

**CASTE AND COMMUNITY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL TAMIZHAGAM
FROM CIRCA 6TH CENTURY AD TO 13TH CENTURY AD**

**Thesis submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University for award
of the degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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2012**



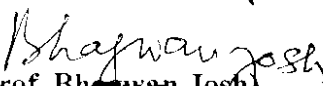

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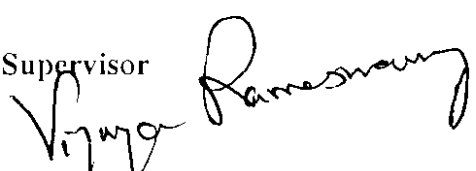
This is to certify that the thesis entitled "caste and community in early medieval tamizhagam from circa 6th century ad to 13th century ad" is an original work by **K. Suresh Kumar** submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi for the award of the degree of the Doctorate of Philosophy. This dissertation has not been submitted for the award of any other degree of this University or to any other University to the best of our knowledge.

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ABBREVIATIONS

In order to reduce the space, in this thesis, many abbreviations are used. Given below are the abbreviations and their extensions so that the reader would face no problem in understanding the non-English terminologies.

AkamAkananuru

AinAingurunuru

KurunKurunthogai

OUP Oxford University publication

PuramPurananuru

SII South Indian inscriptions

TolTolkâppiyam

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research thesis entitled “Caste and community in early medieval Tamizhagam from circa 6th century AD to 13th century AD” primarily intends to unearth the history of marginalized sections in early medieval period. Sympathy may be offered by anyone towards the oppressed sections, yet historical realization could happen only through intellectual discourse. As a part of this process, this thesis has basically chosen two settlements namely *Paraichēri* and *Theendachēri* and attempted to locate them in larger social perspective. In this regard, an effort has been made to trace out the history of the castes and communities in early historical and early medieval *Tamizhagam*. To understand the process of marginalization, many concepts and theories have been employed such as social formation, social stratification, space, identity, status, *Bhakti*, etc.

Firstly, I pay my heartily gratitude to my supervisor Professor. Vijaya Ramaswamy whose motherly attitude and divine nature shaped me as a research scholar from mere student of history. She is the one who enormously kindled my cognitive intellectuality through her libertarian approach. It may sound like exaggeration that she is like a god, but it is a reality. Because, the day I joined as a research scholar under her supervision, I got job in Delhi University. In spite of my busy teaching career, because of her blessings and motherly attitude, today, I could also feel happy that I’m submitting my Ph.D thesis.

I pay my heartily gratitude and I also dedicate this thesis to my mother K. Anjalakshi who brought me up to this stage and I also dedicate this thesis to my father Late R. Kaliamoorthy who was pleased when he heard that I was born as first male child in our family, but he is not there to hear that his son is submitting Ph.D thesis. I have no word to express the contribution made by my brother K. Subash for the completion of M.Phil and Ph.D. he is the one who, with motherly nature took me to Delhi, encouraged me in all the ways. I love to pay my gratitude to him. I also pay gratitude to my lovable sisters Sumathy who always has expected me to become a Ph.D scholar, Kasthuri, Ramani and their kids, Kalaiselvan, Arun, Prabakaran, Priya and Prabavathi.

I pay my heartily gratitude to my student and friend Mr. Rajeev Papreja who did the final editing work of my thesis by devoting his invaluable

time. I have no words to express to Dr. Gunasegaram who, in many difficult situations intellectually helped me. I also intend to pay my thanks to my students and friends, Dinesh, Amit, Arun and Rakesh. I would like to pay my thanks to Dr. N. Selvaraj who kept on discussing social issues with me. I would like to mention few names Jayapradaban, Jaisankar, Malayan, Velmurugan, Thanigasalam, Murugan, Chinnasamy, Logaeshwaran, Gangaimuthu (PCI) Jayaprakash, Vinod, Ambedkar and Santhosh (JNU).

Delhi could not have been in my dream unless a great soul lived in JNU. Without having any prior introduction, the person who sent me application form, the person who accommodated me and the person who created confidence in me is none other than my close associate and brother Veeramani. I have no words to express contribution made by him for the completion of M.Phil and Ph.D.

I pay my gratitude to Father Dominic (Puducherry), Madam Mary Verony, Prof. Surya Kumari and Dr. Chandrika who financially contributed me for the completion of my M.Phil thesis.

My thanks are due to the staff of National Archives, Sahitya Academy Library, Vidyajyoti Library, Central Secretariat Library, Archaeological Survey of India Library, Nehru Memorial Library, J.N.U. Central Library, all in New Delhi, Tamil Nadu State Archives, Library of International Institute of Tamil Studies, University of Madras Library, RojaMutthiah Library, Devaneyapavanar Central Library, MaraimalaiAdigal Library, all in Madras, Annamalai University Library, Chidambaram, French Institute Library, Pondicherry, Karantai Tamil Sangam Library, Thanjavur and Madurai Tamil Sangam Library, Madurai.

I finally pay my gratitude to my wife S. Karunambigai who wished me to complete my Ph.D thesis. I also pay my greater thanks to my father-in-law Mr. N. Viswalingam and my mother-in-law Mrs. V. Lilavathi and their sons Mr. V. Sivabooshanam and his wife Mrs. S. Sudha, V. Vaithiyalingam. I would also like to pay my thanks to my paternal uncle, Mr. Shivaperumal, Shivashanmugam and my daughters and sons.

CASTE AND COMMUNITY IN EARLY MEDIEVAL TAMIZHAGAM FROM CIRCA 6TH CENTURY AD TO 13TH CENTURY AD

ABSTRACT

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History is not the product of dominance to record the stories of the elites and the rulers, instead, it must be the tool used by the historians to acknowledge the existence and participation of commons in the course of socio-economic-political changes through the stages. In this case, tracing the Indian past began with European scholars in late 18th and early 19th centuries. Their perception of Indian past was Eurocentric. Yet an attempt to explore the Indian past was welcomed. The Orientalists and the Imperialists started treating the early Indian past as inferior to the European past. Followed by them, Karl Marx and Henry Maine have taken dialectical analysis to understand the early Indian past. According to them, early Indian society was static and unchanging through history. Their categorization of the society remains in theoretical understanding of caste system, irrigation mechanism and despotic kingship.

In the recent decades this view has been brought into contentions and contestations by the historians like D. D. Kosambi, R. S. Sharma, Romila Thapar, etc. Their views lay in understanding the early Indian societies from the perspective of modes of production, such as slavery, feudalism and capitalism. According to them, society in early India had undergone changes through stages. But they fail to differentiate the historical changes according to regions and their variations. Because their focus mainly lay on the Gangetic valley from where they try to see other parts of India.

However the history of South India remained untouched, until S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri started reconstructing the history of early south India. Unsurprisingly their perception of early south India remains just as merely glorifications. Yet the inscriptional and literary sources on which they have relied upon are still noteworthy. The works of Burton Stein, Noboru Karashima and Subbarayalu, James Heitsmen, A. K. Ramanujan, Norman Cutler, Meera Abraham, Champakalakshmi, Vijaya Ramaswamy, M. G. S. Narayanan Rajan Gurukkal and Kesavan Veluthatt help us to perceive the knowledge about the early south Indian state, society, religion, trade and commerce etc.

Historians like Nilakanta Sastri and T. V. Mahalingam perceive the notion that the south Indian society must be seen as different isolated entity, which had separate history of cultural evolution. According to them, there was no caste system in the Tamil society until Brahmanism arrived south. There prevailed

egalitarian social order. Hierarchy was an alien concept to the Tamils. According to them, it was the legacy of Brahmanism, which was introduced after the 4th and 5th century AD in the Tamil society.

But scholars like Gurukkal and Narayanan began to trace the origin of the caste system in the early Tamil society from the Sangam or classical poetic age. Their views basically lay upon the analysis of mode of productions and division of labour. Many historians are studying the history of early medieval Tamizhagam. The large corpus of inscriptions and literary traditions help us to reconstruct the particular period.

Despite the availability of abundance of inscriptional sources to study the nature and structure of the society in early medieval south India, there have been differences and controversies still prevailing among the historians. For instance, Burton Stein, in his work, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, portrays the structure of the society in south India under the Cholas. According to him, there existed three social groups, Brahmins, ruling class and the non-Brahmin peasant communities. The Brahmins and the non-Brahmin Vellala community were associated with the ruling apparatus directly or indirectly. Still the Brahmins had direct contact with non-Brahmin peasant communities through temples and brahmadeya grants. He also discusses about the left and right hand divisions in the society.

But Karashima in his work *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850-1800*, discusses about the land holdings, power structure, society and the revenue system under the Cholas elaborately. He takes brahmadeya settlements and non-brahmadeya settlements for his analysis. He emphasizes that there was private ownership and individual holding in existence. In the early part of Cholas, in the brahmadeya settlements, individual holdings were common and the non-Brahmins cultivated the land. Whereas in the non-Brahmin settlements, communal land holding was popular and they themselves cultivated the land. But in the later part, both in the non-Brahmin settlements and Brahmin settlements, there seems to be individual landholding and transfer common.

However while Karashima focuses the nature and function of the society in the proximity of Thanjavur and Gangai Konda Cholapuram, he visualizes three major settlements Urnattam, Kammalacherry and Paraichēri in the non-Brahmin settlements respectively. Besides, there were few smaller settlements existed, Theendachēri, Vannarachēri, Telichēri, etc., he categorizes previous all three major settlements as the community of landholders, cultivators and taxpayers. The later settlements are situated outside of the settlements. He also emphasizes Theendachērias the settlement of untouchables. But he fails to trace the cultural relations of these settlements and communities. In the present day, the connotation, Paraichēri itself represents Theendachēri(the settlement of untouchables). So it makes me to raise a historical skepticism whether there was any cultural linkages prevailed between these settlements of communities. It is at this juncture that the present research will try to fill some of the existing vacuum.

As I have done my partial research in my M.Phil. On the Tamil south, I could make out the process of social differentiation occurring in the early Tamizhagam. In the Sangam anthologies, I could come across the social category of paraiyan who belonged to service rendering group, his main occupation was

playing the sacral drum and singing songs to the kings and chiefs to wake up from the bed, praising them to offer gifts, to begin war, etc., he had enjoyed good position in the society. His status was determined and sustained by the surplus of producing community and non-producing community especially the ruling class. But the literary sources the Sangam texts suggest the view that their position was degraded by the influence of Brahmin poets at the chieftain courts. Paraiyas bardic traditions were replaced by the means of pulavan's scriptualization of texts and unfamiliar rituals.

However all these stories of paraiya community have been derived from the controversial Sangam texts. None of the inscriptions support to this portrayal. One of the pictures about the community of the Paraiyas given by the later Sangam text the Perumbanatrupidai can also be taken as the source for our understanding. That is, the Paraiyas lived in the outskirts of the city of Kanchipuram with the Eynars and Eynars treated the Paraiyas as their chiefs. Still it is not clear that tho those Paraiyas were. Were they successors of the Sangam Paraiyas the bardic community? Or were they different tribe living in the given area is not clear.

After the Sangam age, the disappearance of this certain social category makes us into historical skepticism. But in the early medieval period during the Cholas, once again the appearance of this social category with suffix like Paraichēri paves a way to the historians working on south India to rethink the south Indian past. The inscriptions at Thanjavur inscribed during 29th regnal year of Rajaraja I talks often the settlements of Paraiyas, their locations, topographical features and functions. Similarly, the descriptions about the Theendachēri(the settlement of untouchable) are also evidenced in the inscriptions. So I have taken these two settlements and try to trace the historical background of these communities. Given under these circumstances, the present research will focus on the following research questions.

Since inscriptions specify that these settlements had separate burial ground, water tank, water channel, temple etc., especially to Paraichēri and Paraiyas were viewed as cultivators, it makes us to think who were these Paraiyas? Were they cultivators similar those of the cultivators in Urnattam and Kammalacherry? What was their participation in the social space? Weren't their any forces of dominance and subordination in the process of landholding, management of land and cultivation, land sale and transfer and management of cultivation? As it was the period of popular bhakti tradition proselytizing the people in south India, it is evidenced that many of the Saivite (thevaram) hymns identifies as polluters and demoralize them. It also makes us to think, was there any significance of bhakti tradition in the process of inclusion and exclusion? As anti-Brahmin movements and Dalit movements speculate, were the people who did not assimilated Brahmanism excluded from the society and branded untouchables and kept outside of the village? Moreover is there any relation the social category of Paraiyas through different stages of history?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To explore the historical background of the Indian caste system with reference to the Varna ideology.

2. To explore the evolution of social stratification in the Tamil south.
3. To explore the way in which Tamil south transformed into early medieval period.
4. To examine the ways and means by which the community or caste asserts its identity.
5. To examine the influence of bhakti in the process of inclusion and exclusion of certain communities.

Methodology of the Study:

To accomplish the set objectives, the proposed study would employ descriptive and analytical methods. The primary data will include large corpus of inscriptions, religious and secular literature, which prevailed in the particular period, c. 300 BCE – 1300 CE. The secondary sources are drawn from books, news reports, articles etc. Internet sources are also used for this research.

Review of the literature

While reconstructing the history of early medieval Tamizhagam, it became inevitable for me to review the secondary works of scholars who had already devoted their lives to study the history of this region. In this regard, I have made an attempt to review the works of Nilakanta Sastri, Champakalakshmi, M.G.S. Narayanan, Rajan Gurukkal, Karashima, Berton Stein, Subbarayalu etc. they can be found in the thesis.

Outline of chapters

In the thesis undertaken by me, I have brought systematic analysis from the following chapters.

Social formation in early Tamizhagam

The history of early Tamizhagam can be reconstructed with the help of the megalithic burials and large corpus of Sangam literature. Although megalithic burials do not give detailed account of the social life of

the people, we still can get some idea about the class structure and the kind of material people used, food habits, etc., based on the available implements excavated from the burials. Everywhere iron culture denotes the development of civilization and emergence of stratified society. But in south India, although usage of iron evidenced during the megalithic age, scholars contemplate the culture remained in tribal in nature. So the contradictions have yet to be solved by the archaeologists and historians with the help of discovery of new sources and fresh literary traditions. However the Sangam literature composed between circa 3rd century BC and circa 3rd century AD give us vivid account of life and social interactions of the people who lived during that period.

In this chapter, I intend to analyze classical Tamil literature as a preface to an understanding of the social stratification in the classical poetic age. That is, I put forward the following basic questions and rewrite the history of early historical Tamizhagam:

1. Are the Tamil classical literatures merely creative literary texts? Or are they authentic historical documents to narrate the life of the people? If it is so, how far can these texts be used to reconstruct the past?
2. How do historians approach the study of a particular society following the understanding of other societies?
3. Several historians from India and abroad have written on various aspects of Sangam society. So what is their understanding of the Sangam society? What are their theoretical positions?
4. In what way is the ecological set up based on the tinai concept theorized for an understanding of the social formation? Could the process of transformation that occurs towards the end of the early historical period be categorized as secondary social formation? And how and on what basis does my own understanding of the Tamil classical literature differ from the established opinion?
5. How does economic dependency make the various tribal groups to interact with balanced reciprocal relations? And in what way was the means and relations of production controlled and owned by certain sections of tribal groups in each tinai? And how does it define and separate the dominant and subordinate cultures in the course of social interactions?
6. How did the identity of an individual based on status come about? And how did this identity of the status make an individual exploit his social capital in the course of participation in the productive relations in the Sangam society? Did clan or lineage identity implicate the status of an individual? In what way were the axes of power and resources institutionalized in the Sangam society? And how did the celebration of an interior and exterior life of some social categories from birth to death marginalize other sections of people in the society? Was there slavery in the Sangam society? What was the role of women in the Sangam society? How did the concept of kalavuand karpu affect the women in the course

of construction of gender identities? Could all the women be brought into the two-fold order of interior life in the Sangam society? Did patriarchy exist in the Sangam society?

7. How did external social implications bring up the new social hierarchy in the Sangam society? More specifically how far is the brahmanical social hierarchy visible through the literary tradition?

8. Finally it is intended to define in what way the nature of the Sangam society is to be understood? Was it an egalitarian society? Or, a non-egalitarian one? Was it a caste society or a pre-caste society? Was Sangam society really a stratified society?

The history of Tamil classical age is appropriated from a deep analysis of the literature, which was composed during that period. The Sangam literature is divided into two categories, the *mêlkanakku* (the greater accounts) and the *kilkanakku* (the little accounts). They are classified on the basis of the time and space in which their composition took place, and the premise is that the composition of *mêlkanakku* works is prior to the *kilkanakku*. Furthermore, the *mêlkanakku* texts itself are divided into two categories, *Ettutokai*, (the eight anthologies) and *Pattupattu* (the ten songs) respectively. The eight anthologies consist of *Akanânûru* (the four hundred akam poems); *Narrinai* (the excellent genres); *Kuruntokai*, (anthologies of short poems); *Ainkurunûru*, (the short five hundred poems); *Puranânûru*, (four hundred puram poems); *Paripâdal*, (the poems in a metre called *paripâdal*); *Patirrupattu* (the ten tens). In addition to this, the poems are divided into two great categories: *akam* (interior), poems that concern love between man and woman; and *puram* (exterior), poems that view life from outside the family and concern such topics as kings, heroism in battle, elegies and ethics. The techniques as well as the contents of these two groups differed from each other.

Tinai is a term quite often found in the Sangam anthologies, which does not have a uniform meaning; rather it's meaning and interpretations are varied in nature. For instance, *tinai* is the name of the food-grain that is cultivated in contemporary Tamilnadu. *Kurunji* is the *tinai* named after the flower that blooms once in twelve years in the hilly regions. Similarly, other *tinai*s are carrying the names of flowers associated with the region they represent. They are popularly known as the *mullai*, *marutam*, *neytâl* and *pâlai*. In another context, *tinai* is understood as the landscape and the physiographic divisions are of: *kurunji*, the hilly tracts, *mullai*, the forests, *marudam* the plains, *neydal*, the coastal land and *pâlai*, the arid lands.

One surprising thing is that we do not have any evidences about the *tinai* classifications in the Sangam anthologies, on the contrary, all the songs are classified into the above categories irrespective of whether the literary compositions are *akam* [interior] or *puram* [exterior] poems. But the grammatical text *Tolkâppiyam* composed by *Tolkappiyar* throws light on the contemporary times and gives us an idea about the *tinai* classifications and various definitions. *Tolkappiyar* does not talk about all the *tinai*s, which we take into our consideration, rather, he focuses on four *tinai*s for the interior poems. They are *mullai*, *kurunji*, *marutam* and *neytâl*. For the *puratinai* *Tolkappiyar* mentions seven types. They are *vetcî*,

vanji, ulinai, tumbai, vâkai, kanji and padan. So whatever tinai in these two categories we have seen in the present context, they are concepts brought forth by the later poets in later times. Nambi who is the author of the NambiAkaporul, and Buddhammitrar the author of the Puraporul, talk about five tinai for the interior poems and twelve tinai for exterior poems. For our understanding of the people in the Sangam age, we take the five Akatinai into our consideration. Although Tolkappiyar in the Tolkâppiyam does not refer to the pâlai, he gives a clue about the existence of the pâlaitinai. He observes “including the kaikilai [one-side love] and peruntinai [uncombination love] the tinai should be seven in number.” So, scholars assume that Tolkappiyar is referring to the pâlaitinai as the fifth tinai. It is for the first time in the Silappadikâram that Ilangovaligar defined the nature of the pâlaitinai. He says “when the kurunji and the mullai loose their fertility, there the pâlai is born.” However, when we generally discuss about the concept of the tinai in the historical context, we must take Tolkâppiyam as our source material to understand the nature of the tinai.

Tolkappiyar gives two clues for studying the Sangam literature, that is, 1. tinai and 2. turai. The first has been discussed above. The latter stands for the way in which the poems were to be sung, in what situation, how the poet or the poetess was to praise the king, in what context the hero and heroine meet together in which land, what are all the topographical features found in the particular ecological zone; etc. All these come under the category of the turai. Tinai is a monolithic terminology, which is used for the study of the land and the people based on the ecological set up. But each tinai has several turai in their domains. Tolkappiyar also divides the nature of tinai into three categories. They are themutarporul, karuporul and uriporul. The first focuses on the land and the time in shorter and longer durations. The second discusses the gods and goddesses, food, musical instruments, birds, animals, trees, occupations and rituals. The third focuses on the kinds of social and inner feelings of the hero and heroine, the family, etc.; their union, departure, waiting, sulking and quarrels. So we need to refer to Tolkappiyar to be able to make sense of the Sangam anthologies. However, from the Sangam anthologies, especially from the Ettutokai and Pattupâttu songs, we come to understand the nature of the society, and the manner in which the people were actively participating in the process of social transformation.

We need to trace the evolution of the social structure in early Tamilakam based on the ecological-zones. We can also understand the social formation through the sequential arrangement of the tinai. The concept of tinai is understood now as part of the continuum with nature, a reflection of the physiographic reality of the five tinai as interspersed and scattered across the region. The people and products there, and the possible modes of human adaptation have generated ideas regarding contemporary economic activities. Taking tinai as micro eco-zones of given modes of human adaptation, attempts have been made to ascertain the process of interaction across zones. From the poetic specifications, we understand that some activities mark out a zone such as hunting and gathering of the kurunji, plundering and cattle lifting of the pâlai, animal husbandry and shifting cultivation of the mullai, wet-land agriculture of the marutam and fishing cum salt manufacturing of the neytâl. The forms of subsistence adopted by the people are clearly linked to their tinai. In the mullai, marutam and neytâl the blending of craft production with other activities was also part of the means of subsistence. Leaving the primitive forms of subsistence such as hunting and gathering besides their extended forms such as

fishing and plundering, there were four forms of material production, viz animal husbandry, shifting cultivation, crafts production and plough agriculture. There are several place names with prefixes of tinai names, for instance Marudur or Neydalur, which seem to be toponymic survivals of the past in Tamilakam. Similarly, we have ethnographic survivals of a variety of social groups across the deep south of the peninsula who figure frequently in the anthologies. kuravar, paraiyar, vettuvar, kollar, kusavar, (kuyavar), kaniyar and taccar are the most well known examples of ethnographic survivals in Tamilnadu. This would show that the poetic specifications about tinai, people and forms of subsistence can be used as a framework to draw upon the socio-economic situation of Tamilakam around the turn of the Common Era to which the poems are generally ascribed.

After having analyzed the Tinai concept and having devoted much space to understand the status and identity of people, the economic condition of people, women in the society and emergence of new social forces, One can conclude that there was a natural hierarchy determined by the tinai differences, depending on what the primary mode of production based on the natural fertility and resources of that tinai were in the Sangam society. The nature of inter-dependency of the tinais allowed for balanced reciprocal relations among different occupational groups to prevail. Here, producing communities and the non-producing ones were accommodated with a mutual dependency. But we cannot call it an egalitarian society as the status of individuals determined by possession of wealth might have differed.

The question of the nature of Sangam society in terms of whether it was a caste society or a pre-caste one also needs to be reconsidered. The generally prevalent view is that the Sangam society was a non-caste and pre-caste society, which was projected by historians like Nilakanta Sastri, Meenakshi, Subramanian and others. Their view is that the non-caste society of the Sangam age is transformed into caste society by the intrusion of the brahmanical religion to south India. The brâhmanas or the northerners were also shown as the patrons of the brahmanical four-fold Varna system and who introduced it in the Tamil speaking area. M.G.S. Narayanan states that the society in early Tamizhagam was based on kin-based and clan-based relationships, which resulted in a hierarchical social order. But it was transformed as a caste society due to the brahmanical religious influence, which brought with it the notions of purity and pollution based on occupations.

By denying the notion that caste was brought by the brâhmanas, few scholars say that caste was not a new phenomenon introduced into the Sangam society; it had already been evolving in the society. He substitutes a theoretical modification for the notion of caste society. That is, hereditary nature of the occupation, clan and lineage possession of the resources, the identity of the group and the community paved the way for an emergence of caste society. It was not because of the notion of purity and pollution of the brahmanical social order that Sangam society became a caste based society. He says that while the notion of purity and pollution may have been followed within their respective communities, it might not have affected the social categorization to a large extent.

From my own understanding, one cannot assume that Sangam society was a caste society or non-caste society. There was no unilinear process of social transformation; rather social stratification emerges out of the ecological determinism based on the primary mode of production. So, while reading the primary sources, it was possible for me to distinguish between an individual, group, community, etc., based on

the status and the social capital. In the Sangam age there were two stages in the making of the social order. In the first case, the productive forces and the productive relations were based on the accessibility of resources, which determined one's status. So those who labored and those who controlled their labor would have been mutually dependent, and the non-producing and producing community would have maintained a social equilibrium. In order to enhance status, the non-producing community would have provided service through their skills. But in the second stage, the earlier existing non-producing community had to confront other non-producing communities, which were newly emerging in the course of acquiring status in society. We feel that the brahmanical priests would have introduced the notion of purity and pollution, which they already inherited and practiced in the Gangetic valley. They transmitted these notions here to enable their upward mobility in the society through monopolizing the field of knowledge and education, ceremonial activities including marriage and the institutionalization of marriage. (However, the actual visibility of this process is provided only through the early medieval sources.) This may have led to the status of earlier non-producing communities to go down to the bottom of the society. Not only they, but their sacred instruments also were identified as impure. This leads me to think over whether the notion of an identity based on hereditary occupations, clan and lineage ties, and group, tribe or community bonds could have resulted in the displacement of certain sections and their replacement by others in the society as Gurukkal has posited? Or, do we need to see the notion of purity and pollution introduced by the adoption of the brahmanical social system as the reason for the evolution of caste society in the Tamil south? In my opinion, we need to consider both the external and internal stimuli in analyzing the evolution of an incipient caste society by the end of the early historical period in the Tamil region on the basis of the evidence from the Sangam literature.

Social Stratification in Early Medieval Tamizhagam

Interpretations of the concept of social stratification differ from one another. The Structuralist school suggests that since social stratification exists in all societies, hierarchies must, therefore, be beneficial in helping to stabilize their existence. Karl Marx states that stratification implies that working class people are not likely to advance socio-economically, while the wealthy may continue to exploit the proletariat generation after generation. "The advancement in technology changes the structure of mobility completely". But scholars like Weber and his followers criticize Marx and point out that social stratification is not purely based on economic inequality but is shaped by some status and power differentials.

In this chapter, we have taken up a larger view on the social stratification in the early medieval Tamizhagam. The period taken up in this chapter was from 6th century A.D. to 13th century A.D. the chosen area was the history of early medieval Tamizhagam which can be understood and studied by making differentiations and distinctions between the regional histories of the larger area. We would

raise some hypothetical questions and resolve it by deriving the source from secondary reading of books and the primary inscriptions. The questions are what distinctions can be found in the periodization of early medieval Tamizhagam from the periodization of Gangetic plain? How can we understand the social transformation occurring in the early medieval Tamizhagam? As scholars portray, was the brahmanization or Sanskritization peculiar feature in the process of social stratification? Do we necessarily bring the application of Brahmanical concepts of Varna and Jati in understanding the society in early medieval Tamizhagam? What was the role of the state in structuring the society in early medieval Tamizhagam? What was the role of religious institutions in the process of social stratification? Did internal and overseas trade play in determining ones status in the society? What was the actual structure of the society in early medieval Tamizhagam? How did the land rights determine the high and low status of the people in the society?

If one looks at the contemporary social changes in the Gangetic plain in the north we would see that it was quite different from that of the Kaveri basin in the south. In terms of polity, the Gangetic plain witnessed the decline of centralized states or kingdoms in the first half of the Christian era. On the other hand, in the Kaveri basin the transformation from pre-state to state began with the establishment of the Pallava rule in south India. From the economic point of view, the Gangetic plain had been experiencing the development of the feudal mode of economy after the decline of a prosperous monetary or market economy. But at the same time, the Kaveri basin in south India witnessed the transition from the semi-agrarian or semi-pastoral economy to a full-fledged agrarian economy. In the Gangetic plain, the process of revival of the Brahmanical religion resulted in the appearance of several sects and the gradual decline of the heterodox sects. However, in the Kaveri basin, the confrontation between Brahmanical religion and the pre-existing heterodox sects of Jainism and Buddhism and the secular social groups got intensified. It is in this period, according to Kesavan Veluthat, that the this-worldly, secular, materialist ideas of the Sangam period were replaced by traditions that privileged spirituality and ritual. In terms of architecture, the Tamil south saw the beginnings of structural monuments inspired by the Brahmanical and heterodox traditions.

From the 6th century AD onwards, as mentioned above, the landscape lying between mount Venkatam and Kanyakumari popularly known as Tamizhagam had been undergoing rapid changes. Use of iron became widespread. New land tracks were brought under cultivation. Labor force was systematically organized to produce more surpluses. As a result, urban centers rose up and trading networks had developed. Social structure became now complex by the interactions between little ones and great traditions. Caste became as an instrument of one's status and identity. Temples and assemblies functioned as resource distribution mechanisms. New tribal groups were on the verge of adopting socialization processes. State stood as coercive mechanism, which determined the land relations. Land relations and status of an individual remained as undistinguishable phenomenon. Bhakti movements of two distinct cults of lord Shiva and lord Vishnu attempted to incorporate the people from different social strata into Brahmanical social order. At the same time, it is presumed that some people got marginalized and secluded from the mainstream society in the course of interactions between different traditions as well as in the process of accessing the resources. Without any further deviation, let's

analyze the process of social stratification that had initiated its pace by drawing picture from primary sources.

The study of social relations in early medieval Tamizhagam is very complex process. Because, the sources, which we depend upon, like donative as well as Meykirthi inscriptions, copperplates and coins, do not directly advocate the clear picture of the social structure to us. Yet, the inscriptions do give us clues about several social categories with specific names, their settlements, their participations in the public space, their social interactions, etc., thus, this study attempts to reconstruct the social stratification that had been significant process of the early medieval Tamizhagam by drawing possible clues from the inscriptional records which are datable between 6th century AD to 13th century AD.

In the inscriptions, one can get several names of social categories, which got its own significance in social relations. For instance, the terms such as Brahmana, Vellala, Maruthuvan, Natar, Kaniyatchikarar, Palli, Urar, Vanikan, Kollan, Paraiyan, Pulaiyan, Vannan, Thalaikavalan, Vettiyaan, etc., carry various connotations. On the one hand, some of the names such as Maruthuvan (physician) and Kollan (gold smith) are associated with the occupations that they performed. On the other hand, some of them such as Urar (the people of Ur) and Natar (the people of Nadu) denote the settlements where they had lived. On the contrary, some terms such as Paraiya and Vellalar bear dual connotations. In the inscriptions, Paraiya are portrayed as both cultivators and the people who play drums. Similarly, Vellalars are depicted in the inscriptions both as cultivators and soldiers and ruling elites in the king's court. Then, the question arises: who were these two different cultivators? Was there any hierarchy prevalent in between these two social categories? Did their special occupations bear any significance in ascertaining identities and status? Moreover, the settlements belonged to different social categories had not been aligned in uniform patterns. Each settlement had got separate quarters, cremation ground, Pond, and each of them got segregated to their vicinity. So, this study scrutinizes the identity and status of an individual from the settlements. It further attempts to bring out the interactions between communities and their identities in the process of social stratification. In many of the inscriptions of early medieval Tamizhagam, one can get a picture of Idangai and valangai conflicts, which are frequently, portrayed as social conflicts led by two different social groups to ascertain their status and identity. Thus, this study attempts to understand to what extent these social conflicts were meant for acquiring identity and status of the communities and in what way these social conflicts stood as guiding force in the process of social stratification.

From the inscriptions, one can get the view of social categories based on class structure, which are often identified by the names, and functions of the settlements. There were three major settlements found in the grants. They are 1. Urnattam, 2. Kammanaserry and 3. Paraichēri. These all three settlements are not found in common in all grants. The inscriptions also do talk about some smaller settlements such as Iraichēry, Theendachēri, Vannarachēri, etc.; these settlements are also do not appear common in all grants. More interestingly, residential area of these settlements, water channels passing through settlements, cremation ground, temples, etc., are also found in the inscriptions which help us to narrate social interactions of the people who lived in this region. Inscriptions do talk about the grants issued by the kings to Jainas identified (palli grants), to physician, (maruthuvaperu grants) to astrologers, kanikkaiyar, etc.

However the terms like urnattam is often found as the settlement of urars (the villagers and cultivators). Moreover, the term urar denotes the landholding community who were paying tax to the state. Inscriptions still state that urar sometimes had transferred land, and donated some portion of land to the temple. So one can assume that the community of urnattam might be the settlement of wealthy land owning class. Whereas the terms such askammanaseri as the settlements of artisans, and the Paraichērias the settlements of cultivators are found. So it is so essential to take Cathleen gough's view for our purpose. She states that the community of urnattam or Ur was landholders or land owners. Other two communities of kammalas and Paraiyas were artisans and cultivators and they were to be subservient to them. But this view is falsified by Karashima through his deep observations of inscriptions. He suggests that these three major communities of settlements functioned independently. They were not subservient to one another. However the settlements of Paraiyas had their own significance. Inscriptions often state they had separate cremation ground (chudukadu), ponds, (paraikulikulam) and temples, etc., inscriptions states that sometimes kammalacherry and urnattam had joined cremation ground and pond. But in the case of Paraichēri, it was uncommon. It makes me to start research on this area.

Inclusion and Exclusion: An analysis of Bhakti Tradition

Religion is a faculty of mind which plays an important roll in every spheres of human life. What does religion mean? Religion is an institution to express one's belief in a divine power. Religion is a belief concerning the supernatural, sacred, or divine, and the practices and institutions associated with such belief. Then, who created religion? Religion is not created by god, but by human intellect gifted by god. It kindles one's emotion and leads to differences and ultimate conflicts. It also controls one's emotion and paves a path for realization and resolves the problems. Religion is something which leads to social tensions by the domination of human intellect over temporal world and religion leads to social harmony by the rejection of both temporal world and spiritual world with the intervention of ultimate human soul. However, the religions which we have today, had not simply come to us in a ready-made form. No religion had been founded and propogated in a single day or night. On the contrary, every religion originated as a fear of human beings on nature, as an institution built on material exploitation, as a culture in response to that material exploitation, and as a counter-tradition to defend and to give divine justification for the material exploitation of particular group or community. Few religions have their own profounder that, in many cases, set principles for their followers and many religions do not have single propounded, but, they have principles produced by the people in different points of time. Religion originates the moment when the human beings question their existence and surroundings. Religion continuously involves in the process of acculturation, assimilation and accommodation of different ideas and different people. This process often shapes and reshapes intellectual discourse of particular religious tradition.

Brahmanical devotionalism took root in various regions of India at different points of time, and the key figures in what has been called the 'bhakti movement' were the saint-poets who manifested the devotional ideal in their own lives and who often became leading figures in religious sects, based on either historical or mythical constructs. The Tamil saints, who lived between the 6th and the 13th

centuries AD, were the first exemplars of this ideal. Among them, some were devotees of Vishnu, and others were devotees of the other great god of the brahmanical tradition, Shiva. By the 10th and 11th centuries, the poems of the Tamil saints had already got canonized and incorporated into the Tamil Vaishnava and Saiva religious discourse. The Vaishnava tradition is embodied in the Nâlâyira Divyaprabandham, the “heavenly arrangement of four thousand [hymns]”, authored by the Vaishnava saints poets, which was said to have been collected by the tenth-century religious leader Nathamuni. The Tamil Saiva canon consists of twelve compendia called the Tirumurai (sacred arrangement). Most of these are single, long poetic texts or anthologies of poems by a single author. But two among them have multiple authors. Nambi Andar Nambi, who lived during the eleventh century, is credited with arranging all but the last book of the canon.

Mostly, scholars visualize bhakti as the indigenous product of early Tamizhagam, which spread from there to other parts of India. And also, they conceptualize that bhakti was not created by any single person or community; rather, it was popular in nature and accepted by everyone. Furthermore, they glorify that the bhakti movement opened a public space for everyone irrespective of one’s caste and community. Zvelebil is one of the few scholars who looks at the caste aspect in the bhakti tradition, in terms of an analysis of the social background of the saints.

Taking devotional Saivite literature, marking the period between the 6th century CE and the 13th century CE, I would like to bring forth a hermenutical interpretation to analyze the social changes in early medieval Tamizhagam. I would like to look at the internal meanings within the texts, which indicates the changes and continuity in that society. That is, the particular social environment that prevailed at a specific point of time determines the literary productions. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret this literature synchronically and diachronically. The former is done for cross-cultural analysis without concern for the context by the literary persons and the latter is used to provide the time and space dimension to the study of a text.

Space and Identity of Paraichēri and Theendachēri

In recent times, the studies on space and identity have opened hot discussions among the social scientists to study the social interaction of the people. Identity is in reality a subjective, evolving concept, defined by the process of identification. Space can be understood in two terms that is, private space and public space. The private space defined by the people’s participation within the ambit of family, community and related occupations. Whereas public space denotes the participation of the people in the space which is locus of interactions of many communities. In the private space the people will not be immune to access. But in the public space, disabilities to access to space emerge which is basically determined by the forces of production, relations of production and cultural dominance of certain community. Although this concept is used to study the present day secluded sections of the society, I assume that it might help us to understand the social status of certain communities in the historical Tamizhagam.

Taking early medieval Tamizhagam as and the settlements as ecological defined social categories such as urar, kammalas, Paraiyas, etc., one can view the participation and interaction of the people and the communities in the space and one can also evidence the kind of access and disability to public space existed there. The inscriptions and the literature also substantiate the study of the space during the early medieval Tamizhagam. As I have already mentioned that the settlements of Paraiyas had separate water tank, temple and separate cremation ground. But the views of scholar like Karashima on the people in the Paraichēri as cultivators are more contradicting. Because the inscriptions themselves give us the picture of the condition of the Paraiyas. That is, the Paraiyas had cultivated the portion of the land. But it is not clear who was the holder to the land cultivated by Paraiyas. They had drawn water from different water tank (paraikulam) for irrigation. They have used separate cremation ground (chudukadu) for cremation. They worshiped particular gods and goddesses such as aiyan, pidari, etc., the participation of the Paraiyas in the great temple (srikovils) is found nowhere in the inscriptions. All these instances make me to rethink time and space of the people based on location of the settlements and their participations. It also makes me to raise some questions whether there were special distinctions between communities in the accessibility of resources, or whether the terms such as Paraiyas, uroars, kammalas were identified as so-called Hindu caste names in terms of identification of social hierarchy, etc.,

CHAPTERIZATION

Chapter I. Introduction

Chapter II. Social formation in classical poetic age: A Overview.

Chapter III. Social Stratification in early medieval Tamizhagam.

Chapter IV. Inclusion and exclusion: Analysis of Bhakti Tradition.

Chapter V. Space and Identity of Paraichēri and Theendachēri.

Chapter VI. Conclusion: Social dynamism and change in Medieval Tamizhagam.

Chapter I: Introduction

History is not the product of dominance to record the stories of the elites and the rulers, instead, it must be the tool used by the historians to acknowledge the existence and participation of commons in the course of socio-economic-political changes through the stages.¹ In this case, tracing the Indian past began with European scholars in late 18th and early 19th centuries. Their perception of Indian past was Eurocentric. Yet an attempt to explore the Indian past was welcomed. The Orientalists and the Imperialists started treating the early Indian past as inferior to the European past. Followed by them, Karl Marx and Henry Maine have taken dialectical analysis to understand the early Indian past. According to them, early Indian society was static and unchanging through history. Their categorization of the society remains in theoretical understanding of caste system, irrigation mechanism and despotic kingship.

In the recent decades the historians like D. D. Kosambi,² R. S. Sharma,³ Romila Thapar,⁴ etc have brought this view into contentions and contestations. Their views lay in understanding the early Indian societies from the perspective of modes of production, such as slavery, feudalism and capitalism. According to them, society in early India had undergone changes through stages. But they fail to differentiate the historical changes according to regions and their variations. Because their focus mainly lay on the Gangetic valley from where they try to see other parts of India.

However the history of South India remained untouched, until S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar⁵ and K. A. Nilakanta Sastri⁶ started reconstructing the history of early south India. Unsurprisingly their perception of early south India remains just as merely glorifications. Yet the inscriptional

¹Chris Lloronz, *Comparative Historiography: Problems and Perspectives, History and Theory, Vol. 38. No.1*, OUP, New Delhi, 1999, p. 27.

²D. D. Kosambi, *Combined methods in Indology and other Writings*, (Ed) by B. D. Chattopadhyaya, OUP, New Delhi, 2002, p. 25.

³R. S. Sharma, *India's Ancient Past*, OUP, New Delhi, 2005, p. 13.

⁴Romila Thapar, *The Penguin History of Early India, from the Origins to AD 1300*, Penguin publications, New Delhi, 2002, p. 34.

⁵S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar, *Some Contributions of South India to Indian History*, University of Calcutta, Calcutta, 1923. pp. 121-145.

⁶K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Pre-historic to the fall of Vijayanagar*, OUP, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 27-33.

and literary sources on which they have relied upon are still noteworthy. The works of Burton Stein, Noboru Karashima and Subbarayalu, James Heitsmen, A. K. Ramanujan, Norman Cutler, Meera Abraham, Champakalakshmi, Vijaya Ramaswamy, M. G. S. Narayanan Rajan Gurukkal and Kesavan Veluthatt help us to perceive the knowledge about the early south Indian state, society, religion, trade and commerce etc.

Historians like Nilakanta Sastri and T. V. Mahalingam perceive the notion that the south Indian society must be seen as different isolated entity, which had separate history of cultural evolution. According to them, there was no caste system in the Tamil society until Brahmanism arrived south. There prevailed egalitarian social order. Hierarchy was an alien concept to the Tamils. According to them, it was the legacy of Brahmanism, which was introduced after the 4th and 5th century AD in the Tamil society.⁷

But scholars like Gurukkal and Narayanan began to trace the origin of the caste system in the early Tamil society from the *Sangam* or classical poetic age. Their views basically lay upon the analysis of mode of productions and division of labour.⁸ Many historians are studying the history of early medieval *Tamizhagam*. The large corpus of inscriptions and literary traditions help us to reconstruct the particular period.

Despite the availability of abundance of inscripational sources to study the nature and structure of the society in early medieval south India, there have been differences and controversies still prevailing among the historians. For instance, Burton Stein, in his work, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, portrays the structure of the society in south India under the Cholas. According to him, there existed three social groups, Brahmins, ruling class and the non-Brahmin peasant communities. The Brahmins and the non-Brahmin *Vellala* community were associated with the ruling apparatus directly or indirectly. Still the Brahmins had direct contact

⁷ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *A History of South India: From Pre-historic to the fall of Vijayanagar*, OUP, New Delhi, 1966, pp. 27-33.

⁸Rajan Gurukkal, *From Clan and Lineage to Hereditary Occupation and Caste in EarlyTamilakam*, OUP, New Delhi, 1994, pp.22-33.

with non-Brahmin peasant communities through temples and brahmadeya grants.⁹ He also discusses about the left and right hand divisions in the society.¹⁰

But Karashima in his work *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850-1800*, discusses about the land holdings, power structure, society and the revenue system under the Cholas elaborately. He takes brahmadeya settlements and non-brahmadeya settlements for his analysis. He emphasizes that there was private ownership and individual holding in existence.¹¹ In the early part of Cholas, in the brahmadeya settlements, individual holdings were common and the non- Brahmins cultivated the land. Whereas in the non-Brahmin settlements, communal land holding was popular and they themselves cultivated the land. But in the later part, both in the non-Brahmin settlements and Brahmin settlements, there seems to be individual landholding and transfer common.¹²

However while Karashima focuses the nature and function of the society in the proximity of Thanjavur and Gangai Konda Cholapuram, he visualizes three major settlements *Urnattam*, *Kammalacherry* and *Paraichēri* in the non-Brahmin settlements respectively. Besides, there were few smaller settlements existed, *Theendachēri*, *Vannarachēri*, *Telichēri*, etc., he categorizes previous all three major settlements as the community of landholders, cultivators and taxpayers. The later settlements are situated outside of the settlements. He also emphasizes Theendachērias the settlement of untouchables.¹³ But he fails to trace the cultural relations of these settlements and communities. In the present day, the connotation, *Paraichēri* itself represents *Theendachēri* (the settlement of untouchables). So it makes me to raise a historical skepticism whether there was any cultural linkages prevailed between these settlements of communities. It is at this juncture that the present research will try to fill some of the existing vacuum.

As I have done my partial research in my M.Phil. On the Tamil south, I could make out the process of social differentiation occurring in the early *Tamizhagam*. In the *Sangam* anthologies, I could come across the social category of paraiyan who belonged to service rendering group, his main occupation was playing the sacral drum and singing songs to the kings and chiefs to wake

⁹ Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980. P 76.

¹⁰ Ibid, p. 137

¹¹ Noboru karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850-1800 AD*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 37-46.

¹² Ibid, p. 55.

¹³ Ibid, pp.76-83.

up from the bed, praising them to offer gifts, to begin war, etc., he had enjoyed good position in the society. His status was determined and sustained by the surplus of producing community and non-producing community especially the ruling class. But the literary sources the *Sangam* texts suggest the view that their position was degraded by the influence of *Brahmin* poets at the chieftain courts. *Paraiyas* bardic traditions were replaced by the means of *pulavan's* scriptualization of texts and unfamiliar rituals.

However all these stories of paraiya community have been derived from the controversial *Sangam* texts. None of the inscriptions support to this portrayal. One of the pictures about the community of the *Paraiyas* given by the later *Sangam* text the *Perumbanatrupadai* can also be taken as the source for our understanding. That is, the *Paraiyas* lived in the outskirts of the city of Kanchipuram with the *Eyinars* and *Eyinars* treated the *Paraiyas* as their chiefs.¹⁴ Still it is not clear that those were *Paraiyas*. Were they successors of the *Sangam*, *Paraiyas* the bardic community? Or were they different tribe living in the given area is not clear.

After the *Sangam* age, the disappearance of this certain social category makes us into historical skepticism. But in the early medieval period during the Cholas, once again the appearance of this social category with suffix like *Paraichēripaves* a way to the historians working on south India to rethink the south Indian past. The inscriptions at Thanjavur inscribed during 29th regnal year of Rajaraja I talks often the settlements of *Paraiyas*, their locations, topographical features and functions. Similarly, the descriptions about the *Theendachēri*(the settlement of untouchable) are also evidenced in the inscriptions.¹⁵ So I have taken these two settlements and try to trace the historical background of these communities. Given under these circumstances, the present research will focus on the following research questions.

Since inscriptions specify that these settlements had separate burial ground, water tank, water channel, temple etc., especially to *Paraichēri* and *Paraiyas* were viewed as cultivators, it makes us to think who were these *Paraiyas*? Were they cultivators similar those of the cultivators in *Urnattam* and *Kammalacherry*? What was their participation in the social space? Weren't their any forces of dominance and subordination in the process of landholding, management of land and cultivation, land sale and transfer and management of cultivation? As it was the period of

¹⁴*Perumbanatrupadai*, song 10.

¹⁵ *SII*, Vol 2, No. 4, p. 63.

popular *bhakti* tradition proselytizing the people in south India, it is evidenced that many of the Saivite (thevaram) hymns identifies as polluters and demoralize them. It also makes us to think, was there any significance of *bhakti* tradition in the process of inclusion and exclusion? As anti-*Brahmin* movements and *Dalit* movements speculate, were the people who did not assimilated Brahmanism excluded from the society and branded untouchables and kept outside of the village? Moreover is there any relation the social category of *Paraiyas* through different stages of history?

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY:

1. To explore the historical background of the Indian caste system with reference to the *Varna* ideology.
2. To explore the evolution of social stratification in the Tamil south.
3. To explore the way in which Tamil south transformed into early medieval period.
4. To examine the ways and means by which the community or caste asserts its identity.
5. To examine the influence of *bhakti* in the process of inclusion and exclusion of certain communities.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY:

To accomplish the set objectives, the proposed study would employ descriptive and analytical methods. The primary data will include large corpus of inscriptions, religious and secular literature, which prevailed in the particular period, c. 300 BCE – 1300 CE. The secondary sources are drawn from books, news reports, articles etc. Internet sources are also used for this research.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Nilakanta Sastri in his work “*A History of South India: From Pre-historic to the Fall of Vijayanagar*” analyzes the complexity, sophistication, and antiquity of Tamil culture. He surveys the political history, systems of government, social and economic conditions, religion, literature,

and fine art of the Tamils. In each chapter he attempts to place in perspective not only the developments within the area where Tamil culture has prevailed, but also the contacts between this area and other parts of India, Ceylon, and South East Asia. His remarkable knowledge of the Cholas and of the Vijayanagar Empire lends great authoritativeness and vividness to his descriptions. He indicates the great paucity of historical sources for the pre-Pallava period, but he does not describe the vast number of inscriptions and land grants available for documentation of the Chola and Vijayanagar empires.¹⁶

Sastri makes several important new contributions in his discussions of South Indian *bhakti* and of the effects of Buddhism and Jainism on religious controversy in South India. Moreover, perhaps for the first time, the author comments on the significance of the work of European Christian missionaries such as Roberto di Nobili and Constantius Beschi and of the early Indian Christian writers such as Krishna Pillai and Vedanayakam Pillai. Finally, in contrast to his earlier history, the author includes material on the achievements of Tamils in the fields of literature and religion in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, together with an analysis of the effects, which English, and particularly, missionary, education had upon the area.¹⁷

The edited work of R. Champakalakshmi and S. Gopal, *Tradition, dissent and ideology: essays in honour of Romila Thapar* bring out important light on the history of south India. Champakalakshmi in her article, "From devotion and dissent to dominance: the *bhakti* of the Tamil Alvars and Nayanars" comprehends that the *Bhakti* movement in South India started off as a powerful voice of dissent against brahminical orthodoxy, but it was transformed into the ruling ideology of powerful and elite groups, and ended up affirming the base of perhaps not Vedic, but certainly Puranic Brahmanism.¹⁸ In her article "The Siddhas of Tamil Nadu: a voice of dissent" K. Meenakshi, contrarily, argues that it was the Tamil Siddha movement and not the *Bhakti* movement that was the true inheritor of a long pan-Indian tradition of dissent in South India. But it failed to develop any alternative structures and was incorporated into the dominant tradition of

¹⁶ K. A. Nilakanta sastri, *A History of South India: From Pre-historic to the Fall of Vijayanagar*, OUP, New Delhi, 1966. Pp. 26-43.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 186-203.

¹⁸ R. Champakalakshmi, S. Gopal, (ed), *Tradition, Dissent and Ideology: Essays in Honour of Romila Thapar*, OUP, New Delhi, 1996, p. 83-94.

bhakti.¹⁹ Rajan Gurukkal in his article “Towards a new discourse: discursive processes in early South India” examines the impact of the change in social formations on hegemonic discourse. He argues that Tamil heroic poetry was central to, and reflected on, the plunder, prebation and redistribution-based economy of the *Sangam* age. The new Kilkkanakku texts emphasize peace, hard work and obedience. This break in the dominant discourse coincided with the transformation of the economy to that based on settled agriculture. Gradually the *Bhakti* movement emerged to replace the heroic ideology of the earlier social formation.²⁰

In his work “*Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*” Burton Stein has brought reinterpretation of the society and polity of medieval South India under the Pallavas, the Cholas, and the dynasties of Vijayanagar.²¹

Stein offers a fully developed statement of the "segmentary state" model of the Pallava-Chola kingdoms in a usage borrowed from Aiden Southall. Stein portrays the medieval South Indian state as an organic structure that gained its power and cohesion directly from local society. He tells us that the basic units of the state were not administrative divisions, but peasant micro regions (*nadus*). Within these areas of intensive rice agriculture, dominant peasant *Shudra* cultivators allied with powerful Brahmin priestly groups ruled by means of local assemblies (*nattar*). Within each *nadu* or "discrete social universe," the respectable Vellalas, Kammas, or Reddis patronized Brahmin-managed temples, individual priests, and, most strikingly, the large Brahmin-landlord-run villages (*brahmadeyas*) the dominant *Shudras* gained legitimacy and ritual purity in return.²²

In contrast to the older view of K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and other historians Stein speculates that The Pallava Chola states rose by agglomerating or massing several hundred nuclear or core areas, but these medieval rulers did not use vast royal standing armies to conquer and destroy local institutions. Nor did they deploy vast numbers of paid royal officials to integrate their empire. Within the "circumscribed core territories of their capitals," the Pallava Chola monarchs exercised compelling coercive power Beyond the Kaveri River zone. However, the king ruled by ritual hegemony rather than by executive authority that is, “following A. M. Hocart’s theory of

¹⁹Ibid, pp. 56-63.

²⁰ Ibid, pp.167-180.

²¹Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, p. 17.

²² Ibid, pp. 87-108.

“sacral kingship”, by the recognition of the monarch’s superior royal dharma on the part of local notables Each Pallava or Chola ruler buttressed this claim by constructing and endowing huge temple complexes, by patronizing Brahmins, and by furthering the royal Siva cult.²³

True authority and power resided in the countryside, not in the cities.²⁴ Local notables and chiefs mustered and commanded military levies, paid tribute, made contributions to royal temples, and kept order because it was in the interest of the nadu to do so. Rural folk Vellalas and Brahmins were the primary source of creativity and energy. Merchants and artisans were also largely rural and dependent upon the nadu elites. Soldiers and warriors were under the command of the local assemblies.²⁵

Stein concludes with a lengthy chapter devoted to dramatic structural changes in South Indian society under the empire of Vijayanagar. Muslim incursions into the south in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries put pressure on the nadu-based peasant state of the Cholas.²⁶

In their work “A Concordance of the Names in the Chola Inscriptions” Noboru Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu and Toru Matsui compiled a romanized list of the 9,590 personal names, which can be identified in 3,168 known Chola inscriptions from seven districts, which correspond to the Chola country proper. Since such names commonly consist of linked segments indicating title, gotra, and other information, the compilers have organized each segment on a separate line and used hyphens to indicate any components within a segment (e.g., multiple titles). The arrangement of segments within each name is indicated by a numerical code which tentatively identifies the sequence of segments by types: 1) village name, 2) gore or equivalent, 3) father's name, 4) given name, and 5) title. They have also identified inscription by location (district, taluk, and village), period and king, and the year in the Christian era, where it is known.²⁷

Although the authors are interested in studying the Chola bureaucracy, they also provide data on titles and status terms without translation, as well as caste names, gender, and related information derived from the name itself or from other information in the inscription. This study provides a

²³ Ibid, pp. 142-145.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 156.

²⁵ Ibid, p 183.

²⁶ Ibid, p. 206.

²⁷ Noboru Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu, Toru Matsui, *A Concordance of the Names in the Chola Inscriptions, Sarvodaya Ilakiya Pannai*, Madurai, Vol. 1, 1978, pp. 76-82.

database for analyzing chronological and topographical distributions of, say, officials bearing particular titles, or for making correlations between castes and titles. Karashima suggests that sociologists might wish to study the naming system, or that linguists might study Tamil phonetics or spelling variations.²⁸

In his work “South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850-1800” Noboru Karashima have arranged The articles thematically under the following four areas of enquiry: the emergence and consolidation of superior right holdings during Chola times; the territorial administrative network of the Chola state, with special emphasis on the village as the primary revenue and administrative unit; the sources of revenue of the Chola and Pandya states and the methods of their assessment; and finally, the nature of land-control as it evolved in the Vijayanagara period and after.²⁹

Karashima informs us that there are 9,000 recorded Chola inscriptions out of which only 3,543 have been published (roughly 40 per cent of these record land sales and revenue grants). There are 4,500 Pandyan inscriptions of which 1,300 have been published.³⁰

The villages of the Chola period (9th-13th centuries) fall into two categories. Brahmadeya villages were those given in grant to Brahmins, who formed an assembly called the sabha for conducting village administration; and in the non-brahmadeya or non-Brahmin villages, which comprised the majority of villages during this period, the village assembly was called the Ur.³¹

In his first section Karashima begins with a study of land-control in two villages. Isanamangalam, a brahmadeya village, and Allur, a non-brahmadeya village, both situated on the southern bank of the Kaveri in Tiruchirapalli district.³²

Karashima has used 30 stone inscriptions, 21 relating to Isanamangalam and nine to Allur, which record land donations to the temples or tax-remissions on the land. In Allur, out of the 11 pieces of land donated or sold, 7 belonged originally to the Ur or village assembly, 2 to the Talaivachchanrar (those responsible for the irrigation of the lands), and one each to the temple

²⁸Ibid, pp.87-105.

²⁹Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 6-8.

³⁰Ibid, p. 9.

³¹ Ibid, p.13.

³²Ibid, p. 24.

and the temple priest. This distribution, he argues, points to the weak connection between the land and an individual person in Allur. In Isanamangalam, on the other hand, more than half the 23 pieces of land donated or sold belonged originally to individual persons. This would indicate the fairly strong development of private ownership of land in this brahmadeya village.³³

The inscriptions bring out the nature of agrarian stratification in these two villages. It appears that in Allur the landholders who were members of the Ur were also the cultivators of the land. There is also definite evidence of a class of agricultural labourers who worked the lands of the temple and village servants.³⁴ Isanamangalam agrarian society, on the other hand, comprised only two distinct strata the landholders and the tenant cultivators.³⁵ He says "that those who were able to alienate land individually were certain privileged persons, most of whom were Brahmins, thus suggesting the prevalence of communal landholding in the non-brahmadeya village during the first half of Chola rule".³⁶

He says that in Thirteenth century there was a substantial growth in individual landholdings in the non-brahmadeya of the lower Kaveri valley. Karashima sees this as the consequence of two developments: First, the "accumulation of wealth brought by the imperialistic expansion of Chola power during the reigns of Rajaraja I and Rajendra I (i.e., from AD 985 to AD 1044) which was distributed to the people of the heart of the Chola country, the Lower Kaveri Valley". And secondly, an increase in agricultural productivity due to the introduction of new agricultural techniques such as the construction of dams, the maintenance of water tanks and so on.³⁷

In his second section Karashima is concerned with the power structure of Chola rule and the institutions that integrated Chola society with special emphasis on the village as its fundamental unit.

Karashima informs us, contrary to Stein's views of segmentary state, that the Chola kings maintained a fairly centralized administrative network. In the middle Chola period, under the reigns of Rajaraja I (AD 985-AD1014), Rajendra I (AD 1014-AD 1044) and Kulottunga I (AD

³³ Ibid, pp.30-32.

³⁴Ibid,p. 42.

³⁵Ibid, p.66.

³⁶ Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, p. 68.

³⁷Ibid, pp. 72-77.

1070-AD 1118) efforts were made to incorporate the nadus into the administrative political structure, as seen by the increase in the occurrence of names and designations of officials who held important posts in the state administration. Another indication of this move towards centralization is seen in the replacement of the term *Kottam* by Valanadu (a territory larger than nadu) during the reign of Kulottunga I (AD 1070-AD 1118) as well as in the land surveys that were ordered to be carried out by him. Further, he argues, it could only have been in a State integrated politically that Rajaraja I (AD 985-AD 1014) could have granted in such a careful manner the revenues of villages scattered throughout the Chola country (including Sri Lanka) to the Brihadiswara temple in Thanjavur.³⁸

Karashima refutes the theory of stagnant society to study the nature and structure of the society in south India, for which he has taken two inscriptions from the Thanjavur and GangaikondaCholapuram temples.³⁹ There is information on the total area of each village, the extent of tax-free lands, the rates of revenue assessment, the state of irrigation, the caste composition of the village residential areas, etc. The evidence points to a definite degree of dynamism of the village economy. There was a level of village interdependency and cooperation in certain areas like the utilization of water resources and certain social and religious activities. Some of these villages were nagarams (commercial towns) or villages incorporated into a nagaram where commodity-money relations must have been more developed. But in all the villages there was the caste division of labour, around which the economic life of the village largely revolved.⁴⁰

Another line of research initiated by Karashima is the study of personal names and titles during the Chola period. Using a computer he has compiled a concordance of all personal names along with their designations. Analyzing the frequency of the appearance of the two terms Nadalvan (a local chief or lord) and Madhyasthan (the registrar of the village assembly), Karashima finds that the distribution of former term shows a tendency to increase, whereas that of the latter tends to decrease. He suggests that this may be one indication of the deprivation of village autonomy by

³⁸ Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984. pp. 82-86.

³⁹ Ibid, p.92.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pp. 97-104.

the local chiefs and the emergence of a 'feudal' system.⁴¹

The third section of Karashima's book deals with the revenue systems of the Chola and Pandya states. He has prepared three concordance lists: one each for Chola and Pandya revenue terms and one of socio and agro-economic terms in Thanjavur. In addition to this, he has also offered tables showing the chronological and topographical distribution of frequent terms separately for the Chola and Pandya periods as well as for Thanjavur.⁴²

Outline of chapters

In the thesis undertaken by me, I have brought systematic analysis from the following chapters.

Social formation in early *Tamizhagam*

The history of early *Tamizhagam* can be reconstructed with the help of the megalithic burials and large corpus of *Sangam* literature. Although megalithic burials do not give detailed account of the social life of the people, we still can get some idea about the class structure and the kind of material people used, food habits, etc., based on the available implements excavated from the burials. Everywhere iron culture denotes the development of civilization and emergence of stratified society. But in south India, although usage of iron evidenced during the megalithic age, scholars contemplate the culture remained in tribal in nature. So the contradictions have yet to be solved by the archaeologists and historians with the help of discovery of new sources and fresh literary traditions. However the *Sangam* literature composed between circa 3rd century BC and circa 3rd century AD give us vivid account of life and social interactions of the people who lived during that period.

Before proceeding to analyze the social formation in early *Tamizhagam*, let us briefly unravel the scholars devoted their lives to study this particular area. Nilakanta Sastri in his many works on Tamil history sees the *Sangam* period as a glorious one marked by great kingdoms, prosperous trade, flourishing cities and promotion of art and culture. He sees the evidence of brahmanical

⁴¹Ibid, pp. 124-137.

⁴²Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 146-147.

culture in this period in the Tamil region. He, however, as mentioned earlier, does not completely accept the idea of the spread of Brahmanism as occurring only through the coming into the region of the brâhmanas. He sees trade and commercial transactions as also paving a way for the spread of brahmanical influence from the north in the Tamil speaking region. He also analyses that certain occupations directed the style of life in each physiographic zones. He carefully elucidates various land tracts, the people and their ceremonial life in his work.

Regarding the religion, he distinguishes the fertility cult practices and analyzes them by comparing them with the brahmanical religion. Accordingly, the following gods and goddesses based on the landscape in the *Sangam* descriptions: *kurunji - Seyôn, mullai - Mâyôn, marudam - Vêndan, neytâl - Varunan* and *pâlai - Korravai* are identified. He co-relates some of these with the brahmanical gods and goddesses. So he clearly points out that the brahmanical religion had been influencing the Tamil society and had affected the indigenous fertility cults, which the people were already familiar with, and practicing in their daily life.

Champakalakshmi's perspective on the *Sangam* society is different from the earlier generation of scholars. While her focus mainly was on the rise and growth of trade and commerce in south India, she uses archeological and literary sources for the study of social diversification in the *Sangam* age.⁴³ She speculates that social relations prevailed on the basis of reciprocal relations according to the productive forces of each ecological zone.⁴⁴ The nature of the society was pastoral cum agricultural. She calls the nature of this age as representing a rural-urban continuum.⁴⁵ Furthermore, there was no evidence that *Varna* classification of the society prevailed; there was only the evidence that priestly brâhmanas possessed high status in the society, which could be found mentioned in texts like the *Tolkaappiyamkâppiyam* a grammatical work of that period.⁴⁶

⁴³ R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology, and Urbanization: South India 300 B.C. to A.D. 1300*, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 14.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 22.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 183.

⁴⁶ R. Champakalakshmi, 'Urbanisation in South India: The Role of Ideology and Polity', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 15, No. 8/9. (Aug. -Sep., 1987), p. 74.

She analyzes the growth of urban centers and its linkage to the social relations in a broad manner. She refers to the transactional networks amongst the *tinai* as indicating the primitive value of goods transactions. In her view, trade and urbanization were the reason for larger social changes being visible in the *Sangam* age. This is manifested in the changes that occurred in the *neytâl* and *marutam tinai*s compared to the other *tinai*s, seen in the large urban centers that developed in these zones such as Madurai, Puhar and Uraiyur.⁴⁷ She also analyzes the influence of Jainism and Buddhism in the growth of urban centers. The heterodox sects had also paved a way for social stratification in the later period. She concludes that polity, economy and society had their own differential transitions in different periods in the various *tinai*.⁴⁸

Kesavan Veluthat completely denies the European notion of periodizing Indian history on the basis of communal classifications. At the same time, he does not agree with the concept of providing uniform periodization to the entire sub-continent. He speculates that each region of India had its own change depending on the transition based on the state of human affairs and the mode of production.⁴⁹ So in this way, Veluthat periodizes the history of the Tamil south in terms of the early historical period represented by the Tamil anthologies in the *Sangam* corpus (c. 300 BCE – 300 CE), the transitional period which has been conventionally referred to as the *Kalabhra* period (c. 300 – 600 CE), and the early medieval period represented by the epigraphic sources and the *bhakti* and court literature (c. 600- 1300 CE). This broadly sums up the time frame used by scholars today.

While critiquing the scholarly works on the *Sangam* age by Kanakasabai, N. Subramanian and others, he locates his vision on the social relations in terms of *tinai*. He sees each social category of the respective *tinai*s had evolved from their respective forms of productions. He characterizes it largely as a pastoral and agricultural society like Champakalakshmi, though plunder and raid prevailed as the major activities. In terms of mode of production, the *marutam* and *neytâl tinai* played a prominent role in redefining productive relations. But the subsistence production was what largely prevailed. He says that there was the rise of urban centers brought forth by external stimuli of trade and commercial activities. There was trade transactional relations that prevailed

⁴⁷Ibid, pp. 67-78.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.79.

⁴⁹ Kesavan Veluthat, 'The South Indian Experience in Early Medieval Transition', paper presented at the seminar *Revisiting Transitions*, JNU, 2007, p.1.

between south India and the Gangetic valley, proved by the presence of the NBPWs and other artifacts found in the excavations of south India. So, he denies the notion of the influence of north Indian traditions brought by the brahmanas in the later period. However, he does recognize that the brahmanical poets had followed the tradition of the poetry recital of the bardic community of *pânan*, *Paraiyan*, *Pulaiyan* and *Kaniyan*.⁵⁰

Veluthat understands social transformation in terms of polity, economy and society being completely changed. The nature of the plunder and raid of chieftains was replaced by the monarchical order under the Pallavas. The reciprocity and patronage based on family labour was replaced by the unequal distribution of labour based on non-kinship ties. The social hierarchy based on Varna jati matrix replaced the equal social order.⁵¹ However, he simply highlights these transformations in simple terms and does not consider the origin of *jati* and causes for *brahmana* land grants. However, in our view he has presented only the conventional analysis of the social changes, as if it was a mechanic model. An interesting thing is that, he has talked about the need to study the Patinenkilkanakku literature, which were presenting the vision of social life in the Kalabhra interregnum. His analysis of *bhakti* movement also needs to be examined closely for our purpose.⁵²

George L. Hart's vision on the social relations in the *Sangam* society is on the basis of the analysis of the social interactions between two different antagonistic social groups, the Aryans and Tamils respectively. Basically he says that the social categories of the *pânan*, *Paraiyan*, *Pulaiyan* and *Kaniyan* were the indigenous cultural groups.⁵³ They were highly respected due to their influence in the royal court. The kings and the chieftains had respected and provided several gifts to them. Their musical instruments were given sacral identity.⁵⁴ But due to the presence of the *brâhmana* poets called *pulavan* their status was reduced.⁵⁵ His motive of analyzing the social relations in the *Sangam* society is based on the pre-conceived notion of Aryan and

⁵⁰Ibid, pp. 3-8.

⁵¹Ibid, pp. 9-16.

⁵²Ibid, pp.14-15.

⁵³ George L. Hart, 'Some Related Literary Conventions in Tamil and Indo-Aryan and Their Significance', Journal of the American Oriental Society, Vol. 94, No. 2, 1974, pp. 157-160.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 153.

⁵⁵Ibid, pp.164-165.

Dravidian elements. However, he also argues that the Tamil and Sanskrit cultures were interacting with one another, where one culture had not dominated the other culture.⁵⁶

Gurukkal from his deep observation of the *Sangam* literature brings in the Marxian conceptualization of social formation in explaining his understanding of the society of that time. The evolution of the society in south India is not a unilinear one, and was based on the ecological set up of the five *tinai*. Each of them has directed the people to hold some kind of occupation for their daily subsistence. At the same time, the forms of productions and the control of production were unequal in nature in the various *tinai*. But there are hierarchies based on the people holding their means of production, in that sense the plough agriculture and the ploughmen in *marutamtinai* were considered more superior to other people in other ecological zones. The use of iron in practice led to some occupations becoming permanent occupations in the micro ecological zones.⁵⁷ This has been discussed earlier. Here, he points out the permanency of the occupations gives the identity of the clan, which is because the occupation was passed on from generation to generation. For instance, the *kollan* was the ironsmith and the *kuyavan* the potter and they became the hereditary occupation of these two clans.⁵⁸

He also says that the degrees of differences apart, the societies were structured by the dominance of kinship. In the *Sangam* society, the people were identified with their occupations. According to the occupations, the hierarchies were practiced with the chieftains on the top and other classes were the dependent classes including the *brâhmana* priestly class who were doing the Vedic sacrifices, and communities like the *pânan*, *Paraiyan*, *Pulaiyan* and *kadamban* were considered as the superior and inferior according to their occupational role. The placement of a warrior headman on the *ûr* does not imply any fundamental change in the relations of production, since it is only superimposition of an extraneous right of appropriation. On the contrary, the *brâhmanas* as scholarly bards and Vedic priests who were also benefited by the institutions of redistribution and gift, brought about a radical transformation of the relations of production and conditions of labor realization.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 167.

⁵⁷ Rajan Gurukkal, 'From Clan and Lineage to Hereditary Occupations and Caste in Early South India' in Dev Nathan (ed.), *From Tribe to Caste*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1997, p.158.

⁵⁸ Ibid, p.154.

N. Subramanian understands that the social and economic life in the *Sangam* era was not dissimilar to that of later times in south India. Communities with different origins, professions, income levels, and customs coexisted peacefully in a remarkably stable society. Barter trade and urban markets supplemented a largely self-sufficient agricultural economy internally; overseas trade was conducted by a vigorous, well-traveled commercial community. The spices, textiles, and jewels for which the Roman Empire exchanged gold were the same commodities sought by Renaissance Europe. If the parallels are striking, no less so are the differences. The author reveals ancient Tamil society to have been essentially a tribal organization, which retained features such as an attachment to totems, and an active concern for things material, while absorbing some Aryan values. The brahmanical system of social hierarchy was adopted, but the caste system developed differently in southern and northern India. The *Sangam* Tamils produced a predominantly secular literature, reached great heights in the fine arts, but did not achieve the metaphysical refinements or mythological richness of Sanskrit philosophy.⁵⁹

One can conclude that there was a natural hierarchy determined by the *tinai* differences, depending on what the primary mode of production based on the natural fertility and resources of that *tinai* were in the *Sangam* society. The nature of inter-dependency of the *tinais* allowed for balanced reciprocal relations among different occupational groups to prevail. Here, producing communities and the non-producing ones were accommodated with a mutual dependency. But we cannot call it an egalitarian society as the status of individuals determined by possession of wealth might have differed.

The question of the nature of *Sangam* society in terms of whether it was a caste society or a pre-caste one also needs to be reconsidered. The generally prevalent view is that the *Sangam* society was a non-caste and pre-caste society, which was projected by historians like Nilakanta Sastri, Meenakshi, Subramanian and others. Their view is that the non-caste society of the *Sangam* age is transformed into caste society by the intrusion of the brahmanical religion to south India. The brâhmanas or the northerners were also shown as the patrons of the brahmanical four-fold *Varna* system and who introduced it in the Tamil speaking area. M.G.S. Narayanan states that the society in early *Tamizhagam* was based on kin-based and clan-based relationships, which resulted in a hierarchical social order. But it was transformed as a caste society due to the

⁵⁹ N. Subramanian, *The Sangam Polity*, University of Madras, Madras, 1980. pp. 15-17.

brahmanical religious influence, which brought with it the notions of purity and pollution based on occupations.

By denying the notion that caste was brought by the *brâhmanas*, Rajan Gurukkal says that caste was not a new phenomenon introduced into the *Sangam* society; it had already been evolving in the society. He substitutes a theoretical modification for the notion of caste society. That is, hereditary nature of the occupation, clan and lineage possession of the resources, the identity of the group and the community paved the way for an emergence of caste society. It was not because of the notion of purity and pollution of the brahmanical social order that *Sangam* society became a caste based society. He says that while the notion of purity and pollution may have been followed within their respective communities, it might not have affected the social categorization to a large extent.

From my own understanding, one cannot assume that *Sangam* society was a caste society or non-caste society. There was no unilinear process of social transformation; rather social stratification emerges out of the ecological determinism based on the primary mode of production. So, while reading the primary sources, it was possible for me to distinguish between an individual, group, community, etc., based on the status and the social capital. In the *Sangam* age there were two stages in the making of the social order. In the first case, the productive forces and the productive relations were based on the accessibility of resources, which determined one's status. So those who labored and those who controlled their labor would have been mutually dependent, and the non-producing and producing community would have maintained a social equilibrium. In order to enhance status, the non-producing community would have provided service through their skills. But in the second stage, the earlier existing non-producing community had to confront other non-producing communities, which were newly emerging in the course of acquiring status in society. We feel that the brahmanical priests would have introduced the notion of purity and pollution, which they already inherited and practiced in the Gangetic valley. They transmitted these notions here to enable their upward mobility in the society through monopolizing the field of knowledge and education, ceremonial activities including marriage and the institutionalization of marriage. (However, the actual visibility of this process is provided only through the early medieval sources.) This may have led to the status of earlier non-producing communities to go down to the bottom of the society. Not only they, but their sacred instruments also were

identified as impure. This leads me to think over whether the notion of an identity based on hereditary occupations, clan and lineage ties, and group, tribe or community bonds could have resulted in the displacement of certain sections and their replacement by others in the society as Gurukkal has posited? Or, do we need to see the notion of purity and pollution introduced by the adoption of the brahmanical social system as the reason for the evolution of caste society in the Tamil south? In my opinion, we need to consider both the external and internal stimuli in analyzing the evolution of an incipient caste society by the end of the early historical period in the Tamil region on the basis of the evidence from the *Sangam* literature.

Social stratification in early medieval *Tamizhagam*

Interpretations of the concept of social stratification differ from one another. The Structuralist school suggests that since social stratification exists in all societies, hierarchies must, therefore, be beneficial in helping to stabilize their existence.⁶⁰ Karl Marx states that stratification implies that working class people are not likely to advance socio-economically, while the wealthy may continue to exploit the proletariat generation after generation. “The advancement in technology changes the structure of mobility completely”.⁶¹ But scholars like Weber and his followers criticize Marx and point out that social stratification is not purely based on economic inequality but is shaped by some status and power differentials.⁶²

Tamizhagam is the area lying between Mount Venkatam and Kanyakumari, which comprises of the present Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and parts of Kerala. This is the area where large number of temples found built by various dynasties in the past. Pragadeeshwara temple built by RajarajaChola was one of the famous temples. The main reason for choosing this region is that it has large number of copper plates and stone inscriptions mostly on temple walls are available to study the social structure of the people who lived during 9th ad to 13th century ad. During this period the Cholas ruled this region. The borders of their kingdom were fluctuating and imprecise, but the major part consisted of the areas covered by the present districts of Thanjavur,

⁶⁰ Terence Ball, ‘*Marx and Darwin: a Reconsideration*’, *Political Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1979, p. 473.

⁶¹ Thomas Sowell, ‘*Karl Marx and the Freedom of the Individual*’, *Ethics*, Vol. 73, No. 2, 1963, p.119.

⁶² Judah Matras, ‘*Social Mobility and social Structure: some insights from the linear model*’, *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1967, p. 604.

Tiruchirapalli, and Pudukkottai. By the time the Cholas came to power, the area had large-scale tank irrigation, and its rice cultivation could support a dense population. There were important cities, but the bulk of the population was rural, and we do not know if there was less urbanization, however measured, than in 1800 or 1900. But we do know that there were well-organized merchant communities engaging in internal and external trade in grain, spices, and cloth, as well as elephants, horses, and precious stones. Gold, silver, and copper coins were current, and taxes were collected in cash as well as in kind.⁶³

Before proceeding to analyze the social stratification in early medieval *Tamizhagam*, it is worthwhile to analyze author's views on the state and its influence in the people's life. For few decades, scholars have been concentrating on the state and its power structure. Mostly their views lay in analyzing the nature of the state whether it was imperial state or segmentary state or feudal in nature. However it is noteworthy to analyze their views briefly. Nilakanta Sastri's view on the Chola state is centralized bureaucratic state, where the state was divided into many administrative units which all functioned according to will and wish of the monarch. Whereas the villages remained as autonomous administrative unit which was subjected only to pay taxes to the government.⁶⁴

But Burton Stein's view on the Chola state is the segmentary state. According to him, the administrative units of *mandalam*, *nadu* and *valanadu* were not hierarchical structure of the Chola monarchy; on the contrary, they were the independent administrative units and functioned independently. The Chola monarch's legitimacy mainly concentrated on the core area. In the peripheral area, the *Brahmin*-peasant alliance has integrated the society. This process was brought into effect by the ritual legitimacy of *Brahmins* and political legitimacy of the chieftains.⁶⁵ Yet Other historians like Kenneth R. Hall, Y. Subbarayalu, N. Karashima and R. Champakalakshmi while agreeing that some correction of Stein's account was necessary, argue that Stein seriously underestimates the scope of Chola administration, and correspondingly

⁶³ N. Karashima and B. Sitaram "'Revenue Terms in Chola Inscriptions," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* (Tokyo), No. 5, (1972), 87-117.

⁶⁴ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Cholas*, University of Madras, Madras), pp. 69-75.

⁶⁵ Burton Stein, *Peasant state and society in medieval south India*, OUP, Delhi, 1980, pp. 92-135.

overestimates the independent power of the *nadus*.⁶⁶ According to them, the *nadus* and *valanadus* represented by the *brahmadeya* grants had mediated the people and the king.

For the purpose of the proposed research, I have taken the inscriptions carrying information about the land grants issued by RajarajaChola in his 29th regnal year for the purpose of building the Pragaadeeshwara temple at Thanjavur.⁶⁷ They do talk about the settlements, people and their social interactions, etc., which also provide us information about 1) area of village; 2) lands to be deducted as tax-free land and their area; 3) area of the remaining taxable land; and 4) amount of paddy to be measured or money to be paid on taxable land.⁶⁸ Besides, they give the descriptions of forty villages granted in Cholamandalam according to the above formula.⁶⁹

During the Cholas, there were three types of settlements found commonly in the Kaveri delta. They were the settlement of *Brahmins*, the settlement of non-*Brahmin* cultivators and the settlement of merchants.⁷⁰ Each of them has functioned according to their mechanism. *Brahmadeya* or settlement of *Brahmins* granted by the royal court remained as the instrument of agrarian expansion. It was also seen as the means of social stratification. The settlement of merchants had often proved its generosity by donating gold and precious jewels to the temple and to the *Brahmins*. The third settlement of cultivators remained as the assimilating force of agrarian expansion and cultural influences of *brahmanas*.⁷¹

From the inscriptions, one can get the view of social categories based on class structure, which are often identified by the names, and functions of the settlements. There were three major settlements found in the grants. They are 1. *Urnattam*,⁷² 2. *Kammanaserry*⁷³ and 3. *Paraichēri*.⁷⁴ These all three settlements are not found in common in all grants. The inscriptions also do talk

⁶⁶ N Karashima, *South Indian History and Society Studies from Inscriptions, a d 850 to 1800 OUP, New Delhi*, 1984), p. 26.

⁶⁷ SII, Vol. II, Introduction, pp. 1-7.

⁶⁸ SII, Vol. II, No. 1. Lines 1-27, p. 23.

⁶⁹ SII, Vol. II, No. I. Lines 30-35, p. 63.

⁷⁰ Noboru karashima, *South Indian history and society: Studies from inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, Delhi, 1984, pp. 82-85.

⁷¹ Ibid, pp. 92-97.

⁷² SII, Vol. II. NO. 4, lines 1-3, 5-9, 13-24, pp 62-73.

⁷³ SII, Vol. II, (the settlement of The Kammalas or artisans include stone-masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths and coppersmiths), No. 4, Lines 1-27, p. 63.

⁷⁴ SII, Vol. II, (the quarter in which the *Paraiyas* live), No. 4. Lines 1-24, p 64.

about some smaller settlements such as Iraichēry,⁷⁵ Theendachēri,⁷⁶ Vannarachēri,⁷⁷ etc.; these settlements are also do not appear common in all grants. More interestingly, residential area of these settlements, water channels passing through settlements, cremation ground, temples, etc., are also found in the inscriptions⁷⁸ which help us to narrate social interactions of the people who lived in this region. Inscriptions do talk about the grants issued by the kings to Jainas identified (*palli* grants), to physician, (*maruthuvaperu* grants) to astrologers, *kanikkaiyar*, etc.

However the terms like *urnattam* is often found as the settlement of *urars* (the villagers and cultivators. Moreover, the term *urar* denotes the landholding community who were paying tax to the state.⁷⁹ Inscriptions still state that *urar* sometimes had transferred land, and donated some portion of land to the temple.⁸⁰ So one can assume that the community of *urnattam* might be the settlement of wealthy land owning class. Whereas the terms such *askammanaseri* as the settlements of artisans, and the *Paraichērias* the settlements of cultivators are found. So it is so essential to take Cathleen Gough's view for our purpose. She states that the community of *urnattam* or *Ur* was landholders or land owners. Other two communities of *kammalas* and *Paraiyas* were artisans and cultivators and they were to be subservient to them.⁸¹ But this view is falsified by Karashima through his deep observations of inscriptions. He suggests that these three major communities of settlements functioned independently. They were not subservient to one another.⁸² However the settlements of *Paraiyas* had their own significance. Inscriptions often state they had separate cremation ground (*chudukadu*),⁸³ ponds,⁸⁴ (*paraikulikulam*)⁸⁵ and

⁷⁵SII, Vol. II, (the quarter where toddy (iram) is sold) No. 4, Lines 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 15, pp. 62-67.

⁷⁶SII, Vol. II, (the quarter of those who must not be touched, of low-caste people), No. 4, p. 67.

⁷⁷SII, Vol. II, (the quarter of the washer men (Vannar),No. 4, Lines 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 14.. p 69.

⁷⁸SII, Vol. II, No. 7, Lines 1-55, pp. 72-86.

⁷⁹SII, Vol. IV, No. 2, Lines 2, 5, 6, 8-15, pp. 28-36.

⁸⁰SII, Vol. I, No. 1, Lines 6-10, pp. 127-129.

⁸¹ Kathleen Gough, 'Modes of Production in Southern India', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 15, No. 5/7, pp. 27.

⁸² Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, Delhi 1984, pp. 97-98.

⁸³SII, Vol. II, no. 4, line 7, p 66.

⁸⁴SII, Vol. II, No. 4, lines 2, 7, 8 and 13, pp 63-67.

⁸⁵SII, Vol. II, (In villages the Paraiyas are not permitted to draw water from tanks or wells used by the caste people),No. 4, Line 7, p. 64.

temples,⁸⁶ etc., inscriptions states that sometimes *kammalacherry* and *urnattam* had joined cremation ground⁸⁷ and pond. But in the case of *Paraichēri*, it was uncommon. It makes me to start research on this area.

Space and Identity of *Paraichēri* and *Theendachēri*

In recent times, the studies on space and identity have opened hot discussions among the social scientists to study the social interaction of the people. Identity is in reality a subjective, evolving concept, defined by the process of identification. Space can be understood in two terms that is, private space and public space. The private space defined by the people's participation within the ambit of family, community and related occupations.⁸⁸ Whereas public space denotes the participation of the people in the space which is locus of interactions of many communities.⁸⁹ In the private space the people will not be immune to access. But in the public space, disabilities to access to space emerge which is basically determined by the forces of production, relations of production and cultural dominance of certain community.⁹⁰ Although this concept is used to study the present day secluded sections of the society, I assume that it might help us to understand the social status of certain communities in the historical *Tamizhagam*.

Taking early medieval *Tamizhagam* as and the settlements as ecological defined social categories such as *urar*, *kammalas*, *Paraiyas*, etc., one can view the participation and interaction of the people and the communities in the space and one can also evidence the kind of access and disability to public space existed there. The inscriptions and the literature also substantiate the study of the space during the early medieval *Tamizhagam*. As I have already mentioned that the settlements of *Paraiyas* had separate water tank, temple and separate cremation ground.⁹¹ But the views of scholar like Karashima on the people in the *Paraichēris* cultivators are more contradicting. Because the inscriptions themselves give us the picture of the condition of the *Paraiyas*. That is, the *Paraiyas* had cultivated the portion of the land. But it is not clear who was

⁸⁶SII, Vol. II, No. 4, Lines 12 and 13, p. 68.

⁸⁷SII, Vol. IV, no 7, lines 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 13, pp 23-45.

Robin D. Jones, *The Interiors of the Empire: Object, Space and Identity Within the Indian Subcontinent 1800-1947*, Manchstor University Press, Manchstor, 2008, pp. 55-60.

⁸⁹Ibid, p.74.

⁹⁰Ibid, pp. 76-84.

⁹¹SII, Vol. II, No. 7, 55, 56, 57, p. 65.

the holder to the land cultivated by *Paraiyas*. They had drawn water from different water tank (*paraikulam*) for irrigation.⁹² They have used separate cremation ground (*chudukadu*) for cremation.⁹³ They worshiped particular gods and goddesses such as *aiyan*, *pidari*,⁹⁴ etc., the participation of the *Paraiyas* in the great temple (*srikovils*) is found nowhere in the inscriptions. All these instances make me to rethink time and space of the people based on location of the settlements and their participations. It also makes me to raise some questions whether there were special distinctions between communities in the accessibility of resources, or whether the terms such as *Paraiyas*, *uproars*, *kammalas* were identified as so-called Hindu caste names in terms of identification of social hierarchy, etc.,

Inclusion and Exclusion: An analysis of *Bhakti* Tradition

Brahmanical devotionalism took root in various regions of India at different points of time, and the key figures in what has been called the '*bhakti* movement' were the saint-poets who manifested the devotional ideal in their own lives and who often became leading figures in religious sects, based on either historical or mythical constructs. The Tamil saints, who lived between the 6th and the 13th centuries AD, were the first exemplars of this ideal. Among them, some were devotees of Vishnu, and others were devotees of the other great god of the brahmanical tradition, Shiva. By the 10th and 11th centuries, the poems of the Tamil saints had already got canonized and incorporated into the Tamil Vaishnava and Saiva religious discourse.⁹⁵ The Vaishnava tradition is embodied in the *Nâlâyira Divyaprabandham*, the "heavenly arrangement of four thousand [hymns]", authored by the Vaishnava saints poets, which was said to have been collected by the tenth-century religious leader Nathamuni.⁹⁶ The Tamil *Saiva* canon consists of twelve compendia called the *Tirumurai* (sacred arrangement). Most of these are single, long poetic texts or anthologies of poems by a single author. But two

⁹²SII, Vol. II, no. 4, Line 7, p. 68.

⁹³SII, Vol. IV, No. 2, Line 16, p. 45.

⁹⁴SII, Vol. IV, 4, lines 2, 3, 4, 7, 16, p. 72.

⁹⁵ R. Nagaswamy, *Siva Bhakti*, Navrang Publishers, New Delhi, 1989, p. 12.

⁹⁶Ibid, p.14.

among them have multiple authors.⁹⁷ Nambi Andar Nambi, who lived during the eleventh century, is credited with arranging all but the last book of the canon.

Indira Peterson in her study on Saiva *bhakti* puts forward an insightful discussion about the multiple contexts in which the poetry functions. These poems are “the first literary expression of emotional *bhakti*; the first sizable corpus of full-fledged religious poems in Tamil and the first Hindu sectarian scriptures in a vernacular language”⁹⁸. The Pallava and the Chola monarchs employed singers to perform these songs during the temple worship and they still form a crucial part of *Saivite* rituals.⁹⁹ Peterson begins her study by outlining the key events and influences which led to the composition of the *Têvâram*. The chapter on ‘The Poets and their Poems’ gives an impressive far-ranging analysis of the poetry’s themes and strategies, touching upon topics as diverse as the poets’ debt to Sanskrit hymns of praise, the use of the verbal icon as rhetorical strategy, the appropriation of voices from classical Tamil poetry, and the role of Tamil landscapes in poetic imagery. She analyzes the manner in which hymns dealing with temple rites, festivals, and local legends are connected with Saivite temples. ‘The Ways of Love’ and ‘Acts of Devotion’ show asensitivity to the many rhetorical frameworks employed in the *Têvâram*. Some poems in the *bhakti* literature provide biographical material: Sambandar nursed by Uma at the temple tank; Appar’s transformation from Jaina monk into vanquisher of Jainas; and Cuntarar’s treatment of his two wives. Peterson’s analysis points to the active efforts made by the *bhakti* saints to propagate their religious and social traditions.¹⁰⁰

According to John E. Cort, “*Bhakti* is not restricted to what scholars say it is; rather, it is primarily what bhaktas have said it is, and these bhaktas have included Vaisnavas, Saivas, Saktas, Jains, Buddhists, and others.”¹⁰¹ He further defines that *bhakti* is a highly complex, multiform cultural category, which is differently understood and practiced in different times, places, and sects. “*Bhakti* is both something that one does and an attitude that can suffuse all of one’s actions. *Bhakti* can range from sober respect and veneration that upholds socio-religious

⁹⁷ Alalasundaram, *Literary Beauties in the hymns of Nayanmars*, NewCenturyBookHouse, Madras, 1992. p. 84.

⁹⁸ Indira Viswanathan Peterson, *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, p.4.

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 68.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, p. 72.

¹⁰¹ John E. Cort, ‘*Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition: Understanding Devotional Religion in South Asia*’, *History of Religions*, Vol. 42, No. 1. (Aug., 2002), p. 60.

hierarchies and distinctions to fervent emotional enthusiasm that breaks down all such hierarchies and distinctions in a radical soteriological egalitarianism.”¹⁰²

Glenn E. Yocum views the Tamil *bhakti* as “The first great upsurge of popular Hindu devotion”,¹⁰³ which occurred in south India from the seventh to the ninth centuries and that it gradually spread northward into the Kannada country and Maharashtra and then into Bengal and North India.¹⁰⁴ He speaks of “the indigenous spiritual roots of Tamil *bhakti*.”¹⁰⁵ He hypothesizes that the early *bhakti* poets laid no emphasis on caste. One could not be disqualified from becoming a devotee because of caste.

Norman Cutler observes “the poems of the Tamil saints are expressions of *bhakti*, a personal, devotional approach to the worship of god.”¹⁰⁶ In this context, he looks that the relation between the author and audience in terms of stressing good things to the audience about the deities, either Shiva or Vishnu, through recital of several Puranic myths in their hymns. Their motive was to advise them to follow the path of devotion. The relation between the author and deity means that as a child, mother and client, the author tries to attain the feet of god. The relation between the deity and the devotee was like the relationship between a leader and follower, where the devotee will follow the words of author as the sayings of deity.

George W. Spencer visualizes the concept of Tamil *bhakti* in the following words, “In several major spheres of human activity—political, social, and religious—the period of Pallava political ascendancy in the Tamil country, from roughly the sixth through the ninth centuries CE, saw the crystallization of many forms of thought and action which would prevail in the Tamil country in later centuries. The emergence of articulate dynastic regimes, expressing themselves through inscriptional records; the appearance of stone Hindu temples as special ‘ritual arenas’ for devotional purposes; and the displacing, first in the royal courts and subsequently in the

¹⁰² John E. Cort, ‘*Bhakti in the Early Jain Tradition: Understanding Devotional Religion in South Asia*’, *History of Religions*, Vol. 42, No. 1. (Aug., 2002), pp. 561.

¹⁰³ Glenn E. Yocum, ‘*Shrines, Shamanism, and Love Poetry: Elements in the Emergence of Popular Tamil Bhakti*’, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 41, No. 1. (Mar., 1973), p. 4.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*, pp. 35-38.

¹⁰⁶ Norman Cutler, ‘*The Devotee’s Experience of the Sacred Tamil Hymns*’, *History of Religions*, Vol. 24, No. 2. (Nov., 1984), p. 91.

countryside, of rival religious elites of the Buddhist and Jaina persuasion by a new, passionate, and aggressive breed of Hindu devotees, were all notable features of the Pallava period.”¹⁰⁷

Kesavan Veluthat speculates that the *bhakti* movement in south India was a temple movement.¹⁰⁸ Devotion to Visnu or Siva was reduced into devotion to the deity consecrated in a particular temple. The *bhakti* movement continued to popularise the temple worship. The popularity of the temple meant the acceptance of all related institutions including religion, norms of social differentiation and the peculiar organization of the forces and relations of production. He also states “in the beginning *bhakti* had an openness about it in matters of caste; but as the movement came to its fruition, it closed its ranks for the lower sections of society.”¹⁰⁹

Mostly, scholars visualize *bhakti* as the indigenous product of early *Tamizhagam*, which spread from there to other parts of India. And also, they conceptualize that *bhakti* was not created by any single person or community; rather, it was popular in nature and accepted by everyone. Furthermore, they glorify that the *bhakti* movement opened a public space for everyone irrespective of one’s caste and community. Zvelebil is one of the few scholars who looks at the caste aspect in the *bhakti* tradition, in terms of an analysis of the social background of the saints.

Taking devotional *Saivite* literature, marking the period between the 6th century CE and the 13th century CE, I would like to bring forth a hermenutical interpretation to analyze the social changes in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. I would like to look at the internal meanings within the texts, which indicates the changes and continuity in that society. That is, the particular social environment that prevailed at a specific point of time determines the literary productions. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret this literature synchronically and diachronically.¹¹⁰ The literary persons do the former for cross-cultural analysis without concern for the context and the latter is used to provide the time and space dimension to the study of a text.

¹⁰⁷ George W. Spencer, ‘*The Sacred Geography of the Tamil Saivite Hymns*’, *Numen*, Vol. 17, Fasc. 3. (Dec, 1970), p. 234.

¹⁰⁸ Kesavan Veluthat, ‘*Religious Symbols in Political Legitimation: The Case of Early Medieval South India*’, *Social Scientist*, Vol. 21, No. 1/2. (Jan. -Feb., 1993), p.1.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*, p. 8.

¹¹⁰ Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti*, OUP, New Delhi, 1993. p. 41.

CHAPTERIZATION

- I. Introduction
- II. Social formation in Early *Tamizhagam*: A Overview.
- III. Social Stratification in early medieval *Tamizhagam*.
- IV. Inclusion and exclusion: Analysis of *Bhakti* Tradition.
- V. Space and Identity of Paraicēri and TheendaCēri.
- VI. Social dynamism and change in Medieval *Tamizhagam*.

Chapter II

Social formation in classical poetic age

The historical inquiry into the past does not always require a search for new evidence with different sets of questions in mind. But it requires fresh observation of existing texts. As the great historian D. D. Kosambi puts it, history is the presentation in chronological order of successive changes in the means and relations of production.¹¹¹ When they locate their view on social changes in a particular time and space, what historians are really trying to do is to identify certain basic incentives which caused the social change and the way in which the productive forces and productive relations work together in transcending the existing material base. This what determines the structure of that society and polity in the next stage. The historical past now has to be investigated, not merely by compiling the historical sources in its time sequence, but by analyzing the interconnection among different variables and their causal relationships. The paucity of fresh literary source material and the arrival of new archaeological sources inevitably have led to a shift from the antiquarian interest in the ancient past to a more analytical comprehension of it. The increasing relevance of the methodology of the social sciences facilitated this shift. Not surprisingly, the intensification of work in archaeology and anthropology has coincided with these new emphases in studying ancient history.

There is a range of divergent sources including literature and archaeological findings to study the historical process of early *Tamilakam* and situate its socio-economic and cultural condition into different evolutionary stages. The existing understanding of the prehistoric period of south India has completely depended upon the archaeological sources particularly the megalithic burials and other excavated materials. However with the transition from the prehistoric period to the historical period, there are a lot of literary sources in narrative and didactic forms, which help us to study various aspects of South Indian society and polity in greater detail. Thus, we have the literary texts, which are popularly known as the *Sangam* literature or the classical Tamil literature. Historians understand the Sangam association as a mythological invention because of the lack of corroboration of sources to trace the time and place in which the so-called *Sangams* or assemblies were held. What is clear is that these literary texts represent a sort of cultural set-

¹¹¹ D.D. Kosambi, *Combined Methods in Indology*, (ed) B.D. Chattopadhyaya, OUP, Delhi, 2000, p. 15.

up and social life, which is certainly quite different from that of the later period, i.e. after the 3rd century CE. The comparative analysis of society which is represented in the different categories of sources, the early Megalithic findings, then the classical literature and later inscriptions (of the Pallava rulers), has helped the scholars, who were interested in studying the *Sangam* literature and the society and culture depicted in it, to date these (*Sangam*) texts between the 3rd century BCE and 3rd century CE.

In this chapter, I intend to analyze classical Tamil literature as a preface to an understanding of the social stratification in the classical poetic age. That is, I put forward three basic questions:

1. Are the Tamil classical literatures merely creative literary texts? Or are they authentic historical documents to narrate the life of the people? If it is so, how far can these texts be used to reconstruct the past?
2. How do historians approach the study of a particular society following the understanding of other societies?
3. Several historians from India and abroad have written on various aspects of *Sangam* society. So what is their understanding of the *Sangam* society? What are their theoretical positions?
4. In what way is the ecological set up based on the *tinai* concept theorized for an understanding of the social formation? Could the process of transformation that occurs towards the end of the early historical period be categorized as secondary social formation? And how and on what basis does my own understanding of the Tamil classical literature differ from the established opinion?
5. How does economic dependency make the various tribal groups to interact with balanced reciprocal relations? And in what way was the means and relations of production controlled and owned by certain sections of tribal groups in each *tinai*? And how does it define and separate the dominant and subordinate cultures in the course of social interactions?
6. How did the identity of an individual based on status come about? And how did this identity of the status make an individual exploit his social capital in the course of participation in the productive relations in the *Sangam* society? Did clan or lineage identity implicate the status of an individual? In what way were the axes of power and resources institutionalized in the *Sangam* society? And how did the celebration of an interior and exterior life of some social categories

from birth to death marginalize other sections of people in the society? Was there slavery in the *Sangam* society? What was the role of women in the *Sangam* society? How did the concept of *kalavu* and *karpu* affect the women in the course of construction of gender identities? Could all the women be brought into the two-fold order of interior life in the *Sangam* society? Did patriarchy exist in the *Sangam* society?

7. How did external social implications bring up the new social hierarchy in the *Sangam* society? More specifically how far is the brahmanical social hierarchy visible through the literary tradition?

8. Finally it is intended to define in what way the nature of the *Sangam* society is to be understood? Was it an egalitarian society? Or, a non-egalitarian one? Was it a caste society or a pre-caste society? Was *Sangam* society really a stratified society?

This study on the *Sangam* literature will look at the problems in understanding the *Sangam* literature as providing historical narratives from different perspectives. It will familiarize the readers with the understanding of the *Sangam* society by appending literary evidences from the anthologies.

Narrative And Didactic Tamil Classical Literature In Reconstructing The Past

History of a literature is not merely an attempt to date literature but also to trace the development of the genre, meter, style, ideas, society and culture. The ultimate goal of this effort is to evaluate the literature effectively. This realization will put in proper perspective the various attempts to reconstruct the history based on literary sources.

To focus on the narrative and didactic classical Tamil literature in reconstructing the past, I have divided the discussion into two parts for the sake of convenience. That is, I would like to narrate the contents of the *Sangam* literature and then I would move on to analyzing several scholars' interpretations on the dating and the contextualizing of the *Sangam* literature.

The history of Tamil classical age is appropriated from a deep analysis of the literature, which was composed during that period. The *Sangam* literature is divided into two categories, the *mêlkanakku* (the greater accounts) and the *kilkanakku* (the little accounts).¹¹² They are classified

¹¹² K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Sangam Literature: its Cults and Cultures*, Swathi Publications, Madras, 1972, p. 5.

on the basis of the time and space in which their composition took place, and the premise is that the composition of *mêlkanakku* works is prior to the *kilkanakku*. Furthermore, the *mêlkanakku* texts itself are divided into two categories, *Ettutokai*, (the eight anthologies) and *Pattupâttu* (the ten songs) respectively. The eight anthologies consist of *Akanânûru* (the four hundred *akam* poems); *Narrinai* (the excellent genres); *Kuruntokai*, (anthologies of short poems); *Ainkurunûru*, (the short five hundred poems); *Puranânûru*, (four hundred *puram* poems); *Paripâdal*, (the poems in a metre called *paripâdal*); *Patirrupattu* (the ten tens). In addition to this, the poems are divided into two great categories: *akam* (interior), poems that concern love between man and woman; and *puram* (exterior), poems that view life from outside the family and concern such topics as kings, heroism in battle, elegies and ethics.¹¹³ The techniques as well as the contents of these two groups differed from each other.

Tolkappiyar in his grammar *Tolkâppiyam* describes about the way in which the poems are composed and what are the meanings contained in them.¹¹⁴ He refers to an organic theory of poetry where the sounds and the meanings together form one united whole. The chapter on literary composition in *Tolkâppiyam* starts by enumerating the various constituents of a verse as its organs where we find enumerated aspects of both form and matter, not only the poetic form but also the phonological and morphological form.

1. The alphabetical sounds or phonemes (*eluttu*).
2. Their duration (*mâtirai*).
3. Their knitting together of syllables (*asai*).
4. The various permutations and combinations of these syllables as feet (*sîr*)
5. The varied integration of these feet into lines (*ati*).
6. The caesura or the coincidence with the metrical and grammatical pause (*yappu*).
7. The lexical tradition (*marapu*).

¹¹³ Kamil V. Zvelebil, *Tamil Literature*, E.J. Brill, Leiden, 1975, p. 48.

¹¹⁴ T.P. Meenakshisundaram, 'Tolkappiyar's Literary Theory', Proceedings of First International Conference Seminar on Tamil Studies, Kuala Lumpur, 1966, on '<http://www.tamilnation.org>'.

8. The basic poetic intonations of or fundamental poetic tunes (*tûku*).
9. The innumerable garland like patterns of the metrical weildings such as assonance and rhyme (*today*).
10. The import or purport of the verse, controlling and vivifying all these parts, so as to make them expressive of the self same purport (*nôkku*).
11. The basic verse patterns as so many permanent and natural sound configurations of the idiom of the language (*pa*);
12. The length or dimensions of the verses (*alavu*);
13. (Here comes subject matter) the harking back to the ideal behaviour patterns of an ennobling humanity (*tinai*);
14. Their varying main currents of activity (*kaikol*);
15. The speaker (*kural*) whose expression is the poem;
16. The person to whom the poem is spoken (*kêtpôr*);
17. The place (*kalam*) and
18. The time of the poem (*kâlam*);
19. The resulting effect of purpose of the verse (*payan*);
20. The sentiment or emotion bubbling forth therein;
21. Here, the poetic syntax or the elliptical construction or the yearning after completion of the senses, at every stage of its progress (*eccam*);
22. The context making the meaning (*munnam*);
23. The underlying universality (*porul*);
24. The ford in the poetic current where the particularity enters into the flow of poetry or the particularity of the poetic aspect of the verse (*turai*);

25. The great linking or the retrospective and prospective constructions (*mattu*);
26. The colours of the rhythm of the verse (*vannam*); and
27. The eight-fold poetical facades (*vannappu*) or kinds of poetic composition.”¹¹⁵

All the *Sangam* classical texts were said to have been composed in accordance with the above stipulations on the characteristics of the poetry. Both *puram* and *akam* songs have been divided by commentators into different genres. Each of these is named after a flower, which also gives its name to the *pan*, or *râga*, in which it was sung. For *puram* poems, the division of genres is not very complex. The case is different for *akam*; the divisions are encoded with a mood and a situation. Love in all its variety - love in separation, and in union, before and after marriage, in chastity and in betrayal - is the theme of *akam*. In *akam* poems, no names of persons are mentioned. The characters in the poems are idealized types rather than individuals. They are the man in love, woman in love, the woman’s friend, courtesan, and passerby, the neighbors, etc. No poet speaks in his own voice, and no poem is addressed to the reader. The reader overhears what the characters say to each other, to themselves or to the moon.

The aspects of love of a hero and a heroine are depicted in those poems in a manner that does not carry the love story as a continuous narrative directly. Rather, it gives a description about the particular moment of love that is captured in the poem, in the form of the speech of the hero or the lady-companion or someone else. There are one thousand, eight hundred and fifty poems of this type in five anthologies, viz. *Akanânûru*, *Narrinai*, *Kuruntokai*, *Ainkurunûru*, and *Kalittokai*. But there is a great difference between the early eight anthologies and the later work as regards the men and the women dealt with in them. In the medieval epics and other literary works, the common man and woman never attained the status of hero and heroine, whereas in the poems on love the ordinary man and woman either in the mountainous region or in other regions are depicted as the hero and the heroine.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

The *akam* or interior poems are always identified with three components respectively: 1. *mutaporul* (land and the time); 2. *karupporul* (the gods and goddesses, food, animal, tree, bird, musical instruments, occupations, and other varieties); and, 3. *uriporul* (five feelings of love between the hero and heroine - union, departure, waiting, sulking and quarrel, respectively). *Tolkâppiyar* clarifies the relative importance of these three components of the *tinai*. According to him *karupporul* is more important than *mutaporul*, and *uriporul* is more important than the other two. In other words, the aspect of love is the most important part, the objects of environment come next, and the region, the season and the hour are less important. There are few poems in the anthologies, which have no *mutaporul*, but only the other two; a few poems have neither *karupporul* nor *mutaporul* but only *uriporul* or the aspect of love. Mostly the *akam* songs are correlated with human interior life by naming the flowers of the each landscape respectively *kurunci*, *mullai*, *marutam*, *neytal* and *pâlai*. In other words they are called *tinais*. In addition to this, *Tolkâppiyam* adds two more *tinais* respectively *kaikilai* and *peruntinai*. Both these *tinais* appeared in both *puram* and *akam* songs.

In the case of *puram* texts, there are three texts picked up from the *Ettutokai* anthologies, the *Paripâdal*, *Patirrupattu* and *Puranânûru* respectively.¹¹⁶ These anthologies are also divided into different *tinai* identified with names of flowers. Tolkappiyanaar gives us seven such *tinais*. They are *vetci* (bravely picking up the cows from the enemy state), *vanji* (attacking the boundary), *kanji* (recovering the land from the enemy), *ulincai* (attacking the enemies' forts), *tumpai* (participating in the battle-field), *vâkai* (celebrating the victory), *pâdan* (praising the bravery of the king and the soldiers).¹¹⁷ Later, the 12th century work by Putamittirar adds five more *tinai*.¹¹⁸ They are *karantai* (recovering the cows from the enemy's state), *nocci* (recovering the fort from the enemy), *potuviyal* (moral advice to the king and to the people), the *kaikilai* (one-sided love), and *peruntinai* (the mismatched love). While mostly these poems are talking about war and battles, they also do not neglect to provide us with sufficient sources for the study of the society.

There is one thing in particular to be noted in these anthologies. Whenever the poets wanted to express their gratitude to their royal patrons, or their admiration of the generosity and

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ This is on the basis of my own reading of the *Purapporulvenbamâlai*, the 12th century text mentioned.

valour of some chieftains, they did so through compositions on the *puram* theme, the theme intended for these. Besides this, they also made use of their poems on *akam* to introduce the glory of their patrons by way of comparison of regions or people, or by mentioning their mountains or forests as background for the drama of love depicted in such poems.

Now I would like to discuss various interpretations given by several scholars on the importance of this literature to study Tamil society. George L. Hart dates the *Sangam* classical texts in different categories. He assumes that the six anthologies in *Ettutokai*, namely *Ainkurunâru*, *Akanânâru*, *Puranânâru*, *Narrinai*, *Kuruntokai* and *Pattirrupattu* can be dated around the first and second century A.D. The *Tolkâppiyam* is dated later than these texts. *Kalitokai*, *Paripâdal* and *Pattupâttu* can be considered as slightly later compositions. The *Silappadikâram* and *Manimêkalai* could have been composed in 5th-6th centuries A.D.¹¹⁹

Zvelebil introduces the idea that with the tracing of the evolution of the south Indian literature one can see the concept of Dravidianism as being relatively unimportant in later times, for which he gives some examples of the growth of regional literatures like Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam literature.¹²⁰ He argues that all these literatures developed concomitantly with the growth of Sanskrit literature. They are no more seen as having a phonological relationship with Tamil. We could observe that Zvelebil was trying to relate the Sanskritic influence to the growth of Dravidian languages.

In fact, Zvelebil uses a pan-Indian ideological premise in his writing to trace the historical development of the Tamil literature in a particular landscape. He also emphasizes that it is important to appreciate the fact that Sanskrit literary works are an integral and intrinsic part of the literary heritage of the South and that Sanskrit was the language of learning and higher culture throughout south India, though, of course, to a different degree in various parts of the south and in different periods.

¹¹⁹ George L. Hart, *The Poems of Ancient Tamil Their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts*, OUP, Delhi, 1975, p. 36.

¹²⁰ K. V. Zvelebil, *The Poets of Powers*, OUP, London, 1973, p. 62.

Zvelebil says that we have to distinguish the following stages in the life of a text:

1. The creative act that is the process of the actual composition of a text.
2. The period of oral transmission of the text.
3. The compilation of anthologies of texts.
4. The redaction, i.e. the editing and codification of the anthologies.
5. The stage of commenting upon the texts; the composition of commentaries and super-commentaries.
6. The critical edition or at least the preparation of a modern edition, which is many centuries after the composition.¹²¹

Kailasapathy in his work on Tamil heroic poetry tries to apply the comparative method to the study of early Tamil poetry by contrasting and comparing it with Homeric poetry, showing that both reflect the conditions of the so-called Heroic Age.¹²² The source of his work is the *Sangam* classics in which he has included the *Tolkâppiyam* also. He rightly points out the fact that the *akam* (inner) and *puram* (outer) poems are not mutually exclusive. He has included the materials found in the invocatory passages of the anthologies in his discussions, the reason being that although they are of later times, they “might have drawn materials coming down from earlier times”.¹²³ He makes comparison of the situations in Tamil kingdoms with those found in Greek and Celtic traditions. Also, when he discusses the thematic arrangements of Tamil poems, he draws parallels from Welsh, Greek and Irish poems. His classification of different types of bards and their functions and his comparison of them with minstrels mentioned in the *Odyssey* are very informative and interesting. The most important elements of oral poetry are the formulae and meter. Formulae are a recurrent element in narration or description, which is restricted by metrical considerations. These are fully discussed and brought out by the author from Tamil evidences.

¹²¹Ibid, p. 87.

¹²² K. Kailasapathy, *Tamil Heroic Poetry*, OUP, Delhi, 1968, p 57.

¹²³Ibid, p. 65.

Father Xavier S. Thaninayagam says, “Literature is a fragment of a fragment; of all that ever happened or has been said, but a fraction has been written, and of this but little is extant.”¹²⁴ He comments that Tamil like Greek and Latin had unfortunately lost the vast portion of its ancient literature, but while Greek and Latin had a vast corpus still in the form of dramas, epics, and historical writings, etc., it is only the bardic poetry of ancient Tamil that has survived. What little has been found, reveals an originality and freshness and throws light on the history of a portion of the world at the time of Asoka, or Alexander, or Augustus, when it would not be enough to take account only of Greek, Latin, Sanskrit and Chinese sources.¹²⁵

As far as dating is concerned, he suggests that the composition of the literature cannot be fixed later than the third century before Christ. It describes the conventions which regulate the two-fold classification of Tamil poetry, namely, “Love poetry and all that is not love poetry” (*akam, puram*), the landscape, the seasons, the hours appropriate to each aspect and emotion of love; the trees and flowers which are symbolic of different landscapes or strategic movements; in short, how nature is to be framed as the background of human behaviour and emotions in poetry.¹²⁶ He reads the information about the *Sangam* assemblies literally and concluded that the poetry belonging to the age before and immediately after the composition of *Tolkâppiyam* has not come down to us. What have reached us are the ten idylls (*Pattuppâttu*) and the eight anthologies (*Ettuttokai*) which are collections of poems composed after *Tolkâppiyam* by various poets, most of whom belonged to one single epoch. Most of this poetry was composed before the second century A.D.

He sees these poems as presenting faithful portraits of the social, economic, political, and literary state of the Tamil country in the two centuries before and after Christ. He also sees the *Tolkâppiyam* as the key text that prescribes nature as the background of the *Sangam* poetry.¹²⁷

The ten idylls contain lengthy and picturesque descriptions of the Tamil country and its seasons. Most of them are in the form of *ârruppatai*, a literary device by which a bard or a

¹²⁴ Father Xavier S. Thaninayagam, *Ancient Tamil Literature from the Introduction to Landscape and Poetry*, Publisher, year?, 1966, p. 61.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

minstrel who has received bountiful gifts from some wealthy patron is supposed to direct another to the same patron.¹²⁸ This gives the occasion to the poet, among other topics, to describe in great detail the natural beauty, fertility, and resources of the territory, which has to be traversed to reach the palace of the patron. These poems, which are in the nature of guidebooks and travelogues, adopt a more credible and realistic device than those Tamil poems of a later age, which utilize inanimate objects like the cloud and the wind as messengers, or the media of poetic observation. The *ârruppatai* is an example of Tamil realism according to Thaninayagam and describes the journey as experienced by a human traveler.

Each of the ten idylls contains passages relevant to the theme of nature. The first poem on the god, Murukan, contains descriptions of the natural beauty of spots most loved by him, of his immanent presence in nature, and of the flowers, trees and animals sacred to him. Minute and interesting descriptions of the hill country, of the dawn and the setting in of evening, and of the close life of the people with nature, occur in *Malaipatukatâm* and Kapilar's famous *Kurincippâttu*.¹²⁹ Few passages can rival the description of the north wind and its effects, and the interplay of human emotions and sentiments as found in *Netunalvatai*. The conventional regions of the Chola and Pandya kingdoms, the Kaveri and Vaigai which water them, and regional fusion (*tinaimayakkam*) are faithfully portrayed in the other poems, which are intentionally panegyric. The greatness of a sovereign was assessed also by the fertility and the diversity of regions found within his kingdom and, therefore, descriptions of the landscapes of the territory of a sovereign often form an integral part of laudatory and heroic verse.¹³⁰

The poems contain descriptions of nature made by lovers regarding such objects as the cloud; the wind, the moon and the sea, but the most precious part of the poems of the anthology is the highly artistic expressions of feminine love sentiment. The *Paripâdal*, another anthology consisting of long odes of a special metre and meant to be sung to the accompaniment of stringed instruments, consists partly of devotional odes to Murukan and Tirumâl, and partly of poems exclusively on the Vaigai river and the water-sports connected with the festivals celebrated around its banks after the monsoon rains. The natural scenery in which the religious shrines are

¹²⁸Ibid, p. 76.

¹²⁹ Father Xavier S. Thaninayagam, *Ancient Tamil Literature from the Introduction to Landscape and Poetry*, 1966, p. 85.

¹³⁰ Ibid, p.106.

located are praised in a devotee's language of love and rapture in the devotional odes, while the odes on the Vaigai contain abundant descriptions of the birth of the river, and its rapid and sometimes devastating progress amidst scenes of natural loveliness. They contain also protestations of almost a human affection on the part of the poets for the river that confers beauty, fertility and prosperity to the city and the kingdom of Madurai. Thaninayagam brings home to us that in our reading of the *Sangam* poetry, we must not overlook the fact that though human emotions form the primary subject of these anthologies, it is the human emotions of a people who lived in intimate relationship and communion with nature.¹³¹

Dubianskii's work on the sources of Sangam poetry focuses on the influences on the Tamil literature.¹³² Dating the composition of the poetry broadly between the 1st and 3rd centuries A.D., Dubianskii focuses on the *akam* (inner or love) poetry as documenting an 'idealized' vision of life in ancient Tamil society. His main aim is to see the mythological and ritual origins of the poems and locating them in a historical and cultural context. He focuses on the much-debated concept of *ananku*, which was first highlighted by Hart, referring to a kind of feminine, natural force. This force could be manipulated, Dubianskii says, by the bards of the poems who also functioned as important ritual functionaries in ancient *Tamilakam*.¹³³ He then discusses at length the possible mythic and ritual backdrop to each of the five *tinai* (landscapes) of the love tradition, from fertility rites that he believes underlie the stories of Murukan in the mountain setting to the ritualized activities of lovesick women pining in the wooded pasture lands. Throughout, Dubianskii draws attention to the intimate connections among images of landscape, nature, love, fertility, and mythic figures, arguing ultimately that "there is a layer at the base of ancient Tamil *akam* poetry which stemmed from the lore of folk songs closely connected with various cults and rituals practiced in the land of Tamils from a hoary antiquity."¹³⁴

Dubianskii uses modern ethnographic data to substantiate his point about ancient Tamil beliefs and ritual practice by giving the example of the traditional singers of the Gond tribe and comparing them with the *Sangam* images of the *pânan* [bard]. Some of his argument is speculative, as he has to move between historical records and poetic imagination. In such a

¹³¹Ibid, p. 110.

¹³² Alexander M. Dubianskii, *Ritual and Mythological Sources of the Early Tamil Poetry*, Groningen, Egbert Forsten, 2000. p. 33.

¹³³Ibid, p. 51.

¹³⁴Ibid, p. 56.

situation, how do we distinguish between archaic images and more recent ones, within the broad time span of the 1st to the 3rd centuries CE. Also, can we take the descriptions in poetry as representing the historical reality?

Herman Tieken presents a completely radical and new interpretation of the *Sangam* poetry.¹³⁵ He rejects the commonly held view that the poetry was composed in the early centuries of the Common Era. He is of the opinion that this literature was composed during the time of the Pandya kings in their court in Madurai, and it is due to this that he refers to it as the court or *kāvya* literature. Given the pushing back of this date, Tieken also presents the view that we should reconsider the dating of the devotional or *bhakti* poetry.

Tieken argues that the Prakrit text *Sattasaî* ascribed to Hâla shows the world-view of the urban elite who disparage and look down upon the life of the rural folk. He sees a similar tendency in the *Sangam* poetry on *akam* or love themes. As far as the *puram* themes are concerned, Tieken sees these as creative outpourings rather than as reflecting real historical moments in the lives of Tamil heroes. The impoverished bards themselves were not a part of this world, and inhabit the poetry to serve as a contrast to the superior *puram* poets. Another point of departure between Tieken and the established historiography is that he sees the poetry as written at the time of composition – in other words that it is not an oral tradition that gets recorded at a later point of time. This composition of the *Sangam* poetry was to suit the requirements of the newly ascendent Pandya state. Similarly, he sees the *bhakti* poetry as presenting an image of the Tamil language as a counterpoint to Sanskrit at the end of the first millennium of the Common Era. There is obviously a lot more evidence that will have to be found before we can accept Tieken's dating. Secondly, he sees the corpus as a unified, homogenous one, which is also clearly not borne out by the evidence.

Various Historical Approaches to the Study of Society and the *Sangam* society:

In this part we would put forward the historical paradigms of the scholars who have looked at the study of society and we would also locate various visions on the *Sangam* society.

¹³⁵ Herman Tieken, *Kāvya in South India: Old Tamil Cankam Poetry*, Egbert Forstern, Groningen, 2001, p. 27.

According to Karl Marx, social formation is to be viewed from two angles: 1. Simple, and 2. Concrete. The former would have depended upon individual possession of land or wealth, which would be manifested as simple relations among tribal groups. The latter meant development of the notion of the ownership of private property and the development of the master-slave relationship to the concrete social formation.¹³⁶

Prof. Romila Thapar says that Indian social history at the moment has one basic preoccupation: an inquiry into the precise nature of social relationships in the structure of early Indian society. Such an inquiry meets with obvious problems because of the nature of the literary source material. Attempts are being made at re-examining the texts in the light of our contemporary understanding of the theoretical model of the caste system or *varna*. These inquiries have taken the form of investigating a particular social group, for example the studies on the *sûdras* or on the *vaisyas*, or the interrelationships of groups in a particular period, or the nature of an institution known to other societies as well, for example, slavery.¹³⁷

She also points out that perhaps the most significant result of the work done on ancient Indian history so far is that the realization that well-defined phases of historical development are not uniformly applicable to the history of every society, and that the historian's interpretation should be the outcome of a search for the phases of historical development within a given society, which can then be analytically compared with other phases in other societies. This is not to deny the legitimacy of historical generalizations, but to recognize the variable factors and to demand a more precise definition of historical formulations¹³⁸. It is one aspect of what some sociologists have referred to as the process of change from *jana* to *jâti*. This process can be recognized in some sources of the early period but needs more detailed investigation. The argument that is sometimes made is that when caste society comes into juxtaposition with the peoples of the forest, there is a process of what might be called osmosis, where the conversion of the forest people to caste can take place, although frequently they continue to observe their kinship patterns, customary laws and religious beliefs and practices. As has often been stated by

¹³⁶ Karl Marx, *Precapitalist Economic Formations*, (earlier version of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*), OUP, New York, 1939, p. 37.

¹³⁷ Romila Thapar, 'Forgotten Themes in History', *The Hindu: Magazine Section*, Sunday, December 19, 2004.

¹³⁸ Romila Thapar, *The Past and Prejudice*, OUP, Delhi, 1975, p. 38.

historians working on the history of religion, new forms of deities and new rituals were possibly contributed through this osmosis. The osmosis could be an end product of confrontation or of juxtaposition, depending on the particular circumstances.

Nilakanta Shastri in his many works on Tamil history sees the *Sangam* period as a glorious one marked by great kingdoms, prosperous trade, flourishing cities and promotion of art and culture. He sees the evidence of brahmanical culture in this period in the Tamil region. He, however, as mentioned earlier, does not completely accept the idea of the spread of brahmanism as occurring only through the coming into the region of the *brâhmanas*. He sees trade and commercial transactions as also paving a way for the spread of brahmanical influence from the north in the Tamil speaking region. He also analyses that certain occupations directed the style of life in each physiographic zones. He carefully elucidates various land tracts, the people and their ceremonial life in his work.

Regarding the religion, he distinguishes the fertility cult practices and analyzes them by comparing them with the brahmanical religion. Accordingly, the following gods and goddesses based on the landscape in the *Sangam* descriptions: *kurunji* - *Seyôn*, *mullai* - *Mâyôn*, *marudam* - *Vêndan*, *neytâl* - *Varunan* and *pâlai* - *Korravai* are identified. He co-relates some of these with the brahmanical gods and goddesses. So he clearly points out that the brahmanical religion had been influencing the Tamil society and had affected the indigenous fertility cults, which the people were already familiar with, and practicing in their daily life.

Champakalakshmi's perspective on the *Sangam* society is different from the earlier generation of scholars. While her focus mainly was on the rise and growth of trade and commerce in south India, she uses archeological and literary sources for the study of social diversification in the *Sangam* age.¹³⁹ She speculates that social relations prevailed on the basis of reciprocal relations according to the productive forces of each ecological zone.¹⁴⁰ The nature of the society was pastoral cum agricultural. She calls the nature of this age as representing a rural-

¹³⁹ R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology, and Urbanization: South India 300 B.C. to A.D. 1300*, OUP, Delhi, 1986, p. 14.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 22.

urban continuum.¹⁴¹ Furthermore, there was no evidence that *varna* classification of the society prevailed; there was only the evidence that priestly *brâhmanas* possessed high status in the society, which could be found mentioned in texts like the *Tolkâppiyam* a grammatical work of that period.¹⁴²

She analyzes the growth of urban centers and its linkage to the social relations in a broad manner. She refers to the transactional networks amongst the *tinai* as indicating the primitive value of goods transactions. In her view, trade and urbanization were the reason for larger social changes being visible in the *Sangam* age. This is manifested in the changes that occurred in the *neytâl* and *marutamtinai*s compared to the other *tinai*s, seen in the large urban centers that developed in these zones such as Madurai, Puhar and Uraiyur.¹⁴³ She also analyzes the influence of Jainism and Buddhism in the growth of urban centers. The heterodox sects had also paved a way for social stratification in the later period. She concludes that polity, economy and society had their own differential transitions in different periods in the various *tinai*.¹⁴⁴

Kesavan Veluthat completely denies the European notion of periodizing Indian history on the basis of communal classifications. At the same time, he does not agree with the concept of providing uniform periodization to the entire sub-continent. He speculates that each region of India had its own change depending on the transition based on the state of human affairs and the mode of production.¹⁴⁵ So in this way, Veluthat periodizes the history of the Tamil south in terms of the early historical period represented by the Tamil anthologies in the *Sangam* corpus (c. 300 BCE – 300 CE), the transitional period which has been conventionally referred to as the Kalabhra period (c. 300 – 600 CE), and the early medieval period represented by the epigraphic sources and the *bhakti* and court literature (c. 600- 1300 CE). This broadly sums up the time frame used by scholars today.

¹⁴¹Ibid, p. 183.

¹⁴² R. Champakalakshmi, *Urbanisation in South India: The Role of Ideology and Polity*, Social Scientist, Vol. 15, No. 8/9. (Aug. -Sep., 1987), p. 74.

¹⁴³ R. Champakalakshmi, *Urbanization in South India: The Role of Ideology and Polity*, Social Scientist, Vol. 15, No. 8/9. (Aug. -Sep., 1987), pp. 67-78.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid .

¹⁴⁵ Kesavan Veluthat, 'The South Indian Experience in Early Medieval Transition', paper presented at the seminar *Revisiting Transitions*, Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2007, p. 1.

While critiquing the scholarly works on the *Sangam* age by Kanakasabai, N. Subramanian and others, he locates his vision on the social relations in terms of *tinai*. He sees each social category of the respective *tinai*s had evolved from their respective forms of productions. He characterizes it largely as a pastoral and agricultural society like Champakalakshmi, though plunder and raid prevailed as the major activities. In terms of mode of production, the *marutam* and *neytâltinai* played a prominent role in redefining productive relations. But the subsistence production was what largely prevailed. He says that there was the rise of urban centers brought forth by external stimuli of trade and commercial activities. There was trade transactional relations that prevailed between south India and the Gangetic valley, proved by the presence of the NBPWs and other artifacts found in the excavations of south India. So, he denies the notion of the influence of north Indian traditions brought by the *brâhmanas* in the later period. However, he does recognize that the brahmanical poets had followed the tradition of the poetry recital of the bardic community of *pânan*, *paraiyan*, *tudiyân* and *kaniyan*.¹⁴⁶

Veluthat understands social transformation in terms of polity, economy and society being completely changed. The nature of the plunder and raid of chieftains was replaced by the monarchical order under the Pallavas. The reciprocity and patronage based on family labour was replaced by the unequal distribution of labour based on non-kinship ties. The equal social order was replaced by the social hierarchy based on *varnajâti* matrix.¹⁴⁷ However, he simply highlights these transformations in simple terms and does not consider the origin of *jâti* and causes for *brâhmana* land grants. However, in our view he has presented only the conventional analysis of the social changes as if they were a mechanic model. An interesting thing is that, he has talked about the need to study the *Patinenkilkanakku* literature, which were presenting the vision of social life in the Kalabhra interregnum. His analysis of *bhakti* movement also needs to be examined closely for our purpose.¹⁴⁸

George L. Hart's vision on the social relations in the Sangam society is on the basis of the analysis of the social interactions between two different antagonistic social groups, the Aryans and Tamils respectively. Basically he says that the social categories of the *pânan*,

¹⁴⁶Ibid, pp. 3-8.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid, pp. 9-16.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, pp. 14-15.

paraiyan, *tudiyan* and *kaniyan* were the indigenous cultural groups.¹⁴⁹ They were highly respected due to their influence in the royal court. The kings and the chieftains had respected and provided several gifts to them. Their musical instruments were given sacral identity.¹⁵⁰ But due to the presence of the *brâhmana* poets called *pulavan* their status was reduced.¹⁵¹ His motive of analyzing the social relations in the *Sangam* society is based on the pre-conceived notion of Aryan and Dravidian elements. However, he also argues that the Tamil and Sanskrit cultures were interacting with one another, where one culture had not dominated the other culture.¹⁵²

Gurukkal from his deep observation of the *Sangam* literature, brings in the Marxian conceptualization of social formation in explaining his understanding of the society of that time. The evolution of the society in south India is not a unilinear one, and was based on the ecological set up of the five *tinai*. Each of them has directed the people to hold some kind of occupation for their daily subsistence. At the same time, the forms of productions and the control of production was unequal in nature in the various *tinai*. But there are hierarchies based on the people holding their means of production, in that sense the plough agriculture and the plough-men in *marutamtinai* were considered more superior to other people in other ecological zones. The use of iron in practice led to some occupations becoming permanent occupations in the micro ecological zones.¹⁵³ This has been discussed earlier. Here, he points out the permanency of the occupations gives the identity of the clan, which is because the occupation was passed on from generation to generation. For instance, the *kollan* was the ironsmith and the *kuyavan* the potter and they became the hereditary occupation of these two clans.¹⁵⁴

He also says that the degrees of differences apart, the societies were structured by the dominance of kinship. In the *Sangam* society, the people were identified with their occupations. According to the occupations, the hierarchies were practiced with the chieftains on the top and other classes were the dependent classes including the *brâhmana* priestly class who were doing

¹⁴⁹ George L. Hart, Some Related Literary Conventions in Tamil and Indo-Aryan and Their Significance, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 94, No. 2, 1974., pp. 157-160.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, p. 163.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 164-165.

¹⁵² *Ibid*,

¹⁵³ Rajan Gurukkal, 'From Clan and Lineage to Hereditary Occupations and Caste in Early South India' in Dev Nathan (ed.), *From Tribe to Caste*, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, 1997, pp.158-159

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 154.

the Vedic sacrifices, and communities like the *pânan*, *paraiyan*, *tudiyar* and *kadamban* were considered as the superior and inferior according to their occupational role. The placement of a warrior headman on the *ûr* does not imply any fundamental change in the relations of production, since it is only superimposition of an extraneous right of appropriation. On the contrary, the *brâhmanas* as scholarly bards and Vedic priests who were also benefited by the institutions of redistribution and gift, brought about a radical transformation of the relations of production and conditions of labor realization.

N. Subramanian understands that the social and economic life in the *Sangam* era was not dissimilar to that of later times in south India. Communities with different origins, professions, income levels, and customs coexisted peacefully in a remarkably stable society. Barter trade and urban markets supplemented a largely self-sufficient agricultural economy internally; a vigorous, well-traveled commercial community conducted overseas trade. The spices, textiles, and jewels for which the Roman Empire exchanged gold were the same commodities sought by Renaissance Europe. If the parallels are striking, no less so are the differences. The author reveals ancient Tamil society to have been essentially a tribal organization which retained features such as an attachment to totems, and an active concern for things material, while absorbing some Aryan values. The brahmanical system of social hierarchy was adopted, but the caste system developed differently in southern and northern India. The *Sangam* Tamils produced a predominantly secular literature, reached great heights in the fine arts, but did not achieve the metaphysical refinements or mythological richness of Sanskrit philosophy.¹⁵⁵

The *Sangam* literature can be seen not only as a literary production to be taken up for analysis by the scholars of literature, but also provide a larger context for the keen reader so that they may serve as the primary source. They help us in reconstructing the history of early *Tamilakam* by providing a vivid account of the socio-economic and cultural condition of the people. Although social formation is viewed in terms of the domination of a particular characteristic, such as tribe, class and caste, the social formation of early *Tamilakam* has been looked upon by specialists as providing a multiple view. Within this, some argue that the history of early *Tamilakam* can be understood in terms of an isolated society that developed its internal hierarchies but whose society and culture was disrupted or changed by the coming of the brahmanical traditions from

¹⁵⁵ N. Subramanian, *The Sangam Polity*, University of Madras, Madras, 1980. p. 15-17.

the north. Some scholars argue that social hierarchy and social stratification of early *Tamilakam* was the development of its own internal forces. It had nothing to do with brahmanical traditions. I would like to analyze the social stratification from the view point of the margins, by reading the primary sources of the *Sangam* literature in the following passages.

I will try to locate the perception of the concept of *tinai* simultaneously with the identification of the social formation as understood from the sources. However, differing from the conventional interpretations, I will be looking at the identities attained by individuals and link it to the emergence of social hierarchies, while also discussing how these hierarchies emerged. I will be presenting my own understanding of the *Sangam* society along with the interpretation of several scholars.

The concept of *tinai* and the social formation

Tinai is a term quite often found in the *Sangam* anthologies, which does not have a uniform meaning; rather it's meaning and interpretations are varied in nature. For instance, *tinai* is the name of the food-grain that is cultivated in contemporary Tamilnadu. *Kurunji* is the *tinai* named after the flower that blooms once in twelve years in the hilly regions.¹⁵⁶ Similarly, other *tinais* are carrying the names of flowers associated with the region they represent. They are popularly known as the *mullai*, *marutam*, *neytâlandpâlai*. In another context, *tinai* is understood as the landscape and the physiographic divisions are of: *kurunji*, the hilly tracts, *mullai*, the forests, *marudam* the plains, *neydal*, the coastal land and *pâlai*, the arid lands.

One surprising thing is that we do not have any evidences about the *tinai* classifications in the *Sangam* anthologies, on the contrary, all the songs are classified into the above categories irrespective of whether the literary compositions are *akam* [interior] or *puram* [exterior] poems. But the grammatical text *Tolkâppiyam* composed by Tolkappiyar throws light on the contemporary times and gives us an idea about the *tinai* classifications and various definitions. Tolkappiyar does not talk about all the *tinais*, which we take into our consideration, rather, he focuses on four *tinais* for the interior poems. They are *mullai*, *kurunji*, *marutamandneytâl*.¹⁵⁷ For the *puratinai* Tolkappiyar mentions seven types. They are *vetci*, *vanji*, *ulînai*, *tumbai*, *vâkai*,

¹⁵⁶ The *Kurunji* festival is celebrated in Kodaikanal every 12 years.

¹⁵⁷ *Tolkâppiyam verses 951, Vazhviyaltinai, Tolkâppiyam.*

kanji and *padan*.¹⁵⁸ So whatever *tinai*s in these two categories we have seen in the present context, they are concepts brought forth by the later poets in later times. Nambi who is the author of the *NambiAkaporul*, and Buddhammitrar the author of the *Puraporul*, talk about five *tinai*s for the interior poems and twelve *tinai*s for exterior poems. For our understanding of the people in the *Sangam* age, we take the five *Akatinai*s into our consideration. Although Tolkappiyar in the *Tolkappiyam* does not refer to the *pâlai*, he gives a clue about the existence of the *pâlaitinai*. He observes, “including the *kaikilai* [one-side love] and *peruntinai* [uncombination love] the *tinai*s should be seven in number.”¹⁵⁹ So, scholars assume that Tolkappiyar is referring to the *pâlaitinai* as the fifth *tinai*. It is for the first time in the *Silappadikâram* that Ilangovadigal defined the nature of the *pâlaitinai*. He says “when the *kurunji* and the *mullai* loose their fertility, there the *pâlai* is born.”¹⁶⁰ However, when we generally discuss about the concept of the *tinai* in the historical context, we must take *Tolkappiyam* as our source material to understand the nature of the *tinai*.

Tolkappiyar gives two clues for studying the *Sangam* literature, that is, 1. *tinai* and 2. *turai*. The first has been discussed above. The latter stands for the way in which the poems were to be sung, in what situation, how the poet or the poetess was to praise the king, in what context the hero and heroine meet together in which land, what are all the topographical features found in the particular ecological zone; etc. All these come under the category of the *turai*.¹⁶¹ *Tinai* is a monolithic terminology, which is used for the study of the land and the people based on the ecological set up.¹⁶² But each *tinai* has several *turai* in their domains. Tolkappiyar also divides the nature of *tinai* into three categories. They are *themutarporul*, *karuporul* and *uriporul*.¹⁶³ The first focuses on the land and the time in shorter and longer durations.¹⁶⁴ The second discusses the gods and goddesses, food, musical instruments, birds, animals, trees, occupations and rituals.¹⁶⁵ The third focuses on the kinds of social and inner feelings of the hero and heroine, the family,

¹⁵⁸ *Tolkappiyam* verses 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, *PuratinaiIyal*, *Tolkappiyam*.

¹⁵⁹ *Tolkappiyam* verses 947, *Vazhviyaltinai*, *Tolkappiyam*.

¹⁶⁰ Subramanyam, K.N. *The Anklet Story: Silappadhikaram of Ilanko Atikal*, Agam Prakashan, New Delhi, 1977, p. 87.

¹⁶¹ *Tolkappiyam* verses, 132, *Tolkappiyam*.

¹⁶² *Tolkappiyam*, 132, *Tolkappiyam*.

¹⁶³ *Tolkappiyam* verses, 941, *Vâzhviyal*, *Tolkappiyam*.

¹⁶⁴ *Tolkappiyam* verses, 952, 953, 954, 955, 956, *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁵ *Tolkappiyam* verse, 957, *Ibid*.

etc.; their union, departure, waiting, sulking and quarrels.¹⁶⁶ So we need to refer to Tolkappiyar to be able to make sense of the *Sangam* anthologies. However, from the *Sangam* anthologies, especially from the *Ettutokai* and *Pattupâttu* songs, we come to understand the nature of the society, and the manner in which the people were actively participating in the process of social transformation.

We need to trace the evolution of the social structure in early *Tamilakam* based on the ecological-zones. We can also understand the social formation through the sequential arrangement of the *tinai*. The concept of *tinai* is understood now as part of the continuum with nature, a reflection of the physiographic reality of the five *tinai* as interspersed and scattered across the region. The people and products there, and the possible modes of human adaptation have generated ideas regarding contemporary economic activities. Taking *tinai* as micro eco-zones of given modes of human adaptation, attempts have been made to ascertain the process of interaction across zones. From the poetic specifications, we understand that some activities mark out a zone such as hunting and gathering of the *kurunji*, plundering and cattle lifting of the *pâlai*, animal husbandry and shifting cultivation of the *mullai*, wet-land agriculture of the *marutam* and fishing cum salt manufacturing of the *neytâl*.¹⁶⁷ The forms of subsistence adopted by the people are clearly linked to their *tinais*. In the *mullai*, *marutam* and *neytâl* the blending of craft production with other activities was also part of the means of subsistence. Leaving the primitive forms of subsistence such as hunting and gathering besides their extended forms such as fishing and plundering, there were four forms of material production, viz animal husbandry, shifting cultivation, crafts production and plough agriculture. There are several place names with prefixes of *tinai* names, for instance Marudur or Neydalur, which seem to be toponymic survivals of the past in *Tamilakam*. Similarly, we have ethnographic survivals of a variety of social groups across the deep south of the peninsula who figure frequently in the anthologies. *kuravar*, *paraiyar*, *vêttuvar*, *kollar*, *kusavar*, (*kuyavar*), *kaniyar* and *taccar* are the most well known examples of ethnographic survivals in Tamilnadu. This would show that the poetic specifications about *tinai*, people and forms of subsistence could be used as a framework to draw upon the socio-economic situation of *Tamilakam* around the turn of the Common Era to which the poems are generally ascribed.

¹⁶⁶ *Tolkâppiyam* verse, 960, Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ *Tolkâppiyam* verse, 965, *Vazhiviyal*, *Tolkâppiyam*.

In my own understanding of the Tamil literature of the *Sangam* age, the social formation in early *Tamilakam* can be classified as the primary mode of social formation. This is because the people in each ecological zone have depended upon the resources available for their daily survival. Though the chieftains were the authoritative mechanism for accumulating resources from the people in the forms of their daily livestock, they were distributed among the people again not based on a secondary redistribution system, but on the primary redistribution based on the existing social relations.

Economic motives and social interactions

I would like to analyze the social categorization of the tribal groups based on the economic motivations in each *tinai*. Also, I would preferably focus on how economic dependency makes the various tribal groups to interact on equal terms with balanced reciprocal relations. We would also like to know, in what way was the means and relations of production controlled and owned by certain sections of the tribal groups in each *tinai*? And how does it result in a dominant and subordinate culture emerging in the course of social interactions?

Basically, the physiographic zones are not like what we tend to imagine. *Tinai*s were not independent zones based on particular forms of production. Rather, we can see each *tinai* had been interacting with one another to avail of what resources were not available in their micro-regions. For instance, the *âyar* or the cattle rearing woman comes out of the forest to exchange her curd for paddy from the *uḷavar* [plough-men] and honey from the *vêttuvan* [the hunters].¹⁶⁸ On the basis of this, we can see that the balanced reciprocal relations were in existence in the various ecological zones. Furthermore, it is not surprising to see that *marutam* and *neytâltinai*s and their productive forces are dominant in the exchange scenario.¹⁶⁹ The *kurunji* and *mullai* are considered inferior to the other two *tinai*s because the surplus available from the primary mode of production is lesser than the others. However, the social interactions based on economic dependency among the five ecological-zones were not the only cause for the social stratification. Here, two things are being taken up for analysis of the reciprocity structure. The first is with

¹⁶⁸ *Puranânûru* verse 36.

¹⁶⁹ *Puranânûru* verse, 47; *Narrinai* 75, 153, 194; *Kuruntokai* 13, 35, 48.

regard to the exchange of substances among the individuals and the second refers to the reciprocal relations among the tribal groups.

When the individuals collectively went for the search of livestock, a headman lead the group while some members found the honey or other food varieties in the natural habitat. These would be collectively accumulated and distributed among the members of the group by that headman. But the surplus of the livestock which gathered from the nature which would be kept under the control of the headman.¹⁷⁰ So, in the process of the distribution of the resources, the headman was able to appropriate a larger share of the wealth. Here, we can see the relevance of the Marxian conceptualization of consciousness as “it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness.”¹⁷¹

The above extraction of resources by the indirect exploitation of the labor is primarily because of the lack of the consciousness among the people. This kind of social relations can be seen mainly in the *kurunji* and *mullaitinai*. In the *mullaitinai* the community based on clan ties had existed such as the *Âyar* and *Idaiyar*, who were the cattle-breeders. In a real sense, they were not merely the people who were supervising cattle but by controlling the cattle resources they utilized the labor of local tribes for herding and enhancing the cattle resources.¹⁷² In *puramtinai*, the cattle-raid and cattle recovery are meant for both *vêtcî* and *karantai*, the first two *tinai*.¹⁷³ Here the question that arises in my mind is who were the people who used to fight wars and battles? In what way was their labor exploited by the chieftains in battle and how was their labor measured vis-à-vis the resources that were plundered from the conquered territory? Evidence in this regard has not yet been found in the *Sangam* anthologies.

The situation is very different for the *marutam* and *neytâltinai*. Here, hierarchies based on economic dependency were clearly in existence. That is, the forms of production based on agriculture and fishing and mercantile activity strengthen one’s position. So, the accumulated surplus from the produce would be higher. In the *Sangam* anthologies the terms like *kilâr*

¹⁷⁰ *Narrinai* verse, 175.

¹⁷¹ Marx, in the ‘Preface’, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 43, 1884.

¹⁷² *Kuruntokai* verse 123.

¹⁷³ *Tolkâppiyam* verse 951, *Tolkâppiyam, Puratinaiyal*.

¹⁷⁴[land-holder] are confusing because we are unable to find out whether their position as land-holders was based on clan and lineage. What is clear is that the fertile resources in these micro regions pave the way for social stratification. As M.G.S. Narayanan points out “the social hierarchy come into being in the *Maruthamtinai* by exacting the labor and controlling the land resources”.¹⁷⁵

We can also see some evidences of the sufferings of the have-nots in the *puramtinai*s. For instance, *Puram* 35 talks about the poet advising the king that he should not lose his confidence in the agriculturalists by listening to the people of other states talking ill about his own state. It is not their fault that they have not produced enough livestock, but it is due to the failure of the monsoon and other natural calamities. The king had won many battles because of the people only; he had got more dignity because of them. They are suffering from the effects of the famine. So, the king should empower them now, it is his turn to rescue them. In another instance, *Puram* 22 gives the evidence of the poet advising the king that he should not be focusing only on continuous battles with other kings but also on the plight of the agriculturalists within his state and do something to improve it. Here, it is clear that the chieftain class had exploited the labor and resources of the subjects in their particular area. The land-holding class supported the king, and the laboring class formed the subordinate stratum.

In the *neytâltinai* two categories of people were engaged in productive activity. They are: 1. the people who depended upon the sea-resources for their livelihood;¹⁷⁶ and, 2. The people who participated in sea-voyage related trade transactions.¹⁷⁷ In the case of the first category the egalitarian social order may have existed, in the second category, the nature of stratification may have been more complex. This is because the person who was able to undertake the sea-voyages would perhaps have been given a more important place in society. Illustrating the first category is a *Puram* song, which talks about the transaction of the people who depended on the sea resources with people from the mainland. Here the fish, gems and sea-wealth of the former were exchanged for packages of black pepper and paddy in the city of Musiri. From this we can understand that the products of all the ecological zones were probably accumulated in the

¹⁷⁴*Ainkurunûru verses*, 73, 84,

¹⁷⁵ M. G. S. Narayanan, *The Role of Peasants in the Early History of Tamilakam in South India*, SocialScientist, Vol. 16, No. 9, 1988, p. 23.

¹⁷⁶ *Tolkâppiyam verse*, 979, *Vazhviyal, Tolkâppiyam*.

¹⁷⁷ *Tolkâppiyam verse*, 980, *Vazhviyal, Tolkâppiyam*.

neytâl zone where the first cities came into existence. More notably, the same poem describes the men who control the sea-wealth as bridegrooms standing in queue on the ladder. Also, the daughter of a man from *neytâl* is superior to the chieftain's daughter in the plains. She is the daughter of the heaven.¹⁷⁸ With reference to the second category, we have instances of merchants and even kings who undertake sea voyages and benefit from sea-borne trade. *Akanânûru* 152 mentions the ships of Tittan Veliyan bringing gold. *Puranânûru* 126 speaks about the Chera who led his gold-giving ships in the western sea.

In the *neytâltinai*, the *parattai* [prostitute] and the *talaivi* [heroine] are identified by scholars. Mostly, the *talaivi* is identified with the prestigious clan. However, the *parattai* is not identified with any clan.¹⁷⁹ So there must have been different sections of people who would have belonged to different social strata. Lastly, the *pâlaitinai* tells us about different kinds of social interactions. The livelihood here is said to have been based on plunder and raid. Mostly, poems tended to talk about the crude nature of people living in the *pâlai tinai*.

It is clear from the brief survey undertaken above that the social interactions and relations were determined by the nature of the productive forces in the region and the productive relations that emerged here over time.

Individual: Status and Role

In this part, I would like to find answers to the following questions. They are: How did the identity of an individual based on status come about? How did this identity and status make the individual exploit the social capital of another individual in the *Sangam* society?

In the *Sangam* literature, terms like *pânan*, *paraiyan*, *tudiyar* and *kaniyan* are used to refer to poets and bards. *Kuravan*, *Kurati*, *Vettuvan*, *Idaiyan*, *Âyar*, *Kiilar*, *Ulavar*, *Paratavar*, *Nodumbar*, *Maravar*, *Eyinar*, are identified with particular *tinai* and the dominant mode of productions in the eco-zones. *Kollan*, *taccan*, *kuyavan*, etc., are identified with the craft production irrespective of the *tinai*. The terms *vêndan*, *vêlir* and *arasar* are associated with the ruler or the chieftains. In the later compositions in the anthologies the term *pulavan* comes to us.

¹⁷⁸ *Puranânûru* verse 20.

¹⁷⁹ *Kuruntokai* verse 263, *Akanânûru* verse 384.

However, how did these various terminologies derive their meaning? If each term stands for the status for an individual, on what basis can this status be understood?

In the *akam* songs, generic terms like *talaivan* [hero], *talaivi* [heroine], *tôli* [friend to *talaivi*] *pangan*[friend to *talaivan*] *narraye* [the mother of the *talaivi*], *sevilitâye* [the surrogate mother], *kandôr* [ordinary people in the village], are used to fulfill the dramatic requirements of the poems. The question that arises in my mind is who are these terms referring to? What are their relations among one another? Is every character only to bring into focus the hero or heroine? And on what basis is their relationship constructed? How is their status to be identified?

The differences between the status of men and women are found in the *Sangam* anthologies, in both the *akam* and *puram* songs. Most of the *puram* songs do talk about the mother who praises the bravery of her son. There is the example of a mother who angrily says to another woman “if my son is wounded on his back, I would right now cut off my two breasts.”¹⁸⁰ In another instance, one of the *puram* songs brings out the dignity and the bravery of men through the sayings of a mother to another woman. A woman asks this mother, where is your son? She replies, he should be nowhere else except on the battlefield, because the cave knows where the tiger is.”¹⁸¹ Her womb is compared with the cave and her son is compared with the tiger. The *Sangam* poems suggest the lower status of woman in that society. A mother says to her son, “It is my first and foremost right to give birth to you. It is your father’s right to make you to be good man.”¹⁸² However, in the *akam* songs, women are given a more prominent place.

In the previous part I have discussed the ways in which the status of the people in the ecological zones are determined. That is the primary and secondary mode of production, which supports their daily subsistence, determines the status of individuals. The occupations of different social classes are associated with a sense of sacredness. This is not the same as the sacredness attached to a person on the basis of *varna* or *jâti*, which includes the concept of purity and pollution. For instance, the *pânan*, *paraiyan*, *tudiyân*, and the *kaniyan* are given an important

¹⁸⁰ *Puranânûru* verse 136.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, verse 42.

¹⁸² *Ibid*, verse 386.

position in the society. Because of their influence during war time in mediating between the king and the people, their talent for composing poetry, for recitation, etc., these communities are placed in the axis of resource redistribution of the producing communities and the kings. They are the people who are highly respected by all the communities in the society. For instance, when the king and the soldiers go to fight wars, the people first pay respect to the *paraiyan* and the *tudiyar* for enhancement of their victory by worshipping the sacred musical drums. Then only do they bow before their king.¹⁸³

Craftsmen are also given an important place in the *marutamtinai* and the *neytâltinai*. They are the people who basically help to enhance the food production and the surplus production and even the livestock. They are the ones who make the ploughs, the chariots and other essential tools. More often they are visualized as holding an important position in the *Sangam* anthologies. From the chiefs and the ordinary people they received precious gifts. For instance, *puram* 87 brings out the condition of a carpenter, who had been engaged with continuous work, making 30 chariots per day. Though the above statement may be an exaggeration, what we do come to understand is that the carpenter who is so much in demand would have been given great respect in the society.

The identification of the status of an individual was determined by a three-fold conception of the moral standing of the person. These are *aram* [morality], *porul* [economic life] and *inbam* [the interior life] which Tolkappiyar refers to on two occasions.¹⁸⁴ In the early verses, he mentioned these three-fold categories in the reverse order, in the later versions he places emphasis on the status of an individual in the order cited by us. Many of the *Sangam* poems highlight the presence of the *brâhmana* poet, *pulavan*, who controls the power and the resources of the chieftains by playing an important role in the royal court.¹⁸⁵ Not surprisingly, this acted as a counterpoint to the sacredness of the *pânan* and the *paraiyan*, which led to a decline in their status over time. However, what is interesting is that the *brâhmana* poets borrowed their style and genre of oral recitation and composition in the later *Sangam* period.¹⁸⁶ There are also instances when we can see them criticizing the earlier poets especially the *pânan*, *paraiyan*,

¹⁸³ *Puranânûru* verses 19, 47, 136, 206, 269.

¹⁸⁴ *Tolkâppiyam* verses 352 and 353, in *Vazhviyal tinai*.

¹⁸⁵ *Puranânûru* verses 273, 279 and 301.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*, verse 19.

tudiyān and *kaniyān*. An example of such an imitation is *Puram* 60, where the fact that the poet is imitating a song of a *pānan* is shown by his reference to the *virali*, a generic term for female *pānans*.

Furthermore, one has to look at the duties that they performed. The *pānan* was also charged with playing certain drums during battle.¹⁸⁷ The *kinaimakan* or the *paraiyān* would play the drum and chant songs.¹⁸⁸ Probably, he served as a sort of news reporter and carried the commands from the king and centers of power to the people.¹⁸⁹ He was charged with waking the king in the morning by drumming and singing in praise of his exploits, as well as with playing certain drums during battle.¹⁹⁰ The *tudiyān* also played certain drums during battle. In ancient *Tamilakam*, all musical instruments, and especially drums, were thought to be a symbol of magical power. In some poems, drums are actually said to have a ‘god’ residing in them.¹⁹¹ The king’s drum, the *muracu*, was fashioned of special wood from the bark of a tree, lined with special hide, and was struck to establish and keep strong the king’s ties with the sacred. If the *muracu* were taken, or if it were desecrated, its power would go out. Its importance can be seen in *Puram* 50 where a bard who, exhausted from his journeying from one court to another, enters a strange building and unwittingly lies down on the table from which the *muracu* has just been taken. The *muracu* is shown as imbued with the powers of the bard. The *Kinaimakan*’s task of waking the king is clearly a sacred one: a person of great sacred importance, such as the king, must be brought back from the other world of sleep by a competent shaman in an auspicious manner.

The function of the oral singers in ancient Tamilnadu was to assist the war effort and political institutions by utilizing their powers of imparting fitness and of keeping potentially dangerous magical forces under control. Because of this latter aspect, they were considered in later times to be of low caste as they were closely associated with magical forces that were also seen as ‘polluting’. This is similar to the conceptualization of the widow, the monstrous woman, the fisherman, or the leather-worker being considered as dangerous. First, it is evident that the reason the bards sang was not merely to give pleasure. The bards and their compositions served

¹⁸⁷Ibid, verse, 134.

¹⁸⁸Ibid,verse 135.

¹⁸⁹Ibid,verse, 185.

¹⁹⁰Ibid,verse, 162.

¹⁹¹Ibid, verse, 89.

an important function in society and were considered an important instrument for keeping the sacred order. The Tamil bards were charged with helping to keep things in order, in a state of fitness, so that potentially dangerous power would not go out of control.¹⁹² Their poems, therefore, were not addressed to the gods but to the king and the people.

The lives of the *pânans* and other bards consisted of going from one court to another, and singing of the greatness of the king for a reward. If a king liked a bard, the bard might stay at his court indefinitely. If a bard was not treated with due respect, he felt no hesitation in describing the king's lack of generosity in vivid terms, and hence in decreasing his fame and sacred status.¹⁹³ The bards, it has been seen, had the task of regulating certain aspects of the sacred, an occupation which they continued to practice even during the time when the *pulavans* became the dominant voice in the poetry. It has been seen above that these *brâhmana* poets, while they lacked the sacred importance of the bards, were also considered as vehicles for establishing the sacred fitness of kings. This position was derived not from their inherent status, as was the office of the bards, but from their talent. The poems show clearly that many kings strived to have a *pulavan* with a good reputation in their court. Status by birth had been replaced by status by talent.¹⁹⁴

In the *Tolkâppiyam* Tolkappiyānar quotes the term *aharsilar* [the people who are not qualified]. Discussing about this, he clearly mentions that these people are slaves and they are not suitable to be characterized in the poems as hero and heroine.¹⁹⁵ In the *Sangam* literature, the terms like *sevitâtaye* [the nurse to the heroine] and the *tôli* [the friend to the heroine] bring to the fore the question whether they belonged to the same clan and lineage as the heroine, or were they the domestic slaves in the *Sangam* society. This is because we find that invariably the *sevitâtaye* was the *tôli* of the *narraye* [the mother of the heroine] and her daughter is shown as the friend of the *talaivi*[heroine].¹⁹⁶ So there are no possibilities for the *tôli* or the *sevitâtaye* to be thought of as the heroines in the anthologies. Furthermore, these people were kept as a separate category having a lower status in the society. A reading of the *akam* poems will bring home this reality. In

¹⁹² George L. Hart, 'Some Related Literary Conventions in Tamil and Indo-Aryan and Their Significance', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 94, No. 2, 1974., pp. 161.

¹⁹³ *Puranânûru* verse 206.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, verse, 35.

¹⁹⁵ *Tolkâppiyam* verses, 969, 1001, *Vazhviyal*, *Tolkâppiyam*.

¹⁹⁶ *Narrinai* verses, 301, 302 and 324.

most of the interior poems, the *tôli* is being used as the means for the fulfillment of the *talaivan* and *talaivi'skalavu* [the pre-marital relations and the marriage by elopement] and the *karpu* [the institutionalized marriage]. For instance, the *tôli* is sent by the *talaivi* to inform the *talaivan* to come to a particular place at midnight.¹⁹⁷ To convince the *talaivan*, she conveys the sexual frustration of the *talaivi* to the *talaivan*. She also makes the arrangements for the elopement.¹⁹⁸ Nowhere else is the *tôli's* interior life visualized, she is merely the friend of the *talaivi* who expresses not her own sexual feelings but that of another, and is in fact instrumental in furthering the love affair between the *talaivi* and the *talaivan*. The hero considers her only as a maid who serves a certain purpose for the time being.¹⁹⁹

The institution of gift giving (*kôtai*) celebrated in the anthologies provides insights into the contemporary system of resource circulation. There are many references in the poems to the practice of accumulating the harvest at the residence of chieftains and to its redistribution by them among their kinsmen, bards, preceptors, mendicants, warriors and a variety of other dependants. The chieftains redistributed the resources as their gifts, though they were customarily bound for the act as part of their responsibility to the community. There were three levels of redistribution corresponding to the three categories of chieftains, namely: the *vêntar*, *vêlir* and *kilâr* in descending order. *Vêntar* were the chieftains of the three major lineages, viz the Cheras, Cholas and Pandyas.²⁰⁰ *Vêlir* were the hill chieftains, while *kilâr* were the headmen of settlements (*ûr*).

Redistribution at all the three levels seems to have followed a determinate pattern of social relationships, which evolved on the basis of kinship, as well as interpersonal relationships beyond kinship.²⁰¹ Bards in their poems claim to have received gifts of elephants, golden lotuses, chariots, gems, muslin and land.²⁰² These seem to be conventional motifs for praising the munificence of patron heroes rather than references to reality. Ordinary bards generally received some grain, meal or used clothes by way of gifts.²⁰³ However, scholarly bards (*pulavar*) including *brâhmanas* and warrior leaders (*Maravar*) occasionally received gold horses, chariots,

¹⁹⁷ *Ainkurunûru* verses, 286, 321 and 324.

¹⁹⁸ *Kuruntokai* verse, 56.

¹⁹⁹ *Tolkâppiyam* verse, 996, *Vazhviyal, Tolkâppiyam*.

²⁰⁰ *Puranânûru* verses, 301, 302, 304, 317, 320, 321, 322, 323, 324, 325, 326, 327.

²⁰¹ *Ibid*, verse, 24.

²⁰² *Ibid*, verses, 58, 59 and 63.

²⁰³ *Ibid*, verse 256.

gems, etc.²⁰⁴ Gifts of land appear to be rare at that level of polity and this point of time. Warriors mostly received cattle and grain that constituted booty chiefly collected from raids.²⁰⁵ Plunder raids were the instituted means for acquiring resources for redistribution and every chieftain had to organise plunder campaigns from time to time.

In general, institutions like marriage, family and the community are in the process of evolving in the *Sangam* period. Two kinds of marriages are clearly mentioned: the *kalavumanam*²⁰⁶ [the marriage without any influence of clan and lineage] and *karpumanam*²⁰⁷ [the institutionalized marriage, mostly manifested in the form of the cross-cousin marriage]. For the *kalavumanam* we have a few restrictions, which are imposed by the village community and the social relations. For instance, *Kuruntokai* 40 visualizes that there was no barrier like birth, family, clan, caste and community for the love between the young couples. In the same poem, the *talaivan* movingly asks, what relation could my mother be to yours? What kin is my father to yours anyway? And how did you and I meet ever? But in love our hearts are as red earth and pouring rain: mingled beyond parting.²⁰⁸

In the *karpumanam*, the situation is quite different where the hero and heroine love one another when the heroine's parents do not permit them to marry each other. The uncle of the heroine, in one case, comes to their rescue and arranges the marriage.²⁰⁹ In one poem, the *talaivan* [hero] who does not want to lose his lover to another man and informs the village people so that they can help him marry the woman he loves.²¹⁰ It is called *madalerutal*.²¹¹ But the convention of the heroine conveying her affection to the hero was not practiced in the poems dealing with *karpu*.²¹² At the same time, love between a married couple belonging to the same community can also be seen in the *Sangam* anthologies. For instance, *Kuruntokai* 31 gives an idea about the love between ordinary dancers in the society: "Nowhere, not among the warriors at their festival, nor with the girls dancing close in pairs, anywhere did I see my dancer. I am a

²⁰⁴ *Puranânûru* verse, 126.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, verses, 52, 53 and 54.

²⁰⁶ *Tolkâppiyam* verses, 1035, 1040, 1048, 1049, 1052, 1053.

²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, verses, 1089, 1090, 1091,

²⁰⁸ *Kuruntokai* verse, 40.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid*, verse, 64.

²¹⁰ *Kurunthokai* verses, 67, 68, 73 and 74.

²¹¹ *Tolkâppiyam* verse, 981.

²¹² *Ibid*, verse, 982.

dancer; my pride, my lover, - for love of him these conch-shell bangles slip from my wasting hands - he's a dancer too.”

Except for the royal lineages that are described, there is no evidence for the lineage of ordinary men through which we can trace back their history. For instance, *Purananuru* 66 addresses Karikala Chola as born in the lineage of the one who controlled the wind and set the ships on the vast ocean for sail. So we cannot determine whether clan and lineage gave identity and status to ordinary men in the society.

Women and social expectations:

In this part I would like to focus on the following questions: What was the role of the woman in the *Sangam* society? How did the concept of *kalavu* and *karpu* construct women's identities within the larger gender relations? Were all the women brought into the two-fold order of interior life in the *Sangam* society? Did patriarchy exist in the *Sangam* society? The *akam* and *puram* songs in the *Sangam* anthologies throw light on the role of the woman in different aspects of social life. Interestingly, there are 15 women poets who have authored *puram* poems. At the same time the male poets also talked about the condition of the women in the *Sangam* society. By analyzing both their visualizations of the condition of women, we would like to see how they differ from one another.

There is no evidence for the childhood of the woman in the *Sangam* anthologies. But there are several characters such as the *talaivi* [heroine], *tôli* [friend of the heroine], *narraye* [the mother of the heroine] and *sevilitâye* [the surrogate mother of the heroine] who are prominently depicted in the *akam* poems. In the *puram* poems, the woman is visualized as the mother, daughter, wife, widow, etc. In each *tinai* in the *Akam* genre, songs are defined according to the feelings of the heroine.

The two types of marriages/ relationships, *kalavu* and *karpu*, in my understanding are instruments to subordinate the woman to a man in the *Sangam* society. In the *kalavu* stage, the heroine is restricted because she is portrayed as merely a young girl experiencing sexual desire

and love, to be fulfilled by the hero.²¹³ Here the man or the hero is given greater liberty to move and meet the heroine be it night or day. But her family and the society restrict the heroine's movements.²¹⁴ She is invariably not the one who expresses her love to the hero directly, and even though she is bold enough to propose to him sometimes, it is through the mediation of her friend.²¹⁵ But in the case of the hero it is completely different. Once the hero falls in love with the heroine he goes and proposes to her directly.²¹⁶ In some rare cases, he also uses the mediation of the *tôli* of the heroine to propose his love.²¹⁷

The portrayal of the *tôli* in almost all *akam* songs reveals the fact that the *tôli* was given an important position in the interior life. As I had discussed earlier, the *tôli* must have been a girl from a slave background. While she is never visualized as the heroine in the *Sangam* anthologies, there are 842 poems where the *tôli* speaks to the hero and the heroine.²¹⁸ Totally, she appears in 882 poems.²¹⁹ In *Tolkâppiyam*, in the *kalaviyal* and the *karpiyal* parts, 68 verses refer to the *tôli* as not having the capability of becoming the heroine.²²⁰

Here I would like to point out that there are two kinds of exploitation occurring in the *Sangam* society. Firstly, the sexual capital of the heroine is shown as being controlled by the hero or the man in general. Secondly, the social capital of the society results in the exploitation of some women to serve the needs of others in the society. In the context of the slave girl, both capitals, sexual as well as social, may be seen as exploited. This is because of the control on the means of sexuality as well as the means of social productivity in the society. So when we analyze the condition of the women in the *Sangam* society, we cannot generalize and categorize them into one monolithic category.

There are several occasions where the woman speaks as mother, a political adviser to the king, etc. Many mothers in the *Sangam* anthologies praise the bravery of their sons as I have already pointed out earlier. As may be expected, elite women appear to have enjoyed a high status in the society. But this was not the case for women belonging to other strata.

²¹³ *Aingurunuru* verses, 201, 204 and 206.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, verse, 315.

²¹⁵ *Akanânûru* verse, 25.

²¹⁶ *Ibid*, verse, 33.

²¹⁷ *Tolkâppiyam* verses, 982, 983, 984, 986, 989, 996, 997.

²¹⁸ From my discussion with Prof. Thirunavukarasu, A tamil teacher in Pondicherry University, on *Puranânûru*.

²¹⁹ *Akanânûru* verse, 118.

²²⁰ *Ibid*, verse, 123.

The question of prostitution and its institutionalization by patriarchy is an interesting one for the readers of the *Sangam* anthologies. In the poems, there is evidence of prostitution both in the *marudam* and the *neydaltinai*s. For instance, a hero in a poem undertook sea voyage for economic gains.²²¹ When he returns to his place, he does not go directly to the house of the heroine but to the *parataiyar*'s [prostitute] house where he would fritter away all his wealth. When the heroine comes to know that her hero is there in the prostitute's house, she sends her friend to convince him to come back to their house. After some time, he returns to her and she accepts him back without saying anything.²²² This is called *pirivunimitam* [the reunion after the departure].²²³ Not only that, he also praised the taste of the prostitute to the heroine.²²⁴ In the *Sangam* society, two terms dealing with sexuality can be used to understand social perceptions. They are *paratamaiolukkam*²²⁵ [the association with prostitute as socially desirable] and *sorampotal* [the heroine having sexual relations with another man is called a humiliation].²²⁶

Puram 261 visualizes the condition of the widow in the *Sangam* society. In this poem, a husband was killed in battle and then a hero-stone was erected there in his memory. The people of the village shave the widow's head while she is crying over her partner's death. The society compels her to live alone even though she is *vidalaiparuvam* or below the age of twelve.

Emergence of a new social hierarchy

In this part, I would like to analyze how external social factors bring about the transition to a new social hierarchy in the *Sangam* society. More specifically, I wish to examine the establishment of the brahmanical social hierarchy in the region through the study of the literary traditions and the manner in which the indigenous Tamil speaking groups were being absorbed into the brahmanical social hierarchy.

First, *brâhmanas* started institutionalizing education in the society for specific communities. That is, the resources of knowledge and education were now in the hands of the

²²¹ *Aingurunuru* verse, 105.

²²² *Ibid*, verse, 58.

²²³ *Ibid*, verse, 153, *Kurunthokai* verse, 62.

²²⁴ *Akanânûru* verse, 122.

²²⁵ *Ainkurunuru* verses, 63, 87, 132, *Kuruntokai* verses, 381, 435.

²²⁶ *Narrinai* verses, 86, 162, 362.

brâhmanas. In *puram* 183, the emergence of social hierarchies in the society determining access to education and knowledge can be seen. A woman belonging to the bardic community says to her son that he should respect the *uyarntôr* or educated men who are the only ones fit to study. She questions him about his paying respect to his elder brother. Instead, she tells him to show greater respect for the *uyarntôr*. Thus, it appears that the presence of the *brâhmanas* coincided with the hierarchizing of the society through the monopoly over knowledge and education by the upper classes. Not only that there are many occasions where the *pânan*, *paraiyan*, *tudiyar* and *kaniyan* are referred to as not being settled and steady, as they moved from place to place in praise of different kings, by the *pulavans*. This seems to indicate the process of marginalization of the bardic tradition.

One more thing is that the brahmanical marriage system was getting institutionalized. In *Tolkâppiyam*, when Tolkappiyar refers to the *kalavumanam*, he says that this form is not part of the *maraiyôrmanam* [the 8 types of marriages in the brahmanical tradition].²²⁷ In the later versions of the poems, we can also see the influence of the brahmanical ceremonies on the marriage practices, mostly with regard to the royal chieftain's households. The *brâhmanas* introduced bride price, *manakotai*, on the occasion of marriage.²²⁸ In the *Tolkâppiyam*, there are two kinds of marriages found: 1. A man from a high status family marries a woman of lower status; 2. the man from a lower status family marries a woman of high status.²²⁹ But there is no evidence found for the arrangement of the eight types of marriage mentioned in the *Tolkâppiyam*. However in the *Sangam* society, the marriage with the *brâhmana* priest [*Aiyar*] is always considered as the most prestigious.²³⁰

From the later verses of the *Tolkâppiyam*, one can actually get the evidence of the influence of the brahmanical order on the social system. That is, just as Magasthenes referred to seven social categories, Tolkappiyar is also pointing out that the brahmanical social influence led to the elaboration of seven occupational orders in the Tamil region. They are 1. the *brâhmana* priest, 2. the king, 3. the merchant, 4. the peasant, 5. the sculptors, 6. the chariot-pullers, and 7.

²²⁷ *Tolkâppiyam* verse, 1092, *Kalaviyal, Tolkâppiyam*.

²²⁸ *Ibid*, verse, 1142, *Karpiyal, Tolkâppiyam*.

²²⁹ *Ibid*, verse, 1142, *Karpiyal, Tolkâppiyam*.

²³⁰ *Ibid*, verse, 1141, *Karpiyal, Tolkâppiyam*.

the bards and singers.²³¹ Since Megasthenes compares Indian society with the Greek Slave society, his account may not have been as relevant to the Indian context. But Tolkâppiyar is clearly mentioning the pre-Brahmanical social system in ancient *Tamilakam*, and at the same time, he brings out the influence of the brahmanical social order in the same region at a slightly later point of time.

In the *Sangam* society, the people followed animistic religious practices. They did not have any dominant religious tradition. In the *Tolkâppiyam*, the first four *tinai*s have been identified with a particular deity – *mullai* with Mâyôn, *kurunji* with Seyôn, *marutam* with Vêndan and *neydal* with Varunan. In the *Sangam* anthologies, a goddess named Korravai is found in the *pâlaitinai*. The term *iraivan* is mostly used to refer to the king in the region. There is no evidence to show the dominance of the brahmanical religions. In the *Sangam* society, there was no concept of purity and pollution. The different communities were basically non-vegetarians, and marriage festivities as well as the victory celebrations after war included feasting on meat-rice. There was no *yajna* system followed by the people. The *yajna* [*vêlvi*] system was also emerging in the society.²³²

So given the above clues from the *Sangam* period, the literary evidences suggest that the brahmanical social hierarchies and traditions were newly emerging in the *Sangam* society.

CONCLUSION:

Historians have tried to trace the social formation through the classical literature. However, literature alone cannot be considered an authentic source for constructing the historical narratives. Mostly, the early literature was carried through the oral traditions. The compilation of the text would take place in some other time period, and it was often recorded in the written form many centuries after its composition. At the same time, one cannot negate the literary sources for writing history. In the *Sangam* period, the archaeological sources are limited to the Megalithic remains, and it is primarily the literature which is available to us.

²³¹ Tol1075, *Puratinaiyal*, *Tolkâppiyam*.

²³² *Tolkâppiyam* verse, 1090, *Puratinaiyal*, *Tolkâppiyam*.

There was a natural hierarchy determined by the *tinai* differences, depending on what the primary mode of production based on the natural fertility and resources of that *tinai* were in the *Sangam* society. The nature of inter-dependency of the *tinai*s allowed for balanced reciprocal relations among different occupational groups to prevail. Here, producing communities and the non-producing ones were accommodated with a mutual dependency. But we cannot call it an egalitarian society as the status of individuals determined by possession of wealth might have differed.

The question of the nature of *Sangam* society in terms of whether it was a caste society or a pre-caste one also needs to be reconsidered. The generally prevalent view is that the *Sangam* society was a non-caste and pre-caste society, which was projected by historians like Nilakanta Sastri, Minakshi, Subramanian and others. Their view is that the non-caste society of the *Sangam* age is transformed into caste society by the intrusion of the brahmanical religion to south India. The *brâhmanas* or the northerners were also shown as the patrons of the brahmanical four-fold *varna* system and who introduced it in the Tamil speaking area. M.G.S. Narayanan states that the society in early *Tamilakam* was based on kin-based and clan-based relationships, which resulted in a hierarchical social order. But it was transformed as a caste society due to the brahmanical religious influence, which brought with it the notions of purity and pollution based on occupations.

By denying the notion that caste was brought by the *brâhmanas*, Rajan Gurukkal says that caste was not a new phenomenon introduced into the *Sangam* society; it had already been evolving in the society. He substitutes a theoretical modification for the notion of caste society. That is, hereditary nature of the occupation, clan and lineage possession of the resources, the identity of the group and the community paved the way for an emergence of caste society. It was not because of the notion of purity and pollution of the brahmanical social order that *Sangam* society became a caste based society. He says that while the notion of purity and pollution may have been followed within their respective communities, it might not have affected the social categorization to a large extent.

From my own understanding, one cannot assume that *Sangam* society was a caste society or non-caste society. There was no unilinear process of social transformation; rather social stratification emerges out of the ecological determinism based on the primary mode of

production. So, while reading the primary sources, it was possible for me to distinguish between an individual, group, community, etc., based on the status and the social capital. In the *Sangam* age there were two stages in the making of the social order. In the first case, the productive forces and the productive relations were based on the accessibility of resources, which determined one's status. So those who labored and those who controlled their labor would have been mutually dependant, and the non-producing and producing community would have maintained a social equilibrium. In order to enhance status, the non-producing community would have provided service through their skills. But in the second stage, the earlier existing non-producing community had to confront other non-producing communities, which were newly emerging in the course of acquiring status in society. We feel that the brahmanical priests would have introduced the notion of purity and pollution, which they already inherited and practiced in the Gangetic valley. They transmitted these notions here to enable their upward mobility in the society through monopolizing the field of knowledge and education, ceremonial activities including marriage and the institutionalization of marriage. (However, the actual visibility of this process is provided only through the early medieval sources.) This may have led to the status of earlier non-producing communities to go down to the bottom of the society. Not only they, but their sacred instruments also were identified as impure. This leads me to think over whether the notion of an identity based on hereditary occupations, clan and lineage ties, and group, tribe or community bonds could have resulted in the displacement of certain sections and their replacement by others in the society as Gurukkal has posited? Or, do we need to see the notion of purity and pollution introduced by the adoption of the brahmanical social system as the reason for the evolution of caste society in the Tamil south? In my opinion, we need to consider both the external and internal stimuli in analyzing the evolution of an incipient caste society by the end of the early historical period in the Tamil region on the basis of the evidence from the *Sangam* literature.

CHAPTER III.

SOCIAL STRATIFICATION IN EARLY MEDIEVAL *TAMIZHAGAM*

An identity of the group of people living in a permanent place, having similar custom, cultural practices, life style, etc., is termed as society. Society is the spatially constructed entity in which the people who live in that particular society have produced a set of values. These values are not equally distributed and appropriated by the same people due to disparity in the society in the process of accessing the resources. Access to resource determines ones status in the society.²³³ At present, we could encounter various kinds of disabilities in the access to resource, such as caste discriminations, class struggle, gender bias, racial discriminations, etc., in the western countries; the white people do feel themselves racially superior to the blacks and other afro-Americans. Whereas, in India, the upper caste men discriminate the lower caste people. Moreover, it is too hectic to put it her that some categories of the people in the society in India do not even wish to touch the people and even to see the people. Both these two categories of the people the whites and the upper caste Hindus want to maintain some distance and through which they could carve out some status which they consider as high in the society. Therefore academic disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, political science, philosophy, psychology, do actively participate in understanding these problems and in creating remedies and solutions for these problems. In this line, history as an academic discipline has initiated historical enquiry to these social problems.

Historians in the present days, Based on the nature of the society, classify the societies into various types, such as egalitarian society and non-egalitarian society, caste society and non-caste society, stratified society and non-stratified society, primitive society and modern society, etc.²³⁴, each society has its own normative values. In the primitive society, the men had wandered from one place to another and appropriated the resources. He hunted the animals, fetched the fruits and slept in the branches of the tree and in the caves. It was the society in which the men had

²³³ Bonnie J. McCay, James M. Ache, and, *The Question of the commons: the culture and ecology of communal resources*, University of Arizona press, Arizona 1987, p. 153.

²³⁴ Sylvia Lettice Thrupp, *Society and history: Essays*, University of Michigan press, Michigan, 1977, p. 76..

appropriated the resources equally, in other words, it can be said that the nature taught the men to appropriate resource equally. But in the later stage, when the men started living in a permanent place, used the plough, produced the surplus grains, here they had not only been civilized but also developed with their cognitive faculty to accumulate the resource in an uneven manner. The uneven developments of family, private property, state and civil society in human life had brought some disabilities in accessing the resource in the society.²³⁵ As stated earlier that the disabilities to access the resource had brought social differentiations and subsequent discriminations, these social discriminations and social inequalities are mainly found in the stratified societies.²³⁶ They are caused by both internal factors and external factors. Therefore, as a researcher, it is my inevitable duty and responsibility to put it what definitions of stratified societies are.

Interpretations of the concept of social stratification differ from one another. The Structuralist school suggests that since social stratification exists in all societies, hierarchies must, therefore, be beneficial in helping to stabilize their existence.²³⁷ Karl Marx states that stratification implies that working class people are not likely to advance socio-economically, while the wealthy may continue to exploit the proletariat generation after generation. "The advancement in technology changes the structure of mobility completely".²³⁸ But scholars like Weber and his followers criticize Marx and point out at that social stratification is not purely based on economic inequality but is shaped by some status and power differentials.²³⁹

In India, the conception of *Jati* and *Varna* remain as stratifying force in the society over the centuries. This eternal conception, Caste controls production system, it determines ones access to resource, participation, etc.²⁴⁰, moreover, it is very clear that one's caste only tells us what kind of status he or she possesses in the society.

²³⁵ Thomas Sikor, Christian Lund, *The Politics of Possession: Property, Authority, and Access to Natural Resources*, John Wiley and sons, New York, 2009, pp. 25-36.

²³⁶ Ibid, p. 67.

²³⁷ Terence Ball, 'Marx and Darwin: a Reconsideration', *Political Theory*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1979, p. 473.

²³⁸ Thomas Sowell, 'Karl Marx and the Freedom of the Individual', *Ethics*, Vol. 73, No. 2, 1963, p.119.

²³⁹ Judah Matras, 'Social Mobility and social Structure: some insights from the linear model', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 1967, p. 604.

²⁴⁰ Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi, (Ed) Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Combined methods in indology and other writings*, OUP, Delhi 2002, p. 65.

Then the question arises, what is *Varna*? And what is caste? As Eminent historian Romila Thapar states, “In Hindu social order, *Varna* is a ritual status and caste (*Jati*) is an actual status of an individual.²⁴¹” Thus, all the Brahmin priests are identified, as Brahmana *Varna* when they perform rituals, though may not necessarily be similar in nature. Irrespective of their castes, all the rulers claimed to be descending from *Kshatriya Varna*. Therefore, *Varna* can be understood as vertical Brahmanical social order which puts Brahmins on the top and *Shudras* at the bottom. Whereas, caste is a horizontal division implicit within each *Varna*. Marriage, birth, heredity and hierarchy are common features of the caste system. Caste does not mean class structure. In the class-based society, the poor, one day, can attain the status of the rich, but a *Shudra* could never become a Brahmana in the caste-based society. The moment a child is born in the family, he or she gets an identity and status of the caste to which, his father belongs. Birth is a basic criterion, which decides one’s position in the caste-based society. It is very certain that the endogamous marriage relationship within one’s own caste sustains the purity of particular caste. One cannot marry a girl from outside of his caste. If he does so, he will be put in the *Sankranajati* (mixed-caste).²⁴² In the early historic India, we could come across various rules and regulations laid down by priests in the *Dharmasastras* and in *Sutras*, which strictly prohibits the inter-caste marriages. Woman was considered as central locus of the caste system that was believed to sustain the purity of caste and to provide pure offspring. That is the reason why mostly, the men from lower *varna* were not permitted to marry the women from upper caste. On the contrary, *Dharmasastras* tell us that since from the early times, women were treated at par with *Shudras* in India like the women and slaves in Greece.²⁴³ Both the women and *Shudras* were the property of the upper caste men. They were not permitted to study Vedas and they were also not given an opportunity to initiation of *Upanayana*.²⁴⁴ Hierarchy is an implicit notion of caste-based society. As mentioned before, one’s caste only decides what occupation he or she possesses. The nature of one’s occupation tells us what rank he or she gets in the society, which often stands as,

²⁴¹ Romila Thapar, *Interpreting early India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1992, p. 82.

²⁴² R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1983, p. 23.

²⁴³ Ibid, pp.27-32.

²⁴⁴ R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p.37.

determines in-built hierarchy in the society. Caste never provides any opportunity to seek upward mobility in the society except in few occasions. In the early medieval period, *Bhakti* or devotion came to be identified as an instrument of promoting one's status if he or she assimilated the prevailing tradition.²⁴⁵ Moreover, the fundamental legacy of caste system in the early India remained as to who could own the land and who could not. Thus, access to resource that determines one's status, was prescribed by the caste. But, in the modern era, the nature of caste and hierarchy changes over the centuries due to advanced technology, modern thoughts such as rationalism, humanism, materialism, etc. both eternal forces of *Varna* and *Jati* determine the kind of production system and subsequent social participation in a given area and in the given time.

Historians are keenly interested in analyzing how the caste system originated rather than how the caste system functioned and in what way caste sanctioned identity and status to individual and community. As a result, the readers to early Indian history could come across various theories on the origin of caste system projected by historians. Most of the theories seem to be either defending the caste or rejecting origin of the caste, which was peculiar to Brahmanism. Nevertheless, let us analyze few prominent theories regarding the origin of caste system speculated by historians in the recent centuries. Some feel that caste was an inherited nature of the human beings. That is, each and everyone had got certain qualities, for instance, Brahmins got teaching quality, *Kshatriyas* with fighting quality, *Vaishyas* with trading quality and finally, the *Shudras* got the quality of serving to other three *Varna*.²⁴⁶ Even though we are in agreement with this theory, how could it historically be justified? Before the arrival of Brahmin priests in the early *Tamizhagam*, everyone from the village could conduct ceremonies in the marriage, any could fight in the battle and anyone could become cultivators. Neither one's occupation nor one's natural quality determined ones status and rank.²⁴⁷ Those who wanted to defend *Hindutwa* garb and perpetuate Hindu social order might have propagated this theory of origin of *Varna* and caste. It, in no way provides a historical justification to the origin of *Varna* and caste.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁵ B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *The making of early medieval India*, OUP, Delhi, 1994, pp. 157-163.

²⁴⁶ R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p. 28.

²⁴⁷ Kesavan Veluthat, *The early medieval in south India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 45-49.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 51.

Few scholars believe that the caste might have originated based on the notion of purity and pollution.²⁴⁹ The people belong to each *Varnadid* some specialized occupation. Some occupations were considered as pure and others unclean and impure. So, the one who did clean job wanted to distance from those who did unclean jobs. This process of distancing based on the notion of purity and pollution might have led to the origin of caste system. Thus, the people who believe in the notion of purity and pollution have still carried this system. One cannot ignore the fact that the process of distancing undertaken by the so-called civilized people, in modern days, had expelled the tribal groups from their original home land, the forests and then they were given impure identities.²⁵⁰ But, why had this similar story not been found in other parts of the world? And why only to India?

Caste is often believed to have originated from the cultural traditions of aboriginal tribal groups.²⁵¹ Historians of certain kind tend to narrate the origin of caste system in this manner. That is, the primitive tribal groups in India had several clans and sects. The people belong to one clan did not have exogamous marriage relation with other clan. They also never used to have social intercourse like interdining with the people belongs to other tribal clan, which was considered as inferior to them. In the similar manner, the members of one clan used to feel themselves superior to members of other clan. These primitive tribal customs and traditions might have been transformed into caste when the tribal groups got sanskritized.²⁵² Here, again, the question arises: why had customs and traditions of other tribal groups in other parts of the world not led to the origin of caste system? Why only to India? Moreover, the primary sources often say that Caste was penetrated into the tribal cultures and then, they were sanskritized. Thus, castification preceded the Sanskritization. Throughout the history, we could come across tribal girls given in marriage to tribal chiefs from one clan to another.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p.73.

²⁵⁰ Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian social history: Some interpretations*, Orient Longman, 1978, p. 124.

²⁵¹ R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p. 33.

²⁵² Romila Thapar, *Interpreting early India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1992, p. 153.

The notion of division of labor and economic efficiency of individual and a community is believed to have led to origin of caste system.²⁵³ This theory had got some value in it. Because, those who got direct access to resource and managed it became dominant than others. At the same time, those who involved in primary mode of production were considered more powerful than others, especially in the case of cultivators and peasants.²⁵⁴ If we consider economic efficiency and involvement in primary mode of production as means for the origin of caste system, how could the *Brahmins* and the *Kshatriyas* who did not have any direct connection to the primary mode of production and economic efficiency, be considered superior castes?

Unsurprisingly, popularly accepted notion is regarding the origin of caste system that caste might have originated based on social differences which rose out of unending social tensions and conflicts and institutionalized form of unequal distribution of resources.²⁵⁵ When technology advanced with the use of iron, there was a possibility for rapid growth in the surplus production. As a result of rapid growth in the agricultural surplus, the society got stratified into various strata based on the means and forces of production. As long as there exists self-sufficiency in the production, there would not be any social differences found between the individual and communities. But, where there is more surplus, there will be more conflicts and tensions between the people in terms of production, accumulation and distribution. Those who controlled the labor and land came to be identified with superior caste and those who rendered labor were considered as the persons of inferior caste.²⁵⁶ Thus, we could see the similar story when we come across the transitional period from Vedic to post-Vedic era. In the Vedic period, people followed tribal and pastoral way of life based on egalitarian social order. Agriculture remained as secondary mode of production. Wooden-ploughshare dominated in cultivation and kin-based labor was prevalent in the production mechanism. Therefore, there was no possibility for growth in agriculture and

²⁵³Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi, (Ed) Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Combined methods in indology and other writings*, OUP, Delhi 2002, p. 192.

²⁵⁴Ibid, p. 193.

²⁵⁵R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, pp. 63-64.

²⁵⁶Ibid, p. 65.

there was no class division found in the society.²⁵⁷ Textual manipulations of *Varna* and *Jati* did not take effect in dividing the people under Brahmanical social order. But, at the end of Vedic era, wooden-ploughshare was replaced by iron-ploughshare. Kin-labor was replaced by free labor. Maximum amount of land track was brought under cultivation. Surplus production grew rapidly. New state emerged. Kings and priests gained prominence who tried to differentiate themselves from the producing communities. Centralized mechanism of food production controlled by the king let the people to become sub-servients of the king. The *Brahmin* priests gained prominence through their sacrificial performances in king's court as well as in the peasant family. The ritual supremacy of the *Brahmins* sponsored by the king had brought the textual manipulation of *Varna* and *Jati* to be penetrated in the grassroots level. Fundamentally, both the king and the priest to ensure their livelihood and to sustain their prominence in the society used *Varna* and *Jati*.²⁵⁸ To what extent could we apply these theories of caste in order to understand the caste and community in early medieval south India? Moreover, we should also look at whether caste remained as stratifying force in the society of early medieval *Tamizhagam*.

In the previous chapter, the study has been taken up to highlight the social formation in the early *Tamizhagam*. It is therefore, in this chapter, we would like to take up a larger view on the social stratification in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*. The period taken up in this chapter was from 6th century A.D. to 13th century A.D. the chosen area was the history of early medieval *Tamizhagam* which can be understood and studied by making differentiations and distinctions between the regional histories of the larger area. We would raise some hypothetical questions and resolve it by deriving the source from secondary reading of books and the primary inscriptions. The questions are what distinctions can be found in the periodization of early medieval *Tamizhagam* from the periodization of Gangetic plain? How can we understand the social transformation occurring in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*? As scholars portray, was the brahmanization or Sanskritization peculiar feature in the process of social stratification? Do we necessarily bring the application of Brahmanical concepts of *Varna* and *Jati* in understanding the society in early medieval *Tamizhagam*? What was the role of the state in structuring the society in early medieval *Tamizhagam*? What was the role of religious institutions in the process of social stratification? Did internal and overseas trade play in determining ones status in the

²⁵⁷ R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, pp. 65-68.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 93-98.

society? What was the actual structure of the society in early medieval *Tamizhagam*? How did the land rights determine the high and low status of the people in the society?

There are lots of inscriptional sources and literary sources available to study the society during this period. Stone inscriptions, copper plates, meykeerthies and extensive use of coins under the Pallavas, Cholas and Pandiyas would substantiate our knowledge to understand the social stratification of this period. Besides, we have enormous religious texts, which were composed and compiled during this period, which would give us possible clues to understand the nature of the society and its stratification during the early medieval *Tamizhagam*.

If one looks at the contemporary social changes in the Gangetic plain in the north we would see that it was quite different from that of the Kaveri basin in the south. In terms of polity, the Gangetic plain witnessed the decline of centralized states or kingdoms in the first half of the Christian era.²⁵⁹ On the other hand, in the Kaveri basin the transformation from pre-state to state began with the establishment of the Pallava rule in south India.²⁶⁰ From the economic point of view, the Gangetic plain had been experiencing the development of the feudal mode of economy after the decline of a prosperous monetary or market economy.²⁶¹ But at the same time, the Kaveri basin in south India witnessed the transition from the semi-agrarian or semi-pastoral economy to a full-fledged agrarian economy.²⁶² In the Gangetic plain, the process of revival of the Brahmanical religion resulted in the appearance of several sects and the gradual decline of the heterodox sects. However, in the Kaveri basin, the confrontation between Brahmanical religion and the pre-existing heterodox sects of Jainism and Buddhism and the secular social groups got intensified. It is in this period, according to Kesavan Veluthat, that the this-worldly, secular, materialist ideas of the *Sangam* period were replaced by traditions that privileged spirituality and ritual.²⁶³ In terms of architecture, the Tamil south saw the beginnings of structural monuments inspired by the Brahmanical and heterodox traditions.²⁶⁴

²⁵⁹ D. N. Jha, (Ed), *The Feudal Order: State, Society and Ideology in Early Medieval India*, Manohar, Delhi, 2000. p. 27.

²⁶⁰ Noboru Karashima, 'The Prevalence of Private Landholding in the Lower Kaveri Valley in the Late Chola Period and its Historical Implications', D. N. Jha (ed), p.73.

²⁶¹ R. S. Sharma, 'The Kali Age: A Period of Social Crises', in' D. N. Jha, (ed.), p. 35.

²⁶² R. S. Sharma, 'Fudal State and Society: The Segmentary State and Indian Experience', in D. N. Jha, (Ed.), p. 102.

²⁶³ M. G. S. Narayanan and Kesavan Veluthat, *Bhakti Movement in South India*, in D. N. Jha (Ed.), pp. 214-215.

²⁶⁴ R. Champakalakshmi, *Trade, Ideology, and Urbanization: South India 300 B.C. A.D. 1300*. OUP, Delhi, 1986. p. 192.

For the purpose of this study, the transitional period in the Tamil region that has been identified by scholars between the fourth to the sixth centuries, indicating the dissolution of the social formation of the early historical period and the progress towards the new formation of the early medieval period will be studied in three ways:

1. The transition from the tribal polity to monarchy – Scholars like Claessen and Skalnik would define a pre-state polity as one in which the clan and lineage ties determine the nature of power distribution.²⁶⁵ It has been shown that in the *Sangam* period, such a tribal polity was in existence.²⁶⁶ Many scholars have also identified state formation in the early medieval period in *Tamizhagam*.²⁶⁷ On this basis, we can argue that in this period there was a shift from the first to the second type of polity mentioned above.

2. Shift from material appropriation to material extraction – Champakalakshmi has argued that there was no rechanneling of resources that were extracted from the region, as the emphasis was on consumption rather than on creating a surplus in the early historical period.²⁶⁸ It is only in the early medieval period that we clearly see the production of a surplus, capable of supporting a large population of non-agrarian specialists.²⁶⁹ Again, the transformation must have been generated in the transitional period between the early historical and the early medieval.²⁷⁰

3. Transition from the local cults and belief systems to Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism – As discussed earlier, the *Sangam* texts reflect at least five cults that were prevalent in the aintinai, and many rituals and traditions.²⁷¹

From the 6th century AD onwards, as mentioned above, the landscape lying between mount Venkatam and Kanyakumari popularly known as *Tamizhagam* had been undergoing rapid changes.²⁷² Use of iron became widespread. New land tracks were brought under cultivation. Labor force was systematically organized to produce more surpluses. As a result, urban centers

²⁶⁵ Claessen, H. J. M., 'The Dynamics of Early State Formation', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 25, No. 4, 1984, p. 367.

²⁶⁶ K., Sivathamby, 'Early South Indian Society: The Tinai Concept', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 3, No. 5, 1974, p. 28.

²⁶⁷ Burton Stein, 'Circulation and the Historical Geography of Tamil Country', *Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1977, p. 10.

²⁶⁸ R. Champakalakshmi, 'Urbanisation in South India: The Role of Ideology and Polity', *Social Scientist*, Vol. 15, No. 8/9. (Aug. -Sep., 1987), p. 89.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p. 83.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p. 692.

²⁷¹ See, chapter 2, p. 37.

²⁷² Kesavan Veluthat, *The early medieval in south India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2008, p. 53.

rose up and trading networks had developed. Social structure became now complex by the interactions between little ones and great traditions. Caste became as an instrument of one's status and identity. Temples and assemblies functioned as resource distribution mechanisms. New tribal groups were on the verge of adopting socialization processes. State stood as coercive mechanism, which determined the land relations. Land relations and status of an individual remained as undistinguishable phenomenon. *Bhakti* movements of two distinct cults of lord Shiva and lord Vishnu attempted to incorporate the people from different social strata into Brahmanical social order.²⁷³ At the same time, it is presumed that some people got marginalized and secluded from the mainstream society in the course of interactions between different traditions as well as in the process of accessing the resources. Without any further deviation, let's analyze the process of social stratification that had initiated its pace by drawing picture from primary sources.

The study of social relations in early medieval *Tamizhagam* is very complex process. Because, the sources, which we depend upon, like donative as well as Meykirthi inscriptions, copperplates and coins, do not directly advocate the clear picture of the social structure to us. Yet, the inscriptions do give us clues about several social categories with specific names, their settlements, their participations in the public space, their social interactions, etc., thus, this study attempts to reconstruct the social stratification that had been significant process of the early medieval *Tamizhagam* by drawing possible clues from the inscriptional records which are datable between 6th century AD to 13th century AD.

In the inscriptions, one can get several names of social categories, which got its own significance in social relations. For instance, the terms such as *Brahmana*, *Vellala*, *Maruthuvan*, *Natar*, *Kaniyatchikarar*, *Palli*, *Urar*, *Vanikan*, *Kollan*, *Paraiyan*, *Pulaiyan*, *Vannan*, *Thalaikavalan*, *Vettiyaan*,²⁷⁴ etc., carry various connotations. On the one hand, some of the names such as *Maruthuvan*²⁷⁵ (physician) and *Kollan*²⁷⁶ (gold smith) are associated with the occupations that they performed. On the other hand, some of them such as *Urar*²⁷⁷ (the people of

²⁷³Ibid, pp. 67-75.

²⁷⁴ SII, Vol 2, No 4, p. 67.

²⁷⁵ SII, Vol 2, No 4, line 6, p. 62.

²⁷⁶ SII, Vol 2, No 4, line 3, p. 62.

²⁷⁷SII, Vol 6, No 4, line 4 and 5, p. 127.

Ur) and *Natar*²⁷⁸ (the people of *Nadu*) denote the settlements where they had lived. On the contrary, some terms such as *Paraiya* and *Vellalar* bear dual connotations. In the inscriptions, *Paraiya*²⁷⁹ are portrayed as both cultivators and the people who play drums. Similarly, *Vellalars*²⁸⁰ are depicted in the inscriptions both as cultivators and soldiers and ruling elites in the king's court. Then, the question arises: who were these two different cultivators? Was there any hierarchy prevalent in between these two social categories? Did their special occupations bear any significance in ascertaining identities and status? Moreover, the settlements belonged to different social categories had not been aligned in uniform patterns. Each settlement had got separate quarters, cremation ground, Pond, and each of them got segregated to their vicinity. So, this study scrutinizes the identity and status of an individual from the settlements. It further attempts to bring out the interactions between communities and their identities in the process of social stratification. In many of the inscriptions of early medieval *Tamizhagam*, one can get a picture of Idangai and valangai conflicts, which are frequently, portrayed as social conflicts led by two different social groups to ascertain their status and identity. Thus, this study attempts to understand to what extent these social conflicts were meant for acquiring identity and status of the communities and in what way these social conflicts stood as guiding force in the process of social stratification.

Forces of production and relations of production in a given point of time and in a given space condition the nature of the society and its evolution.²⁸¹ Particular technology determines the pace of the social change. Interaction between individuals and communities structures and restructures the given space.²⁸² Status of an individual is nothing but a kind of recognition which he or she acquires by his or her talents and it is some times granted by ones birth.²⁸³ Status is conditioned by based on the way in which the labor of commons is used in producing goods and service and the way in which accumulated resources are being redistributed. Status acquired by talents does

²⁷⁸ SII, Vol 22, No 5, line 24, p. 43.

²⁷⁹ SII, Vol 2, No 5, Lines 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13 and 16, p. 63.

²⁸⁰ SII, Vol 14, No 5, lines 3, 4, 5, 7, 8 and 9, p.27.

²⁸¹ Damodar Dharmanand Kosambi, (Ed.) Brajadulal Chattopadhyaya, *Combined methods in indology and other writings*, OUP, Delhi 2002, p. 37.

²⁸² Bonnie J. McCay, James M. Ache, and, *The Question of the commons: the culture and ecology of communal resources*, University of Arizona Press, Arizona, 1987, p. 291.

²⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 27.

not promote the status sanctioned by birth. Birth determining one's status is unique feature of Indian caste system. Caste does not permit one's upward mobility and it also does not upgrade one's status. Identity denotes the peculiarity of a community or group of individuals, ethnicity, state or nationality. It is determined by the nature of accessibility of resources and disabilities in it. Yet, sometimes, extraneous forces such religion and race play an important roll in sanctioning identity to certain community either high or low, either pure or impure, either superior or inferior. In the Indian scenario, a given identity to one's community through caste cannot be changed at all throughout history. In the context of social stratification, I strongly believe that both status and identity constitute substantial elements in understanding the manifestation of various social categories described in the inscriptions and copper plates. So, by putting the above mentioned presumptions in the forefront, let's analyze the social stratification in early medieval *Tamizhagam* in the following manner.

The river plains of the *Tamizhagam* had experienced under the advent of agriculture and its rapid intensification in the mid 6th century AD. Many excavations undertaken by archeological survey of India at various sites in *Tamizhagam* in the 1980s and variety of inscriptions including Meykirti as well as royal inscriptions bring out a clear picture of agrarian expansion on the plain land especially on the river banks of Kavery and Thamirabarany in the early historical *Tamizhagam* as well as in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*.²⁸⁴ In the previous chapter, we have analyze *Sangam* anthologies and studied how agriculture played an important roll in promoting social capital of an individual as well as community in the Marudham Eco-zone. Many Megalithic burials clearly show that the people were familiar with iron from 1200 B.C. onwards. We have also seen some *Sangam* anthologies especially *Agam* songs carry bearing information about ploughshare. But none of the archeological remains have supported it so far. But, in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*, we could see the extensive use of iron in agriculture. Moreover, many inscriptions talk about the use of ploughshare being dominant means of cultivation from 6th and 7th century A.D.onwards. Many land tracks were brought under cultivation. The system of transplantation of paddy came to be recognized by the people as an important art of cultivation. Not only the process of transplantation had reduced and facilitated the labor force,

²⁸⁴ Noboru Karashima, 'The *Emergence of Medieval State and Social Formation in South India*', International Journal of South Asian Studies, Vol. 1, 2008, pp. 11-16.

but also it had let the rapid growth in the agricultural production. Peasants cultivated various crops such as paddy, millets, serials, etc., thus, the peasants began to produce more surplus than what they were expected to consume. Subsequently, it let to the material exchanges among the people.²⁸⁵ In short, one can say that Distribution mechanism based on appropriation had been replaced by distribution based on extraction. Literary imaginations implicit in the *Sangam* anthologies or embedded histories provided by material remains of Megalithic burials were becoming assimilated as well as recognized histories in early *Tamizhagam* during these centuries which has been taken for this study.

Urbanization came to be marking a significant feature of this period. As mentioned above, when agricultural surplus grew up, definitely, there was a possibility for the transactional networks to come up for the exchange of goods and services. Later, they might have transformed as urban centers where the non-producing communities especially traders, merchants, artisans and service rendering communities began to live.

Many urban centers prospered due to acceleration in agricultural production.²⁸⁶ As we have seen in the last chapter, many urban centers in the interior part of *Tamizhagam*, Coramendal coast and in the Malabar Coast such as Madhurai, Kaverypoombattinam, Uraiyur, Vanji and Korkai, flourished due to the contact of people of India with outside world Especially with Roman world.²⁸⁷ But, in the 6th century A.D. both internal stimuli of growth in the agricultural surplus and external stimuli of trade and commerce let to the growth of urban and semi-urban centers. In early medieval *Tamizhagam*, urban centers grew around the settlements where political activities were taking place or the places where agricultural surplus were exchanged or the place which the people believed to be centers of worships. In the final case, the devotion to Shiva and Vishnu had largely let to the growth of urban centers, which mostly centered on the temples. New type of urban development began under the Pallava dynasty from sixth to ninth centuries A.D. they

²⁸⁵ N Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu, and P. Shanmugam, '*Nagaram during the Chola and Pandyan Period: Commerce and Towns in the Tamil Country AD 850-1350*', *Indian Historical Review* Vol 35-1, 2008, PP 23-27.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 32.

²⁸⁷ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Studies in Chola History and Administration*, University of Madras, Madras, 1932, p. 153.

centered especially in the capital city of Kanchipuram. Donative inscriptions at major temples in the capital indicate that religious institutions, especially temples, lay spatially and conceptually at the heart of growing political and commercial networks. The developments originating in the Pallava period came to fruition during the subsequent reigns of the Chola kings, when many areas of medieval *Tamizhagam* experienced the growth of small urban sites around temples. During the Cholas, the settlement of merchants called Nagaram functioned an important urban centre which involved in the process of transaction of goods coming from different parts of the region.²⁸⁸ As we often read from the inscriptions, many merchant guilds were formed among traders, which actively participated in money lending, overseas trade and they also supported state treasury of particular region²⁸⁹.

It was primarily due to extensive use of iron ploughshares and due to the emergence of new state system under the Pallavas that this material transformation had been occurring. Fundamentally, the state system evolved as predatory model during the Pallavas.²⁹⁰ During this period, the state was a mechanism, which had been dominated by the group of elite class; it had been consolidated by the conquests and coercive powers of those elite ruling class.²⁹¹ In other words, one can state that the dominance and hegemony of the elite class in the rural as well in the urban centers led to the early state formation in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*.

The king for wars and conquests were primarily drew the initiative from the advices and suggestions of the court priests. Wherever the chiefs made the conquests, the ruling class and its associates went and participated in the wars and battles and then plundered resources got redistributed among themselves. Once the Pallavas occupied Kanji, they had put up the conquered territories under their rule as feudatories. In the course of time, these feudatories got vanished. The dominant state got carved out.²⁹² Inscriptions do not talk about standing army;

²⁸⁸ N Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu, and P. Shanmugam, 'Nagaram during the Chola and Pandyan Period: Commerce and Towns in the Tamil Country AD 850-1350', *Indian Historical Review* Vol 35-1, 2008, p. 33.

²⁸⁹ *SII*, Vol 2, No 2, lines 35-42, p. 68.

²⁹⁰ Noboru Karashima, 'The Emergence of Medieval State and Social Formation in South India', *International Journal of South Asian Studies* Vol 1, 2008, pp. 12-15.

²⁹¹ *Ibid*, p. 17.

²⁹² A. Appadorai, *Economic Conditions in Southern India (1000 -1500 A.D.)*, Vol I., University of Madras, Madras, 1939, p. 139.

rather, they give us a clue about the participation of peasant militia in the conquests waged by the predatory kings.²⁹³ In the earlier times, the system of Regular taxation was not there. But certain amount of revenues was collected from the feudatories that likely seemed to be occasional tribute. But in the later centuries, regular taxation system evolved under later Pallavas it attained its height during the time of the Cholas. Mostly feudatories were basically local chiefs and village headmen. Inscriptions do often talk about the life of village headman. Since village was mere unit of production and interaction between communities, which functioned according to availability of resources, and requirements of the population, village headmen could not become a hereditary chief of the village and he could not extract resources for his sustenance as well.²⁹⁴ But, when the state began using coercive force in extracting the resources through centralized control over rural production mechanism, the headman of a village was forced to rethink of his subsistence and his status. Therefore, later he became hereditary leader of a particular village and this process also facilitated process of castification of communities along with Brahmanism. Unsurprisingly, the community to which this village headman belonged could have been evolving a new caste, which might possibly have been considered as superior as other communities. Thus, social stratification stepped into pristine village community.

As Kautilya says, the loyalty between the subjects and the ruler is more important than other fundamental seven elements of the state along with the king and his treasury,²⁹⁵ the rulers during this period had realized an inevitable phenomenon of loyalty. Basically, the rulers had ensured the relative loyalty from the commons by the process of giving land grants to the *Brahmins* and other ruling elites. Those of land grants provided to *Brahmins* were called *Brahmadeya* and those of the land grants given to non-*Brahmins* especially *Vellalas* were called as *Vellanvagai*.²⁹⁶ There were other land grants provided by the kings to the people who rendered their service either in the chief's court or in the temples or in the vicinity of village, which we will discuss in the later part of this chapter. As has been said above, each village functioned as an independent

²⁹³ SII, Vol 12, lines 1-3, p. 37.

²⁹⁴ SII, Vol 12, lines 1-5, p. 37.

²⁹⁵ R S Sharma, *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, 1999, p. 284.

²⁹⁶ Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850 - 1800*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, p. 32.

as well as cultural unit and kin-labor determined the forces of production in a given village. When the rulers conquered the territory, they took the control over the people and resources. Although the ruler had control over the people, territory and resources, the people considered him as stranger who did not have any experience of being subject to the state before. Thus, he had to build loyalty among the people towards the ruler. The rulers had done it successfully with the support of *Brahmins* who had both coercive powers by holding office in ruler's court and attractive power by holding ritual supremacy of Brahmanism. Around 10th century A.D., Loyalty to the Chola rulers, and the manifestation of authority, depended on displays of piety through religious gift giving. In this way the unification of the Cholas spread throughout *Tamizhagam* a political system in which religious donations were a means toward political integration and the establishment of local power.²⁹⁷ It was elaborately structured process, which can be understood through detailed analysis of the status and identity of *Brahmins*, and the process of Sanskritization. Who were the *Brahmins*?

In early medieval *Tamizhagam*, while the king was primarily a military and civic leader, his bureaucracy was drawn almost entirely from religion of the *Brahmin* caste. To maintain his government and army, the king held a customary right to extract land revenue amount about 33 to 40 per cent of the gross produce of the wet lands and 20 to 25 per cent of the dry. Varying portions of the revenue together with the management of particular villages, were delegated by kings for indefinite periods to the great Hindu temples, monasteries, colleges, hospitals, and ministers of state, or military officers. Apart from this, the revenue of other villages was granted to communities of interrelated families of Brahmin scholars from whom the bureaucracy, the priesthood, and even some of the army officers were recruited. As local land managers, all of these bodies were required to expand irrigation works, increase the cultivated area, and patronize crafts and trade. They formed a theocratic ruling caste, directly administering about a third of the villages.

The *Brahmins* were basically priestly community. They belonged to hegemonic cultural group who often seemed to be acting as agents of structuring Brahmanical social order in India.²⁹⁸ The

²⁹⁷ Noboru Karashima, *History and Society in South India: The Cholas to Vijayanagar*, OUP, New Delhi, 2001, p. 72.

²⁹⁸ Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian social history: some interpretations*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1978, p. 168.

Brahmins gained prominence both in the private sphere of individuals as well as in public sphere. They performed certain rituals for the veneration of the king and his kingship in the courts of the ruler. They also had engaged in advising the ruler during the time of wars.²⁹⁹ That was the reason why we could see in many inscriptions that Land grants were given by the kings to *Brahmins* In return to their service. These land grants can also be considered in terms of constructing ruler's loyalty and respect to the *Brahmins*. Each grant consisted of hundreds of villages. These land grants given to *Brahmins* can be classified into three types. They are 1. *Brahmadeya* grant, 2. *Devadana* grant and 3. *Agrahara* grant.³⁰⁰ Each of these land grants got their own privileges and functions. These beneficial grants of land were frequently subject to special conditions, connected either with the maintenance of the land that is, it should be irrigated properly or with Brahmanical functions and behavior. In addition, frequently there were restrictions on alienation, such as that the land could be transferred only to other *Brahmins*, or even only to *Brahmins* belonging to a particular philosophical school.³⁰¹ Let us analyze in what ways these land grants determined the status and identity of *Brahmins* in the following passages.

Firstly, the status of the *Brahmins* was upgraded by the *Brahmadeya* grant provided by the king to the *Brahmins* for their official efficiency. *Brahmadeyas* were basically individual grants and sometimes *Brahmadeya* grant was given to group of individuals in particular vicinity. They were, some times, tax-free grants. Yet, the *Brahmins* were not cultivators. They were basically people who held the land, left it for lease and collected land revenue, or they used to hold land and cultivated by the landless cultivators. In most of the times, when the *Brahmadeya* grants were granted to *Brahmins*, they were simultaneously granted with tenural rights over the cultivators who were constituted in the particular *Brahmadeya*. In the later case, there was a possibility, during this period, for the prevalence of serfdom in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*, which we discuss in the proceeding passages. Part of the revenue was paid to the ruler and the rest was enjoyed by the grantee. The Brahmana who received *Brahmadeya* grant acquired administrative, revenue as well as legal rights over the people and their

²⁹⁹Ibid, p. 212.

³⁰⁰K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Studies in Chola History and Administration*, University of Madras, Madras, 1932, p. 73.

³⁰¹Ibid, p. 87.

settlements.³⁰² *Brahmadeya* grants were actually described as grants or gifts provided by the rulers to the Brahmana priest who performed sacrifices in royal houses and most of the sacrifices performed by the Brahmana priests were considered to be in terms of veneration of the kingship. *Brahmadeya* grants were believed to be granted to those who hail from high Gotra and dignified lineages. Kasakudi copper plate inscription and Udhayendiram grant of Pallava rulers attach evidence to the nature of the *Brahmadeya* grants and its functions³⁰³.

These *Brahmadeya* settlements had larger impact on the prevailing societies. Prior to *Brahmadeya* grants given to *Brahmins*, these areas had different village settlements covering a large portion of wetland as well as semi-arid land. These villages had distinct land relations, distribution mechanisms and social structure. Communal holder ship was generally prevalent in these villages. They produced the grains and stuffs, which they needed for, and they exchanged surplus with people of other villages.³⁰⁴ Once they were brought up under *Brahmadeya* grants, villagers' communal rights over the land were questioned and finally taken over by the *Brahmins*. Inscriptions portray a kind of social tension, which broke out during this process of interaction. As a consequence, there rose few peasant conflicts in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*.³⁰⁵ But, they were not clear enough for us to understand these peasant resistance and conflicts in a proper manner. Since the *Brahman's* profession was performing ritual sacrifices and ceremonies, not only they could manage the land administration but also they could attract the people to become subservient to them. *Brahmins* generally did not plough the lands themselves. They either leased the lands out, or, less frequently, hired Labor. When *Brahmin* villages were founded in virgin lands, the rulers may also have assigned groups of agricultural laborers to them to clear and develop the lands. If the laborers were of low caste, they may have become serfs, but if of the higher cultivating castes, may have acquired occupancy rights in time. Here, extraneous factors such as Brahmanical religious discourse and coercive power of the state supported the *Brahmins* to look after their affairs in a given *Brahmadeya* grants in a peaceful manner. That might be the reason why the deprived sections of

³⁰² Noboru Karashima, 'The Emergence of Medieval State and Social Formation in South India', International Journal of South Asian Studies Vol 1, 2008, pp. 11-29

³⁰³ Kasakudi copper plate inscription, SII, Vol 14, and Udhayendiram plate in the same volume, pp. 3-14.

³⁰⁴ Inscriptions of early Pallavas provide us an elaborate picture of pre-brahmanical society, see SII, Vol. 9, No 1-20, pp. 26-135.

³⁰⁵ "Peasant resistance can be seen in the inscriptions around 7th century A.D.", see SII, Vol. 22, No 4, pp. 25-63.

the peasants under the impact of *Brahmadeya* grants seemed to have been silent throughout the centuries except some peasant tussles during the Cholas. Later, temple became epicenter of spreading brahmanical culture which we would discuss under Devadana grant in the following passage. The process of bringing the local people into brahmanical people could be termed as the brahmanization or sanskritization. Not surprisingly, inscriptions during the Pallavas state that Brahmanical epics such as Ramayana and Mahabharata were read in the vicinity of brahmadeyas by the son of Brahmin priest and subsequently in return the villagers had granted plots of land to them.³⁰⁶

Secondly, *Devadana* grant or gift of god was the grant given by the ruler to the *Brahmins* to construct the temple, manage its affairs and look after the temple festivals.³⁰⁷ This grant consisted of hundreds of villages and the officials appointed by the ruler and handed over to the temple treasury collected the revenue of these villages. *Devadana* was not an individual grant. It was the grant given to group of *Brahmins* who stayed at the vicinity of the temple. Although the ruler gave *Devadana* grant, inscriptions suggest that the local communities and the merchant communities to the temple, which enlarged the size of the *Devadana* grant, donated many villages and gifts. Most often, it was a general belief among the people that donation of gold, land and other gifts to *Brahmins* and to the temple would bring reputation and status to individual and the community.³⁰⁸ However when we look at the land relations and the way in which the labor force was mobilized to expand agriculture under this grant, one can see two types of *Devadana* grants prevalent from the 10th century AD onwards. They are 1. *Kudi-NeengaDevadana* and 2. *Kudi-NeekkiDevadana*. In The first type, when the land was given to the *Brahmins* for the temple management, the laborers were also attached in it. The local social elites became tenants in it and the ordinary communal cultivators became the landless cultivators and they were considered to be mere serfs on the land.³⁰⁹ At any cost, the peasants or agricultural laborers were not given freedom to flee from the land kept under the *Devadana* grant. In the second type, before the land was granted to the *Brahmana* or to the temple, the peasants and the cultivators were evicted from the land and then they were put up under the *Devadana*

³⁰⁶ SII, Vol 12, No 2, lines 3, 5, 6, 7 and 10, pp. 14-27.

³⁰⁷ S. Rajagopal, (ed.), *Kaveri: Studies in Epigraphy, Archaeology and History* (Professor Y. Subbarayalu Felicitation Volume), Panpattu Veliyittakam, Chennai, 2001, pp. 42-47.

³⁰⁸ SII, Vol 2, No 1, lines 2, 3, 5, and 6, pp. 5-17.

³⁰⁹ SII, Vol. 2, No 4, p. 67.

grant.³¹⁰ The peasants and cultivators were given freedom to move from the villages. It also signifies that while the *Brahmins* got the *Devadana* grants, they were given overarching rights over the land. By keeping agrarian expansion and prosperity of the temples in mind, the rulers might have given these kinds of *Kudi-neeki Devadana* grants, so that, the *Brahmins* did not necessarily depend on the local elites for the agrarian expansion.

From the 8th century onwards, *Devadana* grants stood as the centre of production, appropriation and redistribution. That is, *Devadana* grants revolve around the temples. Temple became powerful institution to decide the fate of distribution of power, hegemony, royalty, gift, honor, privileges in the state and natural resources of land and human resources of laborers.³¹¹ Temple managers, sometimes supervised by village assemblies, ran the affairs of a temple. The managers could hire labor and organize the cultivation themselves. But apparently the lands were more commonly leased out to individuals or assemblies.³¹²

Temple managers required income in cash and kind for a variety of purposes. Temple was the controller of the land, villages, and people and moreover, temple was the centre of cultural manifestation. People actively participated in producing more grains and in case; the land of those who failed to produce more was transferred to others. Huge numbers of goats, sheep's and cattle were donated to the temple as gifts and alms.³¹³ Later, these life stocks were leased out among the local pastoral communities. The descriptions about huge festivals in the copper plate inscriptions under the Cholas do attach the evidence for the amount of the wealth that the *Devadana* grants held in their times. Revenue collected in kind was stored in the temples, which gave life to millions of those who's rendered their services to the producing communities. Although service communities, such as dancing girls, physicians, drummers, herders, washermen, temple guards, etc., were benefited, the emergence of temples through *Devadana* grants had brought new social distinctions in the society which was alien to the historic *Tamizhagam*. A special attention will be made in the later part of this chapter.

³¹⁰ SII, Vol. 2, No 4, p. 68.

³¹¹ Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 224-225.

³¹² *Ibid*, p. 229.

³¹³ Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850 — 1800*, OUP, New Delhi, 1984, pp. 87-89.

The affairs of a temple were run by temple managers, sometimes supervised by village assemblies. The managers could hire labour and organize the cultivation themselves but apparently the lands were more commonly leased out, to individuals or assemblies. Temple managers needed income in cash and kind for a variety of purposes. Current expenses included payments of taxes, maintenance of buildings (the sale of land to pay for temple repairs is often mentioned in the inscriptions), rituals and festivals, maintenance of charities, and so on. Some of these costs were obligatory, as when a donor had specified that certain special rituals should be performed. But there was no limit in theory to the expenditure of a temple—rituals could be grander, idols decked in more jewels, new shrines could be built, all to the greater glory of the temple deity (and perhaps, to its superiority over rival deities). Doubtless some managers were maximisers of temple funds, always trying to expand, and others satisfiers, content with maintaining the tempo of temple activities. Managers could raise money by soliciting gifts, but they must also have devoted much attention to the prudent management of temple assets, especially in the large temples. Managers had to choose among alternative forms of investment: hoarding bullion or jewels, storing grain and other undertook. Temples sold lands given to them to other temples, village assemblies, or individuals, and they exchanged lands with other temples. In addition, the temple could increase the value of its lands by irrigation. Temples also made gifts of land to individuals, presumably in payment for past or future services.

Inscriptions during the Pallavas and the Pandiyas suggest us that the stored grains and other foodstuffs in the temple treasury had rescued millions of ordinary peasants, cultivators, and artisans and even it rescued the state from its calamity. Through *Devadana* grants, huge blocks of temples were built up and the places where temple stood became urban centers of political importance. The central and village temples became the organizing points of a complex structure of ritual and material exchange. Through the hierarchy of temples the king channeled resources of men, money and livestock, which could be used to assist and expand the agricultural base of the society. In the countryside, the *Devadana* grants involved in a cultural movement which had often converted the local deities into mainstream Brahmanical pantheon and those who worshiped these deities came to be identified as the people of single homogeneous cultural entity.

During the ninth to thirteenth centuries, many *Brahmadeyas* and a few *Devadana* villages in the *Cholamandalam* and *Tondaimandalam* were converted into *Taniyurs*. These villages were

generally excluded from the jurisdiction of the nadu to which they originally belonged and were directly attached to *Valanadu*. As the land donated to *Brahmadeya* and temples were mostly tax-free, they were separated from the *vellanvagai* villages. The powers of the *sabha* or temples of the *Taniyurs* superseded the powers of the *Nadu* and hence recognized as a separate entity by the State.

During the time of the Cholas, temple servants enjoyed good position. They were also granted a piece of land called *Jeevitham* or *maniyam* land. It was a distinct land grant given to them. This term had got various distinctions. In tondai mandalam, various *maniyam* grants are mentioned in the inscriptions. For instance, there are *taliyari* (village police) *maniyam*,³¹⁴ *vannan* (washer man) *maniyam*, *vettiyan* (funeral attendant) *maniyam*, *isvaran maniyam* (Siva temple), *kovil kurukkal* (Brahmin priest) *maniyam*, *panjanga* (the almanac reader) *maniyam*, *kaval* (watch) *maniyam*, *thatchan* (Carpenter) *maniyam*.³¹⁵

Thirdly, *Agrahara* grants were basically beneficial grants given by the rulers to the settlements of the *Brahmins*, which consisted of few villages or few acres of land. They were most often associated with temples of the localities. *Agrahara* grants were tax-free grants.³¹⁶ During the Pallavas and the Pandiyas and even the Cholas, rulers were delighted to grant *Agraharas* to the settlements of *Brahmins* in their kingdoms. *Agrahara* grants stood as locus of Brahmanical cultural accommodation for all those who were subjected to assimilate the cultures of the great traditions. One cannot deny the fact that the *Brahmins* could establish and sustain their cultural dominance over the regions wherever they were given land grants because of guidance of the state and the process of localization of Brahmanical culture. Probably every great temple would have one or more settlements of *Brahmins* nearby to manage its affairs and conduct its rituals. But the maintenance of *Brahmins* was also an end in itself, particularly of *Brahmins* known for their learning or holiness, so it is possible that settlements of *Brahmins* existed prior to the building of the temple though every *Brahmin* village probably would have at least one temple.³¹⁷

³¹⁴ SII, Vol 2, No 6, p. 63.

³¹⁵ SII, Vol 12, No 1, 2, 3 and 5, pp. 22-235..

³¹⁶ Kesavan Veluthat, *The early medieval in south India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2008, p. 137.

³¹⁷ Kesavan Veluthat, *The early medieval in south India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2008, pp. 139-142.

However, the majority of *Brahmins* lived in non-*Brahmin* villages, as priests, village accountants, teachers, astrologers, and so on.

Brahmins possessed high status in the society. They were the ones who stood as stratifying force through their *Shastric* knowledge and their influence in the state apparatus. However, through critical analysis of inscriptional data, one can get a view that the process of agrarian expansion and centralization of the resources elaborately structured identity and status of the *Brahmins*. Being a priest, not only a *Brahmana* could perform domestic sacrifices but also they could do it so to the royal lineages. An extraneous force, such as sacrifices and devotion stood as guiding principles for the *Brahmins* to attain their high status in the society. *Brahmins* association with the temples and their deities had brought a huge amount of veneration to the *Brahmins*. Unsurprisingly, one can question: acquiring the knowledge is universal phenomenon. Why do we attribute it only to *Brahmins*? Why not others? Even if *Shastric* knowledge was peculiar only to *Brahmins*, how did the *Shastric* *Brahmins* control the non-*shastric* people? These were few hypothetical questions, which remained unsolved due to lack of appropriate sources from the primary sources especially from the inscriptions. Nevertheless, it was well evident in the inscriptions that a son of *Brahmana* went and recites verses of *Ramayana* or *Mahabharata* in the countryside. As a result the settlers of the particular village provided certain amount of land and grains to him. In the mean time, for the regular recital of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*, the villagers constructed a wooden house where the *Brahmana* could stay the night and recite them. Huge audience listened to those to stories, which they had not heard before. Later, the one who enchanted verses of *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana* was invited to the places where they worshiped and given in charge of looking after the temple affairs. The one who was looking after the temple prior to the arrival of the *Brahmana* priests was reduced merely as the temple servant called as *Pujari*.³¹⁸ Inscriptions do not provide an idea that who were those *Pujaries* and which section of the social strata they came from. Nevertheless, it was a long process, which began in the northern part of *Tamizhagam* around 7th century AD and culminated around 13th century AD.

³¹⁸“Pujaris were village priests but not *Brahmins*. Descriptions about Pujaris found in inscriptions of Nandivarman II.” See SII, Vol. 14, No 7 and 8, pp 72-85.

Next to the position of the *Brahmins*, the *Nattars* enjoyed good status in the society. Who were these *Nattars*? Inscriptions in the regions such as Trichnopoly and Dharmaburi frequently carry information's about a distinct social category that were called *Nattars*. *Nattars* were officially designated social group who had often been bureaucrats of the state. As inscriptions portray, *Nattars* were social elites who collected revenue from the villages and administered the state units such as *Nadu* and *Valanadu*. The settlements of The *Nattars* situated in the intermediate zones between *Valanadu* and *Nadu*. Mostly, the *Nattars* were functioning as corporate groups. Who were often responsible for decision making at the local level during the Chola period. The *Nattars* seemed to be the largest of these groups. They formed assemblies which mostly derived dignified members from the *Nadu*.³¹⁹ As mentioned above, *Nadu* was a semi-administrative unit which consisted of a number of villages. The *Nadu* did have a common agrarian zone based often on common irrigation facilities. The *nattar* were local power- holders responsible for administrative decisions. They also involved in tax collection. The *nattar*, who relied on their control over the dominant agrarian system, had also depended on extended systems of interregional trade carried on by itinerant merchants.³²⁰ Thus the status and identity of *Nattars*, the social category were determined by the ways in which they had participated in state activities. However, there was some change in the size of the *nadus*. Due to population pressure and perhaps also due to the emergence of new social groups, the earlier *nadus* split and gave birth to new, smaller clusters, which were called *parru*, such as *Ugalur-parru*, *kunraparru*, etc. In spite of such mutation, which becomes more explicit in the 14th century, from the early 12th century we find more and more interaction between different *nadus*. Groups of *nattar* often acted together in deciding matters of some common interest: patronizing some temple, setting some dispute, sometimes even opposing the government of the day in matters of exacting taxation. Such groups of *nadu* were called *periy-nadu* (the bigger *nadu*) or *chittirameli-periyanadu* (the bigger *nadu* with the beautiful plough). On many occasions of common interest these large peasant organizations associated with similar large mercantile organizations called *padinen-bhumi-disai-ayirattu-ainnuruvar*, "the five hundred of the thousand directions from the eighteen lands. Inscriptions do not provide enough evidences about and they do not talk about

³¹⁹ Noboru Karashima, 'South Indian Temple Inscriptions: A New Approach to Their Study', South Asia (Armidale), US, Vol. 19-1, 1996, pp. 1-12, PP 73-75.

³²⁰ Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 187-85.

identity and status of individual rather, they often tell us *Nattars* as community. We are not left with sufficient sources to understand who the *Nattars* were, from which caste they belonged to, whether these *Nattars* were group of individual constituted by the state apparatus for the time being for the specific function of the state mechanism irrespective of their caste and identity. Inscriptions also do not provide us a clue to understand the social capital of *Nattars* in the place of Brahmanical social order which was process in the making its way into countryside. However, unsurprisingly, today, the *Nadars* in Tamilnadu once the so-called untouchables trace their history from the *Nattars* whose lives were significant during the early medieval *Tamizhagam* especially during the time of Cholas.

Vellalas were more influential persons in the village. Unsurprisingly, the term *vellala* appear in the inscriptions of the late 10th century A.D. As the person who held huge piece of land and cultivated by themselves or by the landless cultivators.³²¹ The method of implementing irrigation networks by establishing temples helped the *Vellala* chiefs and the Kings to colonizing new land and ranked the castes through the ritual transactions of the temple that placed the *Brahmins* and *Vellalas* a top of the rest of the population.³²² Upward social mobility sought by *Vellalas* through the process of Brahmanization and association with *Brahmins* had upgraded also their status. Ritual transactions established through the temples held the factors of production under the control of the *Brahmin* and the *Vellala* chiefs. The ruler granted those *Vellala* families settled in Tondaimandalam over the land for the purpose of establishing agricultural villages.³²³

Then, another social category *palli* often appears in the inscriptions. Mostly, the *Pallis* were the cultivators who were not considered as pure by the *Brahmins*. Sometimes, the inscription at Tiruvarur states that the *Pallis* were not permitted to enter into the temples.³²⁴ The point that such holders were influential persons in the locality or even in the central government have been made clear by the examination of the titles they held. Most of them had the titles, *utaiyan*, *kilavan*, *alvan* or *araiyan* including *vilupparaiyan* which seems to have been conferred on

³²¹ SII, Vol 2, No 7, pp. 62-67.

³²² Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 151-156.

³²³ Ibid, p. 157.

³²⁴ SII, Vol. 12, No 3, pp. 55-58.

officials of the central government. One such title holder is actually known to have been *mantalamutali* (Governor).³²⁵

In the village in early medieval *Tamizhagam* there existed three types of settlements. They were the settlement of *Brahmins*, the settlement of non-*Brahmin* cultivators and the settlement of merchants.³²⁶ Each of them has functioned according to their mechanism. As mentioned above, the settlement of *Brahmins* granted by the royal court in various forms flourished during the period between 7th century A.D. And 13th century A.D. they were rendered with all kinds of state protection, support and sponsorship. They remained as the instrument of agrarian expansion. Since *Brahmins* were culturally hegemonic social group in the village, the settlements of *Brahmins* stood as the means of social stratification. Temples, rituals, shastric knowledge's about agriculture and influence at the king's court all strengthened the position of *Brahmins* in the village. At the same time, one must keep in mind that *Brahmins* were also living in the Non-*Brahmin* villages.

The settlement of merchants had often been situated in the semi-urban centers. Merchants were not constituted in unique community in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*. Rather, except migrants in the village, merchants were drawn from different caste groups who mostly belonged to upper caste. They formed an assembly called *Nagaram* which later came to be identified with urban center. In This assembly, merchants and traders participated and discussed various important tips for overseas trade. They also resolved the problems faced by merchants in their internal trade and commerce. Merchants were the ones who involved in the activities such as buying and selling goods from the villages, transmuting the products into commodities by fixing prices for them and valuating products and commodities in terms of money and market.³²⁷ One can see that in early medieval *Tamizhagam*, merchants also lent money to the cultivators and landholders with fixed interest. Inscriptions provide us ample evidence that many merchants participated in the overseas trade especially Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Indonesia and Cambodia.³²⁸ The state had supremacy over these merchants. It levied tariff on goods brought by the merchants from

³²⁵SII, Vol.12, No 7, p. 79.

³²⁶Noboru Karashima, *South Indian history and society: studies from inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, Delhi, 1984, pp. 83-84.

³²⁷N Karashima, Y. Subbarayalu, and P. Shanmugam, '*Nagaram during the Chola and Pandyan Period: Commerce and Towns in the Tamil Country AD 850-1350*', *Indian Historical Review* Vol. 35-1, 2008, pp 9-12.

³²⁸SII, Vol 2, No 6 and 7, pp. 63-64.

overseas trade. Merchants also presented jewels, precious stones and gems to the king. In the inscriptions, one can also find that few merchants were appointed as treasurers in the state treasury by the Chola kings. Merchants assisted the kings in minting coins. They always proved their generosity by donating gold and precious jewels to the temple and to the *Brahmins* as well.

The third settlement of cultivators, which will be discussed in an elaborate manner in the proceeding passage remained as the assimilating force of agrarian expansion and cultural influences of *Brahmins*. *Brahmin* and *Vellala* landlords had their lands cultivated. In the case of *Brahmin* landlords who did not have even the assemblance of direct connection with the cultivation of the land, their role as parasites was directly and immediately identifiable. The *Ur*, the assembly of Non-*Brahmin* cultivators and *Sabhai*, the assembly of *Brahmins* functioned as village administrative unit. In this assembly, people decided all the matters including, irrigation, digging canals, cultivating new land, paying tax to state, etc.,³²⁹ although we may not have huge evidences to understand the assemblies of Non-*Brahmins*, *Utiramerur* inscription of Kulothunga Chola portrays the function of *Sabhai*, the assembly of *Brahmins* in elaborate manner. At the same time, inscriptions also tell us that Landless agricultural laborers were denied any place in these assemblies. Apart from the king and the governors, sometimes, in some cases, the *Ur* and the *Sabhai* were vested with the authority to levy taxes. That may be the reason why some historians characterize these assemblies as autonomous administrative units.

Village in early medieval *Tamizhagam* was not unique entity. It was the space where different categories of people who followed different kinds of customs and traditions living in separate quarters. The village space seems to have consisted of cultivated land both irrigated and dry. They also consisted of various water bodies such as *eri* (lake), *kulam*, *urinnaduvupattakulam* (pond in the middle of the *ur*), *pulatirkulam* (pond in the wet land), *kalanikulam*, *paraikulakuli* (Pond of the *Paraiyas*) and *udaruttuponavaykkal* (Channel that passes through the fields), etc, and *Manei* (house site), *kinaru* (well), *totti* (water tank), etc.³³⁰ The irrigated land in general was referred as *nanjey* and irrigated land where rice is cultivated was called as *Kalani* and also *pulam*. The dry lands were called as *punjey*, which did not have any source of irrigation and

³²⁹ Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, p. 217.

³³⁰ SII, Vol. 16, No 2-7, pp. 37-45.

these lands are also called as *Kollai*. The groves were called as *thopu*, and the garden lands were called as *tottam*. The residential localities are in general called as *Nattam*.³³¹

The village consisted of distinctive residential localities - for example, *Urnattam*, *Paraichcheri*, *Pulaichcheri*, *Vannarachcheri*, *kammalachcheri*, *kudiyirukkai*, *Ilachcheri*, *tindachcheri*, *talaivaycheri*, *talicheri*, etc. The *Urnattam* seems to be the area where the residences of the *Vellalas* were placed. *Paraichcheri* seems to be the residential area of the *Paraiyas*, *Pulaichcheri*- that of the *Pulaiyas*, *Kudiyirukkai* that of the cultivators (*Kudi*, *kudiyavan*) *Vannarachcheri* residential area for washermen (*Vannans*), *Kammalachcheri* - residential area of the *kammalas*, *Ilachcheri* for toddy tappers, *tindachcheri* was the residential area of the untouchables, *talaivaycheri* seems to be the residential area of people who maintained the sluices. The different residential areas imply that the villagers were never equal to one another.³³² We do not know about when these social categories came into existence, but even the earliest inscriptions note the presence of *Paraiyas*, *Kammalas*, *Vellalas*, *Pulaiyar*, untouchables, *kudis*, of settled agriculture imply that social categories have already existed even before the Chola period. From the inscriptions of early medieval *Tamizhagam*, one can get an idea that the village had people from distinct social locations either endowed with power and privilege or as subjects of those privileged to control natural as well as human resources. These rights, privileges and control over the natural and human resources were given royal sanction in the form of grants by the kings who ruled the region.

In the villages of early medieval *Tamizhagam*, there were also few service rendering communities who were often dependants of the producing communities and *Brahmin* priests in the village and to the ruling class and merchants in the urban centers. The service castes in the village as well in the urban centers were mostly washerman, astrologers, physicians, dancers and musicians. They were remunerated for their service through grants of lands known as *maniyam* such as *VannanManiyam*, *Kanimurruttu*, and *maruttuvapperu*. There are inscriptional evidences that dancers and musicians also held land. *Maniyams* in general means Tax-free land, and therefore, the service castes were provided with tax-free lands which must have been cultivated by the agricultural laborers who mostly belonged to either *Pallar* or *Paraiya* castes.

³³¹ SII, Vol. 16, No 2, p. 67.

³³² Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions AD 850 — 1800*, OUP, New Delhi 1984, pp. 56-58.

Few service castes and their occupations were considered as impure and polluting. Remuneration for the castes kept engaged in menial and polluting jobs such as scavenging (*tottimaniyam*) and grave-digging (*vettiyanmaniyam*) had also been in practice.³³³

From the inscriptions, one can get the view of social categories based on class structure, which are often identified by the names, and functions of the settlements. There were three major settlements found in the grants. They are 1. *Urnattam*,³³⁴ 2. *Kammanaserry*³³⁵ and 3. *Paraichēri*.³³⁶ These all three settlements are not found in common in all grants. As mentioned in the above passage, the inscriptions also do talk about some smaller settlements such as *iraicheri*,³³⁷ *Theendachēri*,³³⁸ *vannaracheri*,³³⁹ etc. these settlements do not appear as common in all grants. More interestingly, residential area of these settlements, water channels passing through settlements, cremation ground, temples, etc., are also found in the inscriptions³⁴⁰ which help us to narrate social interactions of the people who lived in this region. Inscriptions do talk about the grants issued by the kings to jainas identified) *palli*), grants, to physician, (*maruthuvaperu*) grants to astrologers, *kanikkaiyar*, etc.³⁴¹

However the terms like *urnattam* is often found as the settlement of *urars* (the villagers and cultivators. Moreover, the term *urar* denotes the landholding community who were paying tax to the state.³⁴² Inscriptions still state that *urar* sometimes had transferred land, and donated some portion of land to the temple.³⁴³ So one can assume that the community of *urnattam* might be the settlement of wealthy land owning class. Whereas, the terms such as *kammanasery* as the settlements of artisans, and the *Paraicēri* as the settlements of cultivators, are found. So it is so

³³³ SII, Vol. 12, No 6, p 54.

³³⁴ (the quarter in which the *urar* live or main village) SII, Vol. II. NO. 4, lines 1-3, 5-9, 13-24, pp. 27-82.

³³⁵ (the settlement of The *Kammalas* or artisans include stone-masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths and copper-smiths) SII, Vol. II, No. 4, lines 1-27, pp. 14-16.

³³⁶ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, Lines 1-24, pp. 67-68.

³³⁷ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, Lines 1, 3, 4, 7, 8 and 15, pp. 63-68.

³³⁸ (the quarter of those who must not be touched, of low-caste people) SII, Vol. 2, No. 4, p. 65.

³³⁹ (the quarter of the washer men (*Vannar*) SII, Vol. II. No. 4 lines 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 14, pp. 69-72.

³⁴⁰ SII, Vol. II, No. 7, Lines 1-55, p. 67.

³⁴¹ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 63.

³⁴² SII, Vol. IV, No. 2, Lines 2, 5, 6, 8-15, pp. 121-125.

³⁴³ SII, Vol. I, No. 1, lines 6-10, pp. 42-55.

essential to take Cathleen Gough's view for our purpose. She states that the community of *urnattam* or *Ur* was landholders or land owners. Other two communities of *kammalas* and *Paraiyas* were artisans and cultivators and they were to be subservient to them.³⁴⁴ But Karashima falsifies this view through his deep observations of inscriptions. He suggests that these three major communities of settlements functioned independently. They were not subservient to one another.³⁴⁵ However, inscriptions often state, the settlements of *Paraiyas* had their own significance. They had separate cremation ground (*chudukadu*),³⁴⁶ ponds,³⁴⁷ (*paraikulikulam*)³⁴⁸ and temples,³⁴⁹ etc., inscriptions states that sometimes *kammalacheri* and *urnattam* had joined cremation ground³⁵⁰ and pond. But in the case of *Paraichēri*, it was uncommon.

In the village community, *Kaniyachikarar* enjoyed valuable position. The term, *Kaniyachikarar* denotes the community, which held land called *Kani*, tenure control over the laborers and rights over movable properties. It was a distinct characteristic of the land tenure and revenue system found in the early medieval period.³⁵¹ It mainly deals with than the Land rights and different forms of labor. Mostly the *Kaniyachikarar* belonged either to the *Brahmin* or *Vellala* castes.³⁵² The *Kaniyachi* rights of the *Brahmana* or *Vellala* became hereditary rights over the land that cultivated.

While reading inscriptions dating from 12th century A.D., it appears that *Kaniyachi* form of labor and production was recent creation of the state which conquered the land recently. The king provided a piece of land to *Vellalas* and *Brahmins* and in return, they were expected to pay

³⁴⁴ Kathleen Gough, *Modes of Production in Southern India*, Economic and Political Weekly, Vol. 15, No. 5/7, p. 27.

³⁴⁵ Noboru Karashima, *South Indian History and Society: Studies from Inscriptions 850 AD-1800 AD*, OUP, Delhi 1984, pp. 97-98.

³⁴⁶ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, line 7, p. 53.

³⁴⁷ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, lines 2, 7, 8 and 13, p. 63.

³⁴⁸ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, line 7, p. 27.

³⁴⁹ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, lines 12 and 13, p. 66.

³⁵⁰ SII, Vol. IV, No 7, lines 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 13, p. 92.

³⁵¹ Noboru Karashima, 'Kani Right in Tamil Inscriptions and Mirasi Right in British Records: Probing into Pre-colonial South Indian Reproduction System', *Avanam* (Journal of Tamil Nadu Archaeological Society) Vol. 18, 2007, pp. 186.

³⁵² *Ibid*, p. 190.

tax to the state.³⁵³ Yet, there is no specific type of tax or land revenue mentioned as to how much and in what duration the *Kaniyachikarar* had to pay tax to the state. Mostly, Inscriptional evidences suggest that *Kaniyachi* was not just the right over land alone transferred in the name of *kani*. Rather, it included a variety of land types such as wet land (*nanjey*), and dry land (*punjey*). The *Kani* does not merely mean cultivable land. Rather, this term was used in a broader sense. The *Kani* consisted of several residential area of the *Ur* (*urnattam*), and the residential area of the *Pulaiyars* (*Pulaicheri*). Sometimes, inscriptions do talk about the other physiographic locations of the *Kani* such as pond (*Kulam*), and lake (*Eri*). If we read the inscriptional data carefully, we can get an ample picture of the land tenural system under *Kaniyachi* form of labor. That is, that the proportion of one's own *nanjey* land to the entire *nanjey* land in the village should be applied to other categories of land. It is clearly portrayed in the inscriptions that the possession of *nanjey* was the most fertile land in the village. It was composed of the core right of *kani*. We could often evidence that Under the *Kaniyachi* form of property; the productive resources were collectively controlled by a set of *Kaniyachikarar* who belonged to either *Brahmins* or *Non-Brahmin Vellalas*.³⁵⁴ This was not only a right over land, rather it was a right over the whole of the village productive resources, including land, water along with a right over the laborers belonging to rest of the castes in the village. Sometimes, inscription describes that crops that were produced in the *Kani*, were not sufficient enough to meet commercial needs of the towns. Because, cultivation had been confined to the wet lands alone. Thus, Lands would have been cultivated to supply for local needs.³⁵⁵

Under the *Kaniyachi* form of labor, the harvest was shared among the *Kaniyalars*. State's share of the harvest was known as *Melvaram* and the cultivators' shares were called as *kudivaram*.³⁵⁶ As it appears in the inscriptions, the *Kudis* (*Ulkudi* and *Purakudi*), and the *Pannaiyals* and *Padiyals*, and various service castes got their own share. *Ulkudis* are resident cultivators and

³⁵³SII, Vol. II, No. 7, 8 and 9, pp. 102-124.

³⁵⁴SII, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 106.

³⁵⁵ Noboru Karashima, 'Kani Right in Tamil Inscriptions and Mirasi Right in British Records: Probing into Pre-colonial South Indian Reproduction System,' *Avanam* (Journal of Tamil Nadu Archaeological Society), Vol. 18, 2007, pp. 194.

³⁵⁶Noboru Karashima, 'The Emergence of Medieval State and Social Formation in South India', *International Journal of South Asian Studies*, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 16.

Purakudi were cultivators from outside the village. *Padiyals* were wage-labourers belonging to the non-*Brahmin* castes and the *Pannaiyals* were laborers attached to the property who were transferred along with the *Kani* rights.³⁵⁷ Some miscellaneous inscriptions show that there had been a legal procedure through which people bound to the *kani* right had been sold along with the *Kani* rights. The *Kaniyalar*s could sell, mortgage or gift his laborers to other *Kaniyachikarar*. Thus *Kani* is not only a right over the productive resources. Rather, it was a status which encompasses a set of rights over the respective agrarian functions of every caste in the village. Hence, land was never conceived outside the social relationship and the every caste had a rightful share over the produce. Inscriptions also state that *Kaniyachikarar*, sometimes, took his decision independently in respect to cultivate a particular land or not. It depended on the possibility and the need to cultivate. It also depended upon the availability of water for irrigation and labor. It means that Taxes were levied only on lands, which were cultivated, and hence one had to pay *melvaram*, State's share of produce only when he cultivates. It is therefore certain that, the *Kaniyachikarar* were not in a compulsion to pay taxes to the rulers for whatever extent of land he controlled; rather he had to pay only for the extent, which was cultivated.³⁵⁸

Most of the *Kaniyalar*s were holders of honorific titles such as *Utaiyan*, *Kilan*, *Kilavar*, *Brahmadeyakkilavan*, *Muvendavelan*, *Brahmarayan*, *Villupparaiyan**Pallavarayan*, *Nadalvan*, and *Madhyastha*. In general *Kilan* and *Kilavan* denote land holders. Most of the *kaniyalar*s, during the early Chola period were *Vellala* chiefs of villages who had the titles *Udaiyan*, *Kilavan*, *Muvendavelan*. The *Brahmin* landlords were referred in inscriptions as *Brahmadeyakkilavan*. The titles which end with '*arayan*' were closely associated with the kings and were part of the state administrative systems.³⁵⁹ The point is that such landowners were influential persons in the locality or even in the central government has been made clear by the examination of the titles they held. Most of them had the titles, *utaiyan*, *kilavan*, *alvan* or *araiyan* including *vilupParaiyan* which seems to have been conferred on officials of the central government. One such titleholder is actually known to have been *mantalamutali* (Governor).

³⁵⁷ Noboru Karashima, '*The Emergence of Medieval State and Social Formation in South India*', International Journal of South Asian Studies, Vol. 1, 2008, p. 20.

³⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 24.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 25.

Kaniyachi form of labor being distinct land tenural system prevalent during the time of the Cholas had stood as stratifying force in the society in several ways. Undoubtedly, it extended cultivation and introduced stranger to the prevailing village community. This system had introduced also the strange idea of caste and penetrated into countryside. Although *Kaniyachi* form of labor could be regarded as positive means through which, production mechanism was centralized under the direct control of the state, one cannot deny that through this system, new problems such as displacement, distress, disparity and discrimination were arising in the society. As it has been said above, the *Kaniyachikarar* belonged to either *Brahmin* or *Non-BrahminVellala* caste. Both these communities had been brought by the state to colonize the land which was recently conquered. Therefore, they got state sponsorship to establish their rights over the land and the laborers as well. Honorific titles such as *Utaiyan*, *Kilan*, *Kilavar*, *Brahmadeyakkilavan*, *Muvendavelan*, *Brahmarayan*, *VillupparaiyanPallavarayan*, *Nadalvan* and *Madhyastha* given by the rulers substantiate our knowledge on the position of the *Brahmins* and *Non-BrahminVellalas*.

Even though we are in agreement with positive outcomes of *Kaniyachi* form of labor, few questions arise before us are, what happened to the village society brought under *Kaniyachi* form of labor which had been functioning based on the communal holdership? Had they been silent throughout the centuries? As we saw in the above passages that the village community prior to the arrival of new state system in the Tamil land, had several communities who had access to the land and appropriated the surplus. But, now in the village community those who accepted the *Kaniyachi* form, came to be recognized as *Kudis* (cultivators) and they got special privileges both from the state and from the dominant castes of *Brahmins* and *Non-BrahminVellala*. At the same time, those who refused to give up their land, which they cultivated over the centuries, were displaced from the land by the force, which was sponsored by the state. In addition to, inscriptions often state that the Brahmin *Kaniyalars* used caste as an instrument and their close associates to divide the people.

Around 13th century A.D. actual disparity resulted in the society by the introduction of caste which was interpreted now based the notion of purity and pollution. Who were the *Purakudis*? Although inscription portrays *Purakudis* as cultivators who were brought from other villages, we are unable to get an idea that why these cultivators were taken from other villages. If they were

taken to cultivate the land in other village, what happened to the land which they held previously? And who cultivated it? Moreover, the terms such as *Padiyal* and *Pannaiyal* clearly tell us that although the *Kaniyachi* form of labor promoted the status of the *Brahmins* and *Non-BrahminVellalas*, it had reduced the village residents into mere wage-laborers and slaves who could be mortgaged, transferred and even sold to others by the *Brahmins* and *Non-BrahminVellalas*. In other words, one can epitomize that *Kaniyachi* form of labor helped in extending cultivation of large land track, stratified the society by introducing Brahmanical caste system and opened a path for the people to seek upward mobility in the Brahmanical social order.

Conflicts between communities for acquiring power and status had also become an important mode of structuring and restructuring the social order in a given space and in a given time.³⁶⁰ In this case, the conflicts fought between communities in early medieval *Tamizhagam* had often led to the emergence of new social order and it also provided a platform for the communities which got an access to resource and power, to put themselves high in the given social order. It did not matter whether the communities were given certain identities such as pure or impure, higher or lower in the caste society by the textual manipulation of Brahmanism. These conflicts were called in the history of *Tamizhagam* as *Idangai* (left-hand) and *Valangai* (right-hand) conflicts. Inscriptions of the 11th century A.D. clearly portray these social conflicts. Was this form of conflicts only peculiar to early medieval *Tamizhagam*?

The left-hand and right-hand class divisions were universal phenomenon.³⁶¹ Fundamentally, when the more agricultural surplus grew up, the more non-agricultural communities also emerged. These non-agricultural communities did not have any direct connection to the primary mode of production. But, their livelihood had fully depended on the surplus provided by the agricultural masses. At particular point of time, when the level of extraction by the non-agricultural communities reaches its height, the agricultural communities will fall down to the subsistence level. So the non-agricultural masses will undergo historical realization. This realization will lead to the arousal of popular consciousness among the agricultural communities.

³⁶⁰Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian social history: some interpretations*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1978, p. 21.

³⁶¹Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, p. 235.

Latter it will lead to the popular conflicts between the agricultural communities and the non-agricultural communities.³⁶² It may not break out in the form of peasant revolt against the landlords and the non-agricultural communities including the king and ruling class, But in the form of claiming supremacy of the communities to which, they belong by tracing historical background. Social equilibrium based on mutual dependence in the countryside had got disturbed when the state evolved as mechanism of extraction and organized the non-agricultural communities to extract the resources from the agricultural communities who were basically peasants and landholders. The disturbance in the social equilibrium caused by the emergence of state and civilization had let to the conflicts between communities for power and status.³⁶³

Some historians believe that the left-hand and right-hand conflicts were a fight that happened between the kingly community and the priestly community for power and status.³⁶⁴ It does not sustain its historical validity. As mentioned above, the king gained legitimacy from the people by ensuring protection to the people. Strengthening taxation mechanism and regular standing army regulated this legitimacy. The *Brahmins* acquire both legitimacy and power from the people through their ritual supremacy. Interestingly, although *Brahmins* remained as beneficiaries of the king, they were the ones who controlled the king and his power. The *Brahmins* only provide sacral identity to the king. They were chief priests in king's court. They were also advisers to the king. In every spheres of king's life, the *Brahmins* had an important roll. This mutual dependence and cooperation continued as long as the king had not intervened in the material life of the *Brahmana*. But, when the king began to question the authority of *Brahmins*, the conflicts began to take its shape.

This tendency of the ruling class had often let to the social conflicts in the history of early India as well as in the history of medieval India. But, in the case of *Idangai* and *Valangai* social divisions in early medieval *Tamizhagam* differed from the social dichotomy, which prevailed in other parts of the sub-continent. In early medieval *Tamizhagam*, the *Idangai* and *Valangai* conflicts were not the social tension that rose between the *Brahmins* and the kingly communities,

³⁶²Thomas Sikor, Christian Lund, *The Politics of Possession: Property, Authority, and Access to Natural Resources*, John Wiley and Sons, 2009, p. 128.

³⁶³Ibid, p. 127.

³⁶⁴Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, p. 213.

rather, it was a social conflict between non-Brahmin communities. The *Uttattur* and *Tiruppaignili* inscriptions belonging to 1128 A.D. suggest certain rights offered to right and left hand groups.³⁶⁵ The *Adudurai* inscription³⁶⁶ reveals that there were 98 castes among right hand groups. The right-hand groups consisted of different caste groups. They included dominant, landowning *VellalaKavundar* (landholders), a moiety of *Nasuvan* (barbers), *Vannan* (washermen), and *Paraiyan* (agricultural laborers and drummer untouchables). Whereas, Left-hand group consisted mostly the artisan and non-agricultural communities. They included the *Kaikkoolars* (weavers), some types of *Chettiars* (business castes), *VettuvarKavundars* (hunter *Kavundars*), a distinct moiety of *Nasuvan* (barbers), *Padayachis* (agriculturalists claiming warrior status), *Acharis* (artisans), *Kottanaar* (builders), *MaadeenChakkahs* (leatherworkers) and *Kuyavan* (potters). What is striking is that the right-hand castes are all dependent on the landowning class. The castes of the left-hand division do not have this kind of economic dependence. Most are artisans and to some degree are economically independent. *Brahmans* do not belong to either section, but as priests, they occupy a ritual status that is distinctive and superior.

By looking at the nature of these social conflicts with religious background, some feel that these divisions might have come from two different sects of Brahmanical proselytizing movements, which were prevalent in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*.³⁶⁷ To certain extent, this proposition has got historical justification. Because, during 9th and 10th centuries, Saivism and Vaisnavism became prominent sects in the *Tamizhagam*. Both these Brahmanical sects attempted to proselytize the people by breaking the barriers by the notion of caste. In these two garbs of Saivism as well as Vaisnavism, many social categories were integrated. It was believed that the Saivites were agriculturalists and land-holding communities who were considered upper caste in the society. Whereas, the Vaisnavites who were often artisans and weaving communities who were considered as low in the society. Even today, in Tamil nadu and in Karnataka and in telugu right hand caste was designated as upper caste who engaged in agricultural production, agricultural commodities and left hand caste were considered to be low caste who were

³⁶⁵SII, Vol. 12, No 3, p. 28.

³⁶⁶SII, Vol. 9, No 6, p. 35.

³⁶⁷Kesavan Veluthat, *The early medieval in south India*, OUP, New Delhi, 2008, p. 157.

associated with mobile artisan production and extensive trade in non agrarian commodities . These lower group operated the supra local systems of alliance form which excluded the two other and most powerful social strata of south Indian society *Brahmans* and non-*Brahmans*.³⁶⁸

In early medieval *Tamizhagam* image worship also became dominant in the society. As a consequence, temple came up in a rapid scale. The spatial segregation of image worship brought a social divide between the worshipers of two different deities, *Shiva* and *Vishnu* respectively. The followers of one deity felt superior to other. Inscriptions, one can get A kind of social tensions resulted by the emergence of temple culture in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. Inscriptions mostly talk about the conflicts between Saivites and Vaishnavites. Yet, when we scrutinize the information's provided in the inscriptions, we can clearly understand that these left-hand and right-hand divisions and subsequent conflicts had nothing to do with Saivism and Vaisnavism. As mentioned above, some scholars even speculate that the conflicts between left hand division and right division could be encapsulated as an open revolt by the lower peasantry against the landlords and the Government. But, no inscriptions support this argument.

To epitomize, South Indian villages during the early medieval ages, were of various categories and administered according to their own local rules of governance. The term employed in the royal order to signify the village is *Ur*, which is most commonly used in the Tamil language to mean village. The inscriptions found in the temples in Thanjavur, known as Thanjavur inscriptions,³⁶⁹ designate three out of thirty-three villages as *Nagaram*. *Nagaram* means commercial town. Apart from this, other classifications of villages includes *Salabhogam*,³⁷⁰ a village or land assigned for the upkeep of a feeding house; and a *Pallichchanda*,³⁷¹ village or land granted to a Buddhist or Jain temple. The other ordinary villages were known as *Vellanvagai* villages.

³⁶⁸Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1980, p. 214.

³⁶⁹SII, Vol. II, No. 4, p. 69.

³⁷⁰ SII, Vol. III, No. 6, pp. 32-57.

³⁷¹SII, Vol. II, No. 3, pp. 1-5.

A considerable variety is seen in the size of the villages. The extent of most villages was less than 60 *Veli* though there were some villages, which exceeded 100 *Veli*. Of the villages, which were less than 60 *Veli* in extent, however, it is difficult to find any peculiarity in distribution. The extent of tax-free lands also varies greatly, though not in its proportion to the whole area of the villages.

*Pidagais*³⁷² were the hamlets of some bigger village where *Urnattam* or *Urirukkai* existed. Another term referring to village in the Thanjavur inscription is the *Kudiyirukkai*.³⁷³ However, its meaning is still more obscure, since the meaning of *Kudi* is not ascertainable. *Kudi* may mean a cultivator, a family, or just people. In the villages mentioned as *Kudi*, however, along with *Kudiyirukkai*, both *Urnattam* and *Paraichcheri* also existed, and therefore, *Kudi* in this case seems to have been tenant cultivators who were economically and socially different from either the *Urar* or the *Paraiyas*. Another category of village land was the *Kanimunuttu*,³⁷⁴ land assigned to astrologers. Likewise *Maruttuvapperu*³⁷⁵ is land assigned to physicians. In some cases, *Paraichcheri* is specified as *UlapParaiyairukkumKilaichcheri*³⁷⁶ (an eastern residential area for the *Paraiyas* who cultivate) and *UlapParaiyairukkumMelaipparaichcheri*³⁷⁷ (a western residential area for the *Paraiyas* who cultivate). This clearly shows that the *Paraiyas* in those villages were employed for cultivation of land.

As to water facilities, the two terms *Kulam* (water tank) and *Vaykkal* (water channel) are mentioned in the royal order of the Thanjavur Inscription.³⁷⁸ In some cases, it is further specified as *Pulattirkulam* (tank in a cultivation field), *Kakinikkulam* (tank in a paddy field), *Urunikulam* (common tank for drinking water), *Urin-Naduvupatta-Kulam* (tank situated in the centre of the village), *Tirumanjanakkulam* (sacred tank for purification), and *Paraikulakuli* (water pool for the *Paraiyas*). The term *Karai* (bund) was also used for some villages. They might have been the bunds of tanks or those of water channels or rivers. Every village had at least one temple and most of them had more than one temple. The term used to describe a temple is usually *Srikoyil* or its plural form *Srikoyilgal*.

³⁷²SII, Vol. XII, No. 6, p. 152.

³⁷³ SII, Vol. III, No. 4, p. 69.

³⁷⁴SII, Vol. II, No. 3, p. 47.

³⁷⁵ SII, Vol. III, No. 2, p. 35.

³⁷⁶SII, Vol. XIV No. 7, pp. 23-28.

³⁷⁷ SII, Vol. XIV, No. 8, p. 164.

³⁷⁸SII, Vol. II, No. 7, p. 116.

Various Chola inscriptions offer a lot of details about the early medieval society. There were different caste people who were known for their prompt execution of duties. Distinctions and disparities were available with regard to upper and lower castes. There were no confrontations and conflicts among them. The expansion in the different professions and occupations led to developed caste system. Many new professions and professionals emerged. For instance the Ennayiram inscription³⁷⁹ speaks about the involvement of the *Brahmins* in agrarian activities.

The *Brahmins* still enjoyed a superior position in the society. They were concentrating on religious activities. Due to their wisdom, imparting education and knowledge were their hereditary professions. They were experts in *Vedas* and *Sastras*. During evening and early nights they conducted discourses in the ambalams and temple mandapas. They preached the principles and philosophies exposed by the epics and *Puranas*. They were experts in Vedic scriptures and Sanskrit. They maintained a high moral standard. The rulers granted them lands and they were known as *Vedavriddhi*, *Pattavriddhi*, *Puranaviruddhi*, *Bharathavriddhi* etc. The lands granted were taxfree *iraiyili* lands. They were provided with noon meals in the temples. *Ursabha*, *mulaparushiyar*, temple administrators etc. executed the landed donations. They lived in separated areas such as *agraharas*; they were exempted from various taxes. They even rendered their views at the time of judgments in specific cases. Thus their position in society was a venerable one.

There were different professionals and they enjoyed many rights and privileges from the rulers. The *Panchakammalas*³⁸⁰ had the right to wear sacred threads like *Brahmins*. An inscription of the period of Kulottunga I says that they had no other rights except the wearing of the sacred thread. The Perur and Karur inscriptions reveal that the *kammalas* of South Kongu region and Vengala Nadu had the rights to use a double conch, *chappals* and right to white was their houses.³⁸¹ Raja Raja I have rendered tax exemptions to the *Vellalas*. Rajendra I assigned the right to engrave the names in the copper plates only to the scribes of Kanchipuram. During the period of Uttama Chola, only the weavers of Kanchipuram alone were offered the rights to make dresses for the royal family. The *Panchakammalas* were known as *VisvakaramaBrahmins*. The

³⁷⁹SII, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 27.

³⁸⁰SII, Vol. 23, No. 3, p. 32.

³⁸¹SII, Vol. 23, No. 5, p. 48.

Kiranur inscription says that the shepherds of *Kiranur* were allowed to construct their houses with two ways. The professions were hereditary in character.

CHAPTER IV.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION: AN ANALYSIS OF *BHAKTI*TRADITION

Religion is a faculty of mind, which plays an important roll in every spheres of human life.³⁸² What does religion mean? Religion is an institution to express one's belief in a divine power. Religion is a belief concerning the supernatural, sacred, or divine, and the practices and institutions associated with such belief.³⁸³ Then, who created religion? Religion is not created by god, but by human intellect gifted by god. It kindles one's emotion and leads to differences and ultimate conflicts. It also controls one's emotion and paves a path for realization and resolves the problems. Religion is something, which leads to social tensions by the domination of human intellect over temporal world, and religion leads to social harmony by the rejection of both temporal world and spiritual world with the intervention of ultimate human soul.³⁸⁴ However, the religions which we have today, had not simply come to us in a ready-made form. No religion had been founded and propagated in a single day or night. On the contrary, every religion originated as a fear of human beings on nature, as an institution built on material exploitation, as a culture in response to that material exploitation, and as a counter-tradition to defend and to give divine justification for the material exploitation of particular group or community.³⁸⁵ Few religions have their own profounder that, in many cases, set principles for their followers and many religions do not have single propounded, but they have principles produced by the people in different points of time. Religion originates the moment when the human beings question their existence and surroundings. Religion continuously involves in the process of acculturation, assimilation and accommodation of different ideas and different people.³⁸⁶ This process often shapes and reshapes intellectual discourse of particular religious tradition.

³⁸² John F. Haught, *What is religion? An introduction*, Paulistpress, London, 1990, p. 7.

³⁸³ *Ibid*, p. 9.

³⁸⁴ John, D. kaputo, *On religion*, Routledge, London, 2001, p. 26.

³⁸⁵ Hent De Vries, *Religion: beyond a concept*, Fordham university press, London, 2008, p. 78.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 80.

Hinduism is one of major religions in India, which has got different sets of ideas, values and followers from different cultural background. Its origin can be traced from Vedic age, which is believed to have begun around 1500 B.C. it evolved as a cultural tradition of Aryan tribal group which is often called as Brahmanism. In the long span of time, the Vedic Brahmanism underwent rapid changes and incorporated many traditions of Sramanism, Shaktatism and Puranic culture which we evidence as Hinduism today. Conglomeration of different sets of ideas produced by the followers in various regions in different points of time had shaped and reshaped the religion of Hinduism.³⁸⁷

Bhakti was one of the religious and reforming ideas, which were produced by the followers of Hinduism.³⁸⁸ Although the notion of *Bhakti* was prevalent in early text of *BhagavatGita*, its popularity came about in the 5th and 6 century A.D. in Gangetic plain. But in *Tamizhagam*, *Bhakti* or devotional movement began around 6 and 7th century A.D. What does *Bhakti* mean? *Bhakti* can be defined as "devotion to a personal deity".³⁸⁹ *Bhakti* was also considered as a reform movement, the first real instance of reform in India. The term *Bhakti* is used specifically to describe the human response to God and never to characterize God's response to human beings.³⁹⁰ In early medieval *Tamizhagam*, the *Bhakti* movement centered around two distinctive cults Lord *Shiva* and Lord *Vishnu*. The saints especially *Brahmin* started composing hymns in praise of these deities. Basically, *Bhakti* movement stood as proselytizing movement, which transformed socio-cultural and material lives of millions who began to follow the path prescribed by the *Bhakti* saints. The saints who wrote poetries in praise of Lord *Shiva* were called as *Nayanmars* and those sang hymns in praise of Lord *Vishnu* were called as *Alvars*. The *Bhakti* saints went from place to place and preached the people about words of god and the ways of worshiping deities. Mostly, the *Bhakti* saints imagined themselves as child, as a servant and as a

³⁸⁷ Romila Thapar, *Interpreting early India*, OUP, New Delhi, 1992, p. 56.

³⁸⁸ Krishna Sharma, *Bhakti and the bhakti movement : A new perspective : A study in the history of ideas*, Munshiram Manoharlal publishers Pvt.Ltd., New Delhi, 2002, p. 17.

³⁸⁹ Ganapathy Subbiah, *Roots of Tamil Religious Thought*, Pondicherry Institute of Linguistics and Culture, Pondicherry, 1991, p. 93.

³⁹⁰ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of religion in South India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1992, p.30.

friend to the deity. From the time of Pallavas onwards, *Bhakti* movement got state and many rulers granted village and alms for the construction of temples which often seemed to the shelters of the *Bhakti* saints. Thus, The *Bhakti* movement generated the huge temple complexes. The tension in *Bhakti* is between emotion and intellection: emotion to reaffirm the social context and temporal freedom, intellection to ground the *Bhakti* religious experience in a thoughtful, conscious approach.³⁹¹ *Bhakti* is not only a devotional mode of veneration, but a broad religious movement. So-called poet saints emerged. Although the saints hail from Sanskritic traditions, they preached the people in the vernacular languages. They opened popular space for all the sections of the people. Irrespective of one's caste and class, one could become the follower of the deities either *Shiva* or *Vishnu*. The historical instances tell us that the *Bhakti* saints also came from outcaste sections. *Bhakti* emphasized on the potentiality of women, their dignity and power.³⁹² *Bhakti* tradition permitted women to adopt asceticism and become saints. But, in the process of inclusion, god was put up the centre of devotion and the followers were looked upon as centrifugal force revolving around the deity. In the later centuries, the saints who preached *Bhakti* traditions were converted into deities and placed in the temples along with important deities. In *Bhakti* literature, one can get an idea that as mentioned above, the *Bhakti* movement incorporated women, low caste and out caste sections in to its pantheon in this chapter, an attempt is being made to trace out in what way the *Bhakti* tradition stood as a social force in terms of inclusion and exclusion.

Before proceeding to analyze *Bhakti* tradition in terms of inclusion and exclusion, let us analyze the growth of religious values and ideas in India briefly which led to the *Bhakti* tradition in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. In the Vedic age, especially the period when the *RigVeda* was composed, the religion originated due to people's fear over nature. Thus, the people worshiped nature such as fire called *Agni*, Thunder called *Indra* and rain called *Varuna*.³⁹³ They also worshiped nature because they believed in the nature, which would provide the things, which they required. People also prayed to gods for sons, horses and pastureland. The Vedic-Aryans

³⁹¹K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of religion in South India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1992, p. 33.

³⁹²Ibid, p. 35.

³⁹³R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p. 28.

demanded pastureland because they were primarily pastoralists. They prayed for sons and horses for battle. The people gathered in public place and elected a priest who performed certain rituals. Raja or a king, in a literal sense, who let the people in war, had also supervised the rituals. People offered various things to gods especially milk, ghee and the wealth brought through battle fought between tribal groups. The god *Agni* was believed to be purifier of human soul as well as the god who represent the prayer of the people to Lord *Indra*. Vedic tribes also worshiped mountain, rivers and certain plants as god.³⁹⁴ Thus, one can understand that religion of *Rig-Vedic* Aryan tribes remained as mere belief, which arose from human fear and expectations.

In the later Vedic age, fear was replaced by material exploitation of particular group or community in the domain of religion. *Indra*, *Varuna* and *AGni* lost their prominence. People began to worship major gods such as *Prajapati*, *Rudra*, *Savitri*, and *Maruti*.³⁹⁵ Female goddesses were also in existence. Gods were divided into four kinds, 1. Earthly, 2. Heavenly, 3. Cowborn and 4. Watery.³⁹⁶ Around 1000 B.C., along with pastoralism, slowly and steadily agriculture came into existence. People began to cultivate the land with kin-labor and with the use of wooden-ploughshare. So, now people produced more than their consumption. The King began to identify himself as the ruler of particular territory and particular tribal groups. That is, *Rajas* (the kings), now, came to be associated with *Janapada* (the territory where the people settled).³⁹⁷ He collected share from the people called *Bhaga*. He sanctified his chiefdom through performing huge sacrifices such as *Rajasuya*, *Ashvamegha* and *Vajipeya* performed by priests who were believed to have hailed from high *Gotra*. Not only the accumulated surplus from the people strengthened the king's position, but also it paved a way for *Brahmins* to become hegemonic cultural group in the society with specialized occupation. During this age, we could see 17 kinds of priests hailing from *Brahmin* community who were identified with different sacrifices being performed in various regions. Huge resources including hundreds of cows were offered to *Brahmin* priests to perform rituals. One can say that during later Vedic age, the

³⁹⁴ R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, pp. 30-32.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 33.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*., 1983, p. 34.

³⁹⁷ R S Sharma, *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999, p. 93.

livelihood of *Brahmins* entirely depended on sacrificial offerings. In order to ensure their livelihood, *Brahmins* institutionalized their ritual traditions and gained their dominance in the society. Not only they performed rituals in the king's court, but also largely in families of different communities except in the families of those who involved in agricultural production.³⁹⁸ Social differentiations and institutionalization of unequal distribution of resources had slowly and steadily begun to incarnate in the society. Thus, the growth in agricultural surplus, the mutual cooperation between ruling class and priestly community had led to the institutionalization of belief system of common people and transformed from mere belief into means of exploitation.

Towards the end of Vedic age, cultures and counter-cultures had reshaped the religious traditions of Brahmanism. Around 600 B.C., Indian sub-continent had undergone rapid material changes. Iron ploughshare replaced wooden ones.³⁹⁹ A large tract of land was brought under cultivation. The system of transplantation accelerated agricultural production. More surpluses in agriculture led to exchange of goods and the growth of urban centers. Chiefdoms were transformed into Kingdoms, which was administered by the rulers through strong fortification, standing army and regular taxes levied on the people. The society was becoming very complex entity.⁴⁰⁰ *Varna* and *Jati* played an important role in determining one's status and identity.

In this crucial atmosphere, Brahmanical religious tradition got shaped and reshaped to intensify material exploitation of *Brahmins* and *Kshatriyas*. The notions of *Karma* (conduct), *Samskara* (transmigration of soul) and *Moksha* (salvation) produced by Brahmanical tradition constituted as social force in classifying the society into four *Varna*, *Brahmins*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaishyas* and *Shudras*.⁴⁰¹ Birth and occupation were considered as religiously sanctioned morals. It was believed that One's birth either high or low was determined by one's *Karma* (conduct) in his previous birth. The notion of purity and pollution came to be identified with one's occupation.

³⁹⁸R S Sharma, *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999, p. 100.

³⁹⁹Ibid, p. 45.

⁴⁰⁰B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *A social history of early India*, OUP, Pearson Education India, New Delhi, 2009, p. 17.

⁴⁰¹R S Sharma, *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 1999, p. 47.

Salvation (*Moksha*) was taken for granted based on one's birth and occupation. Thus, *Brahmins* and the *Kshatriyas* became elites in the society.⁴⁰² *Vaishyas* and *Shudras* paid tax to the ruler and gifts to the *Brahmins*. *Shudras* were now becoming dispossessed servants of Aryan tribes and non-Aryan tribes. All these religious manipulations were questioned by the people within the tradition, which led to the rise of counter culture called *Sramanism* such as Jain, Buddhist, *Lokayata*, *Charavaka* and *Ajivika* traditions. The leaders especially Gautam Buddha and Mahavira, which undermined the position of *Brahmins* in the society, had converted rise of these new traditions into movements. As mentioned above, the livelihood of *Brahmins* solely depended on sacrificial rituals in which huge number of animals was killed. That is the reason why they had organized large scale rituals under the sponsorship of kings and rich landholders. In order to sustain their livelihood and status, *Brahmins* monopolized rituals and attributed to hereditaryship. Moreover, they introduced hierarchy in the society based on one's birth and occupation. But, new sramanic traditions preached the people ideas of non-violence, humanity, human dignity, equality. The leaders of these heterodox sects opposed animal sacrifices, caste system, and inhuman treatment towards the *Shudras*. On the contrary, *Sramanic* traditions opened popular space for all the sections of people including *Shudras* and women to participate and discuss the issues of Brahmanical ritual traditions in the society. *Charavaka* preached materialism. *Ajivikas* taught cosmic world and Jains spoke about real world. Moreover, Buddhism preached the upliftment of slaves and opened a path for salvation to all the section of the people in the society irrespective of one's caste and occupation. Buddhists *Sanghas* permitted women to become nuns.⁴⁰³

Since many of the leaders of these new sects came from *Kshatriyas*, The movements paved a way for the *Kshatriyas* to be placed on the top of the society. While in the one hand the people were mobilized under the *Sramanic* traditions, on the other hand, the Brahmanical religious traditions underwent a rapid revival era. Between 4th century B.C. and 2nd century A.D., *Brahmin* priests produced new ideas, which were later compiled as *Upanishads*. The ideas such as *Karma* (conduct), *Samskara* (transmigration of soul) and *Moksha* (salvation) began to

⁴⁰² R S Sharma, *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 1999, p. 54.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, pp. 128-133.

disappear in defining the status and identity of individual and community in the society.⁴⁰⁴ On the contrary, *Artha* (matter), *Dharma* (righteousness), *Kama*(love) and *Moksha* (salvation) came to be emphasized in every human life. Moreover, the notions of *Jnana* (knowledge) *Atma* (soul) and *Brahmma* (god) were elaborately defined and preached to the people. The *Brahmin* priests preached that one could get absolute Knowledge through reading or listening to *Upanishadic* traditions. One could purify his soul by following the teachings of *Upanishads* in his life and one could reach the feet of god (*Brahmma*) through above-mentioned means. Many of the *Upanishads* particularly, *Vaisheshika* and *Samkya* spoke about the material world. One of the six elements of *Upanishads*, *Vedanta* called for the end of the *Veda*. In short, one can say that during this period, Brahmanical religious culture produced a variety of philosophical traditions.⁴⁰⁵ But, these philosophical traditions could only attract the minority elite sections of the people in the society but not the common masses. On the other hand, under the state sponsorship, all the heterodox sects gained their prominence in the society, especially under the Mauryas and Kushanas, Buddhism became state sponsored religion.⁴⁰⁶ This is how reactionary cultures had revived the Brahmanical religious traditions but they gained no prominence until Guptas came to the power.

Rise of new regional states, state's inclination towards recognition of sacral identity and changing trend in the material lives of the people had brought a paradigm shift in Brahmanical religious domain around 400 A.D. Vasudev cult came into prominence. The people largely recognized Incarnation of *Vishnu*. Image worship began to take its shape in the society. Textual writers started writing new religious literature, moral laws and rewriting the older ones with huge interpolations.⁴⁰⁷ During this period, *Nidhisastras*, many *puranas* and *Dharmasastras* were produced. These literary traditions were primarily drawn from local and tribal traditions. It was the period when state pronounced Brahmanical religious tradition and the kings attempted to seek sacral recognition through their generosity towards *Brahmins* by providing land grants to

⁴⁰⁴ R S Sharma, *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, New Delhi, 1999, p. 135.

⁴⁰⁵ B. D. Chattopadhyaya, *A social history of early India*, OUP, Pearson Education India, New Delhi, 2009, p. 137.

⁴⁰⁶ Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian social history: Some interpretations*, Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1978, p. 75.

⁴⁰⁷ K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *Development of religion in South India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, p. 61.

them. Brahmanism, by now, relaxed its notion of sanctity and started to acculturate local as well as tribal traditions into its manifold. But, Brahmanical religious tradition did not eliminate its fundamental structure of caste and *Varna*. Instead, those who were incorporated into Brahmanism came to be identified with separate caste and they were put in *Varna*-based vertical social order. In case, if the tribal groups were taken into the social order, they were placed at the bottom of the Brahmanical social order. *Shakti* cult came into prominence.⁴⁰⁸ Moreover, the Brahmanical religious traditions got canonized and appeared as proselytizing movement in the society. At the same time, the revival of Brahmanical traditions directly or indirectly let the followers to launch false propaganda against heterodox religious traditions. In the one hand, Brahmanical traditions attempted to incorporate all the sects including Sramanism, Shakticism and Puranic traditions. Even Buddha came to be accepted as one of the incarnations of Lord Vishnu. But, on the other hand, Brahmanical traditions sanctioned immoral identity to those who refused to accept Brahmanical traditions by following heterodox religions. One cannot ignore that in 6 and 7th century A.D, thousands of Buddhists were killed and the followers of Brahmanical traditions with state sponsorship demolished many monasteries.⁴⁰⁹ However, one cannot deny that Brahmanical tradition crystallized its norms and regulations and opened a popular space for the common masses.

In this chapter, I will first attempt to explore the various dynamics of the *Bhakti* traditions, in order to see how this devotional or proselytizing movement brought indigenous cultural groups within the domain of the Brahmanical social organization. I would also like to trace the implication between the notion of devotion and social change. This chapter also attempts to analyze in what way the *Bhakti* tradition occurred through the process of assimilation. This chapter scrutinizes in what ways the marginal and subordinate classes were included into Brahmanical social order and in what way the notion of *Bhakti* excluded the marginals and subordinates from the Brahmanical social hierarchy and given the status of outcaste through the *Bhakti* movements. The compositions of the *Âlvârs* and the *Nâyanârs* will be examined to locate

⁴⁰⁸ R S Sharma, *Perspectives in social and economic history of early India*, Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1983, p. 79.

⁴⁰⁹ R S Sharma, *Aspects of political ideas and institutions in ancient India*, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1999, p. 385.

the popularization of Brahmanical culture and its ramifications in terms of the social and religious culture that could be seen as dominant in the literature of the time.

Brahmanical devotionalism took root in various regions of India at different points of time, and the key figures in what has been called the 'Bhakti movement' were the saint-poets who manifested the devotional ideal in their own lives and who often became leading figures in religious sects, based on either historical or mythical constructs.⁴¹⁰ The Tamil saints, who lived between the 6th and the 9th centuries AD, were the first exemplars of this ideal. Among them, some were devotees of Vishnu, and others were devotees of the other great god of the Brahmanical tradition, Shiva. The saints who sang hymns in praise of Lord Vishnu were called as *Alvars* and the saints who chanted hymns on Shiva were called *Nayanars*. There were 12 *Alvars* who lived in different points of time. They included 1. *PoigaiAlvar*, 2. *Bhoodattalvar*, 3. *Peyalvar*, 4. *ThirumalisaiAlvar*, 5. *Nammalvar*, 6. *MadhurakaviAlvar*, 7. *KulashakaraAlvar*, 8. *Periyalvar*, 9. *Andal*, 10. *ThondaradipodiAlvar*, 11. *ThiruppaanAlvar* and 12. *ThirumangaiAlvar*.⁴¹¹

The *Nayanars* were many in number who devoted their lives and soul in proselytizing the people towards worship of lord Shiva. They went from one place to another to preach *Bhakti* to the people and later they turned out to be pilgrim centers. The Saiva devotional hymns have been collected in a body of twelve *Tirumurai* or 'sacred works'. They consist of: the poems of Appar (Books IV-VI). Campantar (Books III) and Cuntarar (Book VII), together called the *Tevaram*: the hymns of *Manikkavacakar* (Book VIII); musical compositions of nine other saints the *Tiruvicaippd* (Book IX); *Tirumular's Tirumantiram* (Book X) and miscellaneous works (Book XI). The last book of the canon is the *PeriyaPuranam*, a hagiographical treatise on the lives of the legendary sixty-three saints, authored by Cekkilar who, incidentally, introduced the term '*Tirumurai*' to refer to this corpus.⁴¹² The *PeriyaPurânam*, provides information about the 63 *Nâyanârs* who lived at various points of time. The names of 63 *SaivaNayanars* are as follows: 1.

⁴¹⁰Susmita Pande, *Birth of bhakti in Indian religions and art*, Books & Books, New Delhi, 1982, p. 16.

⁴¹¹ Vidya Dehejia, *Slaves of the Lord: The Path of the Tamil Saints*, South Asia Books, New Delhi, 1988, p.36.

⁴¹² A Kandaiah, *A critical study of Early Tamil Saiva Bhakti Literature, with special reference to Tevaram*, Ph.D Thesis, University of London, London, 1973, p. 36.

Sundaramurthi Nayanar; 2. *Tiru Nilakanta Nayanar*; 3. *IyarpahaiNayanar*; 4. *IlayankudiMaraNayanar*; 5. *MaiporulNayanar*; 6. *ViralindaNayanar*; 7. *AmaranidiNayanar*; 8. *EripathaNayanar*; 9. *EnadinathaNayanar*; 10. *KannappaNayanar*; 11. *KungiliyaKalayaNayanar*; 12. *ManakancharaNayanar*; 13. *ArivattayaNayanar*; 14. *AnayaNayanar*; 15. *MurthiNayanar*; 16. *MurugaNayanar*; 17. *Rudra Pasupathi Nayanar*; 18. *Tiru Nalai Povar Nayanar*; 19. *Tiru KurippuThondaNayanar*; 20. *ChandesvaraNayanar*; 21. *Tiru-NavukkarasarNayanar*; 22. *KulacchiraiNayanar*; 23. *Perumilalai Kurumba Nayanar*; 24. *Karaikal Ammaiyar*; 25. *Appuddi Nayanar*; 26. *TirunilanakkaNayanar*; 27. *Nami Nandi Adigal*; 28. *Tiru Jnana Sambandar*; 29. *EyarkonKalikamaNayanar*; 30. *Tiru Mula Nayanar*; 31. *Dandi Adigal Nayanar*; 32. *Murkha Nayanar*; 33. *SomasiraNayanar*; 34. *Sakkiya Nayanar*; 35. *Sirappuli Nayanar*; 36. *SiruthondaNayanar*; 37. *CheramanPerumal Nayanar*; 38. *Gananatha Nayanar*; 39. *Kootruva Nayanar*; 40. *Pugal CholaNayanar*; 41. *Narasinga Muniyaraiyar*; 42. *Adipattha Nayanar*; 43. *Kalikamba Nayanar*; 44. *Kalia Nayanar*; 45. *Satti Nayanar*; 46. *Aiyadigal Kadavarkon Nayanar*; 47. *Kanampulla Nayanar*; 48. *Kari Nayanar*; 49. *Ninra Seer Nedumara Nayanar*; 50. *Mangaiyarkarasiyar*; 51. *Vayilar Nayanar*; 52. *Munaiyaduvar Nayanar*; 53. *Kalarsinga Nayanar*; 54. *Serutunai Nayanar*; 55. *Idangali Nayanar*; 56. *Pugazh Tunai Nayanar*; 57. *Kotpuli Nayanar*; 58. *Pusalar Nayanar*; 59. *Nesa Nayanar*; 60. *Kochengat Chola Nayanar*; 61. *Tiru NilakantaYalpanar*; 62. *Sadaya Nayanar*; 63. *Isaijnaniyar*.⁴¹³ By the 10th and 11th centuries, the poems of the Tamil saints had already got canonized and incorporated into the Tamil *Vaishnava* and *Saiva* religious discourse. The *Vaishnava* tradition is embodied in the *NalayiraDivyaprabandham*, the “heavenly arrangement of four thousand [hymns]”, authored by the *Vaishnava* saints poets, which was said to have been collected by the tenth-century religious leader *Nathamuni*. The Tamil Saiva canon consists of twelve compendia called the *Tirumurai* (sacred arrangement). Most of these are single, long poetic texts or anthologies of poems by a single author. But two among them have multiple authors. Nambi Andar Nambi, who lived during the eleventh century, is credited with arranging all but the last book of the canon.⁴¹⁴

⁴¹³Ibid, pp. 36-39.

⁴¹⁴Vidya Dehejia, *Slaves of the Lord : The Path of the Tamil Saints*, South Asia Books, 1988, p. 75.

Before critically analyzing the process of inclusion and exclusion from the viewpoint of the margins, let us briefly review the nature of *bhakti* movement through reading of the Tamil *Bhakti* literature. *Bhakti* literature was first sizable corpus of full-fledged religious poems in Tamil and the first Hindu sectarian scriptures in a vernacular language. While reading the *Bhakti* literature, one can get an idea about the multiple contexts in which the poetry functions. These poems are the first literary expression of emotional *Bhakti*. Mostly, the Tamil *Bhakti* literature tells us the way in which the saints expressed their emotional bonds towards the deities. When we look at few songs, we can understand that the *Bhakti* saints imagine themselves as child, servant and friend of deities and use to express their deep love and affection to the deity, which they worshiped.⁴¹⁵ From the literature, one can always get idea that the Pallava and the Chola monarchs employed singers to perform these songs during the temple worship and they still form a crucial part of Saivite rituals. Each and every poetry does have themes and strategies, which touches upon topics in diverse manner. In the *Bhakti* literature, one can also understand that the poets had been heavily influenced Sanskrit language and culture. The use of the verbal icon as rhetorical strategy is very impressive in the literature. In a classical Tamil, the poets had represented the voices of millions who were believed to be devotees who revolved around the temple worship. Moreover, the poets often portray the role of Tamil landscapes in their poetic imagery. One can understand the manner in which the *Bhakti* hymns are dealing with temple rites, festivals and local legends. Mostly, the legends are found in Saivite literature, which are connected with temples. Saivite literature, Particularly, Thevaram often speak about the ways of love and acts of devotion in a rhetorical manner. Some poems in the *bhakti* literature provide biographical material. For instance, the myth of Sambandar gives us a vivid clue. It says that *Sambandar* was nursed by Uma at the temple tank. The *legend* of *Appar* says how *Appar* transformed himself from Jaina monk into vanquisher of Jainas and the legend of *Cuntarar* described in the *Bhakti* literature talks about *Cuntarar*'s treatment of his two wives.⁴¹⁶ In general, one can understand how the *bhakti* saints made active efforts to propagate their religious and social traditions.

⁴¹⁵Indira Viswanathan Peterson, *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1989, p. 22.

⁴¹⁶Indira Viswanathan Peterson, *Poems to Siva: The Hymns of the Tamil Saints*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1989, p. 53.

As John E. Cort, says, “*Bhakti* is not restricted to what scholars say it is; rather, it is primarily what bhaktas have said it is, and these bhaktas have included *Vaisnavas*, *Saivas*, *Saktas*, Jains, Buddhists, and others.” Thus, one can understand that bhakti is a highly complex, multiform cultural category, which is differently understood and practiced in different times, places, and sects. “*Bhakti* is both something that one does and an attitude that can suffuse all of one's actions. *Bhakti* can range from sober respect and veneration that upholds socio-religious hierarchies and distinctions to fervent emotional enthusiasm that breaks down all such hierarchies and distinctions in a radical soteriological egalitarianism.”

One can acknowledge the view presented by Glenn E. Yocum on *Bhakti*. He views the Tamil *bhakti* as “The first great upsurge of popular Hindu devotion”, which occurred in south India from the seventh to the ninth centuries and that it gradually spread northward into the Kannada country and Maharashtra and then into Bengal and North India.⁴¹⁷ While reading the *Bhakti* literature especially *Saiva* canonical work, one can get an idea of the indigenous spiritual roots of Tamil *bhakti*. One can also appreciate the hypothesis made by Yakkam. He says that the early *bhakti* poets laid no emphasis on caste. One could not be disqualified from becoming a devotee because of caste. This theme will be analysed in an elaborate manner in the later part of this chapter.

Norman Cutler is quite right in viewing the dimension of *Bhakti*. He speculates that “the poems of the Tamil saints are expressions of *bhakti*, a personal, devotional approach to the worship of god.” In this context, while reading *Bhakti* hymns of either category, one can clearly understand *Bhakti* as the relation between the author and audience in terms of stressing good things to the audience about the deities, either Shiva or Vishnu, through recital of several *Puranic* myths in their hymns. Their motive was to advise them to follow the path of devotion. The relation between the author and deity means that as a child, mother and client, the author tries to attain the feet of god. The relation between the deity and the devotee was like the relationship between a leader and follower, where the devotee will follow the words of author as the sayings of deity.

⁴¹⁷ G.E. Yocum, *Hymns to the Dancing Siva: A study of Manickavasagar's "thiruvAchagam"*, Heritage Publishers, New Delhi, 1982, p. 35.

George W. Spencer visualizes the concept of Tamil *bhakti* in the following words, “In several major spheres of human activity—political, social, and religious—the period of Pallava political ascendancy in the Tamil country, from roughly the 6th through the 9th centuries CE, saw the crystallization of many forms of thought and action which would prevail in the Tamil country in later centuries. The emergence of articulate dynastic regimes, expressing themselves through inscriptional records; the appearance of stone Hindu temples as special ‘ritual arenas’ for devotional purposes; and the displacing, first in the royal courts and subsequently in the countryside, of rival religious elites of the Buddhist and Jaina persuasion by a new, passionate, and aggressive breed of Hindu devotees, were all notable features of the Pallava period.”

Kesavan Veluthat speculates that the *bhakti* movement in south India was a temple movement. Devotion to Visnu or Siva was reduced into devotion to the deity consecrated in a particular temple. The *bhakti* movement continued to popularise the temple worship. The popularity of the temple meant the acceptance of all related institutions including religion, norms of social differentiation and the peculiar organization of the forces and relations of production. He also states “in the beginning *bhakti* had an openness about it in matters of caste; but as the movement came to its fruition, it closed its ranks for the lower sections of society. Infact, strengthening the institution of caste.”

Mostly, scholars visualize *bhakti* as the indigenous product of early *Tamizhagam*, which spread from there to other parts of India. And also, they conceptualize that *bhakti* was not created by any single person or community; rather, it was popular in nature and accepted by everyone. Furthermore, they glorify that the *bhakti* movement opened a public space for everyone irrespective of one’s caste and community. Zvelebil is one of the few scholars who look at the caste aspect in the *bhakti* tradition, in terms of an analysis of the social background of the saints.

However, most scholars see history and its progress as objective events. They do not engage with the idea of history as representing hermeneutical interactions between the human mind and objective events. Taking literary productions as a source for historical writings, historians look at the characters and events in an aesthetic sense. The devotional and other religious literature have mostly been viewed in this way.

In this context, the historians of early *Tamizhagam* especially those who have worked on the *bhakti* movement have also looked at the literary texts in this manner. Firstly, they look at the *bhakti* and social interactions from the viewpoint of the elites, who controlled the social mechanism. Secondly they read the literature in an aesthetic sense and provide a literal interpretation of the compositions. Finally, they try to conceptualize that inequality, hierarchy, seclusion and untouchability are not the outcome of the external stimuli and that everything evolved through a long process.

Taking devotional Saivite literature, marking the period between the 6th century CE and the 9th century CE, I would like to bring forth a hermenutical interpretation to analyze the social changes in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. I would like to look at the internal meanings within the texts, which indicates the changes and continuity in that society. That is, the particular social environment that prevailed at a specific point of time determines the literary productions. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret this literature synchronically and diachronically. The literary persons do the former for cross-cultural analysis without concern for the context and the latter is used to provide the time and space dimension to the study of a text.

The *brâhmana* and non-*brâhmana* saints, including some women saints, produced the Saivite and Vaishnavite literature in the *bhakti* tradition. But on the basis of this, one cannot say that the movement was popular in nature and brought about social equality. In the literature, saints and devotees are visualized as existing in harmony, but one should keep the question open whether it indicates the prevalence of social harmony and absence of exploitation. However, our purpose of reexamining the *bhakti* literature is to analyze critically the mythical stories and social reality which prevailed in the particular time period and scrutinize how individual consciousness was appropriated or exploited by another individual or community through ritual manipulations. Moreover, was there any indication of *bhakti* being accompanied by the process of marginalization of certain communities? If it is so, how did this occur?

Before discussing the *bhakti* literature from the viewpoint of the inclusion and exclusion, let us locate our vision on the general conceptualization about the notion of devotion in several aspects. Pilgrimage is a prominent feature in Indian religious traditions. In the classical Sanskrit tradition, the earliest use of the word *tirtha*, which eventually came to designate pilgrimage, occurs in Vedic and Upanishadic sources. To convey and affirm the importance of pilgrimage, the authors

describe the efficacy of ritual journey in terms of efficacy of ritual sacrifice. Each pilgrimage place is thus distinguished by its geographical location, its name, and its special qualities of efficacy. The Tamil *Bhakti* saints portray the pilgrimage centers in the following manner:

The Lord at Pullirukkuvelur has the form of lightning;
He is one in the heavens
two in the blustering wind
three in the flames of the red fire
four in the flowing water
five in the earth, a refuge that does not diminish.
His form is a great coral flame, a pearl,
bright light, a diamond, gold without blemish.
I dismiss as in vain all days not spent worshipping Him!⁴¹⁸

One cannot say that pilgrimages were exclusively made to temples. Many of the terms denote open, unstructured places. For example, one finds *katu* (forest, uncultivated land), *turai* (port or refuge), *kulam* (tank of water), and *kalam* (field) among the terms they used. Thus, both natural (yet social) and constructed places are included in the poets' places of pilgrimage; only some are specifically religious buildings. In addition, there are some ritual places that are not temples at all.

The *bhakti* hymns indicate the contact or union or communion between god and devotee:

“Lord, our noble leader,
by your grace
I won't give a thought to any god,
but you.”

⁴¹⁸ Hymn 5, Patigam 4, 4th Tirumurai of Tevaram by Tirunavukarasar.

“I don't relinquish my heart at your feet,
I don't melt with love,
sing your praise or bring garlands,
I don't tell of your glory,
tend your temple or dance King among gods, refuge for worthy people,
I rush toward my death.”

The *Bhakti* saints imagined Siva as one with the Tamil lands and culture. They see Him everywhere: Siva is in the hearts and minds of the Tamil people, Siva is in the stories of cosmic deeds and local bhaktas, Siva is in Tamil towns and lands, and Siva is in temples. Saivite Bhakti saints also portray the cosmic power of Shiva. The following song attaches the evidence.

The Lord who burned the cities
drawing against His body
the mountain as the bow, the strong cobra as the bowstring,
and Agni and Hari as the arrows
I am a fool not to think of Him first.
Bearing this body,
How long can I remain separate
from my Lord of Arur?⁴¹⁹

One of the motives behind pursuing the ideal of *bhakti* was to get a pleasurable life, free from rebirth, which could happen through the association with the object of the devotion.

“*Satakopa* of Kurukur,
fertile town filled with gardens,

⁴¹⁹ Hymn 7, Patigam 6, 7th *Tirumurai* of *Tevaramby* Cuntarar.

has performed small service
by singing these thousand polished verses
for the lord who churned the ocean capped with waves,
the lord the gods worship
so they may rise to high places
people who master these ten verses of the thousand
will rise with the gods
and escape the prison of births.”

While we read the *Bhakti* literature especially, one can understand that *Bhakti* was a continuation of early tradition but presented in different manifestation. That is, in the *Sangam* age, love relationship plays a vital roll. In the interior songs of *Sangam* tradition, we could see the portrayal of love relationship between hero and heroin particularly in the Kalavu life. Similarly, in the *Bhakti* tradition in the Tamil land, the love between the deity and devotee is represented as the love between the young lovers.

First, she heard His name
then she heard about His color and form
and His *Arur*.
Though dissuaded, she became mad for Him
and left her mother and father that very day,
abandoning the customs of the world.
Losing herself
forgetting her own name
this girl placed her head at the Lord's feet.⁴²⁰

⁴²⁰ Hymn 4, Patigam 6, 4th *Tirumurai Tevaram* by Tirunavukarasar.

Bhakti saints used to represent themselves as servants of lord as well as servants of the devotees.⁴²¹

Appar's following hymns defines the nature of a *tontar*, or servant to the Lord.

1. We are slaves to no man,
nor do we fear death.
Hell holds no torments for us,
we know no deceit.
We rejoice, we are strangers to disease,
we bow to none.
Joy alone is ours, not sorrow,
for we belong forever
to Sankara, who is the supreme Lord,
our King who wears the white conch earring on one ear,
and we have reached his beautiful, flower-fresh feet.

2. The wide world is our home;
generous householders in every town give us food.
Public halls are our only shelter;
we sleep in Goddess Earth's loving embrace— all this is true.
The Lord of the warlike bull has taken us.
We lack nothing, our trials are over now.
Why need we listen to the words
of men who parade themselves in silk and gold?
We are innocent men.

3. We do not consort with women;
we rise before dawn to bathe and chant Mahadeva's name,
our sole ornament is sacred ash.
Tears, welling from our eyes like monsoon rains,
proclaim the melting of our stony hearts.
Why need we obey the commands of kings,
who ride on elephants? We are free from bonds.

4. Saiva devotees are our only kin,
we wear nothing but the waistband and the loincloth.
Even our enemies cannot harm us;

⁴²¹ Hymns from 1 to 10, Patigam 52, 4th*Tirumurai*, *Tevaram* by Tirunavu Karasar.

all evil is turned into good for us,
and we will never be born again.
Our tongues chant "Hail Siva!"
good name of the Lord
with the sweet, golden konrai wreath.
We are devotees of the Lord
whose blazing forehead eye
reduced crocodile-bannered *Kama* to ashes.

This hymn explores the nature of the servant or slave (*tontar*) status of the *bhaktas*, an important image that pervades the poetry of the *muvar*.

Bhakti movement opened popular social space, sacred space and uncontested space for all the followers of deities which seemed to be believed as preventive force that protected all the followers even from the death. In relation to this notion, Tirujnanasambandhar brings out *Puranic* story of *Markandaiyan* in which, when the god of death, Kootran came to capture him, Markandaiyan went and appealed to Lord Shiva. Shiva protected him from god of death.⁴²²

Bhakti tradition can also be understood as a divine force, which was prescribed by saints to eliminate the poverty of people. For instance, once, Tirujnanasambandhar and Tirunavukarasar stayed together in the village called Tiruvelimezhiyur. During their stay, a huge drought shattered the village. By realizing the situation of *adiyars* saints, the lord Shiva gave them one gold coin each daily. When the villagers appealed to lord Shiva about their grievances, Tirujnanasambandhar recited hymns in praise of the lord and the lord poured gold coins to eliminate the drought from the village. The songs is as follows:

Vaasi Theerave Kaasu Nalguveer,

Change the useless coins and provide us with good ones

To vanquish our poverty,

O lord! You are presiding over Tiruvelimazhi village,

You preside over the entire universe and lord to everyone.⁴²³

⁴²² An elaborate picture is given in the hymns from 3 to 7, Mudhal Tirumurai, Patigam 52.

⁴²³ Hymn 1, Mudhal Tirumurai, Patigam 92.

It was often mentioned in the *bhakti* literature that the *brâhmanas* were portrayed as the ritual holders of Vedic customs and rituals, and their culture was visualized as the high culture. The commoners were not allowed to follow their culture; rather, keeping the *brâhmana* culture distinct, the people were asked by saints to devote their life and soul to the deity by accepting it as the centrifugal force. On only one condition that made the commoners were accepted equal to *Brahmins* was through surrendering their soul to the feet of lord Shiva. The following song reads,

“There are four *Vedas* and their hymns (*mantras*),
Chanted by the *brâhmanas* (*Vediyar*),
Who perform the three *vêlvi* (*yajnas*),
Are considered the high before god.
If you chant five letters of the name of lord *Shiva*,
You will be higher than the *brâhmanas*.”

According to Anthony Good, sexuality, eroticism and fertility are the core themes in the Tamil devotional movement. Irrespective of gender, saints imagine themselves as the spouse of the lord and submit their soul. The deity in the temple is given a human form and emotions, and the worship will be performed through songs and rituals specified according to the time and situation. Some of the saints’ poems denote the sexual eroticism and frustration of the *bhakta*, and the yearning to be united with the deity. Another view is that the deity was portrayed as the child and the songs called *tâlattu* were sung to appease it.

The conversations mentioned in Periyapuram between *Bhakti* saints and their followers reveal many facts, which attach the evidence to the idea, that *Bhakti* movement of 6th and 7th century A.D. involved in proselytizing efforts. We can understand it through the following instances. Thirujnanasambandar and his followers were staying at the temple of lord shiva in the Village called Tirumarugal. Days passed. Oneday, Thirujnanasambandar looked at a young girl lamenting before god. Then he came to her and asked her problems. She explained to him that the young girl being the daughter of a merchant in the village called Vaipur decided to elope with her respective bridegroom. On their way, they happened to stay in the mut where a snake

bither bridegroom and he died. After having listened to her problems, he recited songs to revive the life of her bridegroom and achieved at the end. They were married with blessings of Tirujnanasambandhar.

A Saivite devotee, Sivanesar who lived in Mailapur, had a daughter namely Poombaavaiyar. Sivanesar wanted to give his daughter Poombaavaiyar in marriage to Tirujnanasambandhar. Once, a snake to death bit this young girl. Sivanesar did all the funerals and collected ashes and bones and stored in a pot. When Tirujnanasambandhar came to worship lord Kabaleswarar at Mailapur, Sivanesar expressed his sorrow. Tirujnanasambandhar Tolkaappiyam asked Sivanesar to bring the pot and recited hymns in praise of lord Kabaliswerar. The girl became alive.⁴²⁴

In *Ântâl's Tiruppâvai*, one can clearly see the operation of the brahmanical conversion methods. For instance, she takes all the cow-herd girls to the house of lord Krishna and wakes him up. He looks at *Ântâl* and at the others and says,

“Since you are the daughter of Periyalvar,
You have all the right to come and get blessings,
You have taken these cowherd girls without consecrating them, so
You go back and get these girls to an *Acharya*
Who will purify them, then
Come to me,
I will give my blessings.”

Bhakti songs emphasise importance of the *Brahmins*, their mode of worship and their livelihood of cows. They also specifically state that if the *Velvi* (sacrifice) and proper worship of lord were continued without any interruption, the sky will pour rain and the kingdom will flourish. Therefore, the king has to sponser sacrifices and temple worship. This idea can be understood from the following hymns sung by Tirujnanasambandhar.

Vaazhga Andhanar Vaanavar Aaninam

Veezhga Thanpunal Vendhanum Onguga

⁴²⁴ Hymns from 1 to 10, Patigam 47, 2ndTirumurai of Tevaramby Tirujnanasambandhar.

Aazhga Theeyadhellam Aran Namame
Soozhga Vaiyagamum Thuyar Theergave!

Let the Brahmins, lords and cows live long
Let the sky pour cold rain and let the king flourish
Let all the evil things disappear and;
Let the people in the entire world pronounce the name of our lord Shiva
Thus, Let all the sorrows of people vanish from this world!⁴²⁵

The story of Tirujnana Sambandhar informs us that *Velvi* (sacrifice) was prevalent in *Bhakti* era. And was considered as important. Once Tirujnana Sambandhar was staying at Tiruvaduthurai. His father Tirupa Irudhaiyar came to him and requested him for elements to be used in the *Velvi* (sacrifice). Thus, in order to fulfil his father's request, Tirujnana Sambandhar recited hymns in praise of lord Shiva who resides in Tiruvadurai. The lord gave him a golden peacock to be used in the sacrifice.⁴²⁶

During the time of the Pallavas, Saivism, Vaishnavism, Samanum and Sakyam were the four different ideological sects, which had involved in proselytizing the people in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. Among them, Samanum and Sakyam were heterodox sects which had their influence in Tamil land even from the *Sangam* age. On the other hand, although present Brahmanical religious text writers appreciate the presence of Brahmanism, its intensification began around 6th and seventh century A.D. Each of these religious sects had their own norms, principles and methods. When the strong monarchical state came into existence in the northern part of *Tamizhagam* under the Pallavas, Saivism and Vaishnavism believed to be two wings of Brahmanism came to be patronized by the kings. At the same time, many *Bhakti* literature tell us once the rulers were followers of heterodox sect of Jainism and by the efforts of *Bhakti* saints, they were converted into Saivism and Vaishnavism. The *Bhakti* literature explain the evidence that not only *Bhakti* saints actively concentrated in converting the kings into Brahmanical pantheistic

⁴²⁵Hymn 1, Patigam 52, 3rd Tirumurai of Tevaram by Tirujnana Sambandhar. Transliteration and Translation into English by myself.

⁴²⁶Hymns from 1 to 10, Patigam 4, 3rd Tirumurai of Tevaram by Tirujnana Sambandhar

but also they largely took a devotional journey in proselytizing the common masses. By this time, Religious supremacy of particular sect entirely depended on royal patronage and faith of the people. But, one cannot deny that their involvement in prosilytisation often let to the sectarian conflicts between religious saints as well as between the followers of different sects. Both Saivism and Vaishnavism brought anti-propaganda against Buddhism and Jainism. At the same time, one cannot ignore that both Saivism and Vaishnavism had inner contradictions in their devotional ideologies, which had often let to the break out of sectarian conflicts between Saivites and Vaishnavites. However, conflicts between two opposite traditions and the conflicts between the sects within the tradition had let to the social change. This social change can be studied in terms of inclusion and exclusion.

The ideas and values preached by Saivite and Vaishnavite saints towards the people in their proselytizing efforts were collectively called as *Bhakti*, which is a Sanskrit term, meant devotion. The *Bhakti* saints used various strategies and methods in spreading their devotional message to the people. Some of *Bhakti* saints wrote verses, *Slokas* and songs, which were later, compiled as religious literature. Some went from place to place singing in praise of deities and some preached *Bhakti* message through musical compositions. One cannot deny the fact that in their Endeavour to spread *Bhakti* values and ideas towards the people, the *Bhakti* saints had actively participated in temple culture. As above mentioned, *Bhakti* was a social protest movement which brought social change by breaking the traditional norms. It facilitated the upward mobility to those who were kept outside of the Brahmanical social order. In other words, it involved in the process of inclusion.

While we read *Bhakti* literature, we could get two contradicting views in understanding social atmosphere which prevailed during that time. In one hand, *Bhakti* literature tell us that the notion of devotion broke Brahmanical social norms and incorporated the *Shudras* those who were considered as fourth *Varna* conceptually placed at the bottom of the Brahmanical social order and untouchables those who were kept outside of the order branded as *Avarnas*, into conceptualized spatial order. On the other hand, they provide us a vivid account that how the spatially recognized *Bhakti* saints belonged to *Shudras* and untouchables created a segregated space in *Bhakti* tradition as well as within the social order in which they were accommodated.

Thus, we must employ synchronic and diachronic reading of literature and then we need to understand in what way the notion of inclusion worked out in the *Bhakti* tradition.

As we have analysed in the previous chapter that the social change occurred through Brahmanization and it was done through coercive power of the state and through attractive power of the *Brahmins*. In the first case, we could see from the inscriptions that the state under the Pallavas strongly supported Brahmanism and its conceptualized social order. For instance, the Pallava king Mahendravarman II., issued a copper plate inscription called *Velurpalayam* copper plate which clearly attach the evidence to it. The inscription reads, “*Ivan Avvav Vagupar Nadakkavendu Muraigalai Koorum Aranoolvazhi Aandan.*”⁴²⁷ He ruled according to the rules of *Varnasrama Dharma* which are prescribed to people in the society moreover, the kings issued *Brahmadeya* land grants to the *Brahmins* which were mostly tax-free grants. There were few restrictions imposed on the people other than *Brahmins* who lived in the *Brahmadeya* village. The kings issued orders that toddy tappers should not tap toddy from the coconut trees and palm trees in the *Brahmadeya* village. The kings recognized the sacred language of *Brahmins*, the Sanskrit. Many *BrahminBhakti*saints got state sponsorship in writing literature and they were also largely supported by the state to spread the message of Manu, *Mahabharata*, *Ramayana* and *Purana* among the people in the countryside. This kind of state sponsored religious tradition had let to social change rapidly.

Tirunavukarasar, one of the Saivite saints and one of the composers of Tevaram sang the following songs which portray the *Pulaiyas*, the untouchables who lived in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*.

Angamellam Kuraindhazhugu Thozhunoyaraay

Adharithu Thindruzhulum Pulayarenum

Gangaivar Sadaikadandhar Anbbar Aagil

Avar Kanbir Naam Vanangum Kadavulare!

⁴²⁷ Velurpalayam copper plate, SII, Vol. XIV, Part 2, No. 3. Translation by myself.

Even the one who suffer from lepracy,
Even the *Pulaiyar* who eat beef by cutting the cows,
If he who becomes devotee of lord who has got river Ganga in his hair,
He will be our god whom we worship.⁴²⁸

This song kindles both our emotional faculty as well as cognitive faculty. If one, by using emotional faculty, reads first two lines of this hymn that is, “*Angamellam Kuraindhazhugu Thozhunoyaraay Adharithu Thindruzhulum Pulayarenum*”, he will be appreciating the effort of *Bhakti* in including *Pulaiya* untouchable irrespective of their impure occupation of killing cows and their habit of beef eating into Brahmanical social order. If he steps further to understand on what condition the *Palaiya* could be included and respected as god. The last two lines state, “*Gangaivar Sadaikadandhar Anbbar Aagil Avar Kanbir Naam Vanangum Kadavulare!*” The *Pulaiya*, will be respected as god only and only when he is ready to become the devotee of Lord Shiva. If we read this verse diachronically, we must question that what would be the condition of the *Pulaiya* if he did not become a devotee of lord Shiva. literature does not directly tell us what happened to those who refused to become devotees of *Bhakti* cults. But, while we read Cuntarar’s Tevaram, we we can understand the conditions for the untouchables who wanted to become devotees of lord Shiva. In Tirukurukai Viratta Patigam, Cuntarar sings,

Kaapadhor Villummam Pungaiyathor Cippaaram
Thorperum Serupputhottu Thooyavaay Kalasamati
Theeperum Kangal Seyya Kurudhineer Ozhuga Thankan
Koppadhum Patrikondar Kurugaiviratanare!

Those who hunt animals,
Those who stitch skin-made slippers with shield
He who gave his eye with flowing blood
O lord Kurukaiviratanare! You accepted him as true devotee and the king.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁸ Hymn 6, Patigam 44, 5th Tirumurai, Tirunavukarasar, Translation by myself.

In his work, the Tirutondartokai, Cuntarar portrays Nandhanar as a *Pulaiya*, Neelakanta as a *Paanar* and Kannappar as a hunter. These castes were considered as untouchable castes. *Bhakti* songs tell us that irrespective of their castes, Kannappar, Tiruneelapovar(Nandhanar) and Thiruneelakanta,*Paanar* were included within the *Bhakti* tradition. Cuntarar's song reads:

Kalaimalindha Seernambi Kannapparkadiyen

Semmaiye Therunaalai Povarkum Adiyen

Thiruneela Kantathup Paanarkkadiyen

I'm the servant to Kannappar, the one who is specialist in hunting

I'm servant to Theeruneelapovar, (Nandhanar) who is specialist in *Bhakti*

I'm also servant to Thiruneelakantar, the *Paanar*, who is specialist in composing musical hymns in praise of lord.⁴³⁰

But, Periyapuram, the *Bhakti* literature of 11th century A.D. states that the Untouchable saints could become true devotee of lord Shiva only and only when they agreed to certain purificatory conditions such as crossing the fire and sacrificing one of their eyes.

In the above instances, we have seen how the Tamil Saiva *Bhakti* tradition acted as the divine force involved in the process of inclusion and esclusion. Let us analyse in what way the legacy of Tamil Vaishnava *Bhakti* tradition involved in the aforesaid process.

Pazhudhila Ozhuga laatrup

Palasadhu Pedhi maargal

Izhikulath thavarga lenum

Emmadi Yaarga Lagil

Thozhumineer Kodumin Kolmin!

Endrunin Nodu Mokka

⁴²⁹Hymn 1, Patigam Tirukurukaiviratam, 5th Tirumurai by Cuntarar, translation into English by myself.

⁴³⁰ Hymn 6, Patigam 4, Tiruthondarthokai by Cuntarar. Transliteration and translation into English by myself.

Vazhipada Varuli Naaypom
Madhilthiru Varangath thane!

Those who follow difined order,
Other than four *Varna* order
Even the lowest order
if they become devotee of lord Vishnu
and worship him, they can give and they can take (ideas)
they can be one of us.
O lord! He who reside in Thiruvarangam.⁴³¹

Both Thondaradipodi Alvar and Nammalvar were aware of fourfold classification of Brahmanical social order. Moreover, they denote the untouchables as *Chandalas* in their songs. But their songs clearly inform us that *Bhakti* stood as a force which incorporated the untouchables.

Puranic tradition as well as Nalayiradivyaprabandham the *Vaishnava* canonical text portray the life story of *Vaishnava* saint belong to untouchable caste. Once, Logasharangan A *VaishnavaBrahmin* saint with a pot in his hand went to draw water from the river Kudamurattu (a tributary of river Kaverri). He saw an untouchable standing in meditational mode. So he shouted at him to move from the riverbank. He did not listen to Logasharangan. So all the *Brahmin* priest came there and threw stones on him. He did not move at all. Later they went to the temple of Srirangam to worship lord Vishnu. They found blood bleeding from deity's forehead. They were shocked. To that night, lord Vishnu appeared in Logasharangan's dream and said to him, "take the Tirupaanalvar on your sholder and come to me, he is my devotee. He is no longer untouchable." The *Brahmin* saint acted accordingly. The conversation between the *Brahmin* saint and untouchable saint really provide clear picture of the process of inclusion.

⁴³¹ Song 22 of Tondaradipodi Alvar. Transliteration and Translation into English by myself.

It is also to be noticed here that the brahmanical forces had to confront with the heterodox sects of Buddhism and Jainism. In order to reduce the influence of Jainism and Buddhism and bring the people into the so-called brahmanical order, the bhakti saints were not only praising their gods but were also vehement in giving an immoral identity to the Buddhist and Jain traditions. The *Bhakti* saints polemics towards Jains and Buddhists portrayed in the songs as follow:

1. The Jains, who expose their skulls,
Conceal Siva with their minds.
But is it possible to conceal him?
Meditate on the feet,
Of the One who resides at Pajaiyarai vatatali,
enclosed by groves and ocean waves and gain release.
2. The god who uprooted
the group that bears waterpots,
and recites mantras through their noses,
Reveals the temple at beautiful vatatali as his own;
No dread diseases will afflict those who gaze fondly upon this temple.
3. The hands of your humble servant,
who worshiped the One at Pajaiyarai vatatali Are saved.
He is the cosmos, the blue-necked One,
who destroyed the arrogant and fat Jains,
lacking in both virtue and clothing.
4. How cool is my mind, Meditating
Upon the master of Pajaiyajai vatatali
who, bearing as weapons fire and a white axe,
drove away the stinking, debased Jains,
who pluck their heads bald.
5. Sorrows will wither,
When we praise the benefactor of Pajaiyarai vatataji.
Where the ground is flooded,
with sweet sugarcane juice,
and turned to mud; He destroyed the Jains,
who rob propriety by eating while undressed,
before young women who have red lines of beauty
in the corners of their eyes.
6. Afflictions will cease instantly,
For those who pray to the
Source and Light of life itself at Pajaiyarai vatatali;
He destroyed the Jains,
who ruin the order of life when they eat thus.

7. The fire of *karma* is extinguished,
When we worship the One who illuminates,
pleasing Palaiyarai vatataji,
which is full of grace;
Cleaving from there the deceptive Jains,
who cram riceballs into their mouths.

8. All karma will perish
When we worship the One who endures at Pajaiyarai vatataji;
His foot kicked cruel Yama
And caused such trouble for the Jains
who are ignorant of the five holy syllables
recited by the kin [*bhaktas*].

9. All karma will fall away When we say:
"He who favors Pajaiyarai vatatali
where the river flows Destroyed one thousand Jains
who remained unenlightened
despite their study
of Tamil, the truth itself."

10. When we pray to the One
who restored Pajaiyarai vatatali;
who is form and meaning,
who broke the neck and body of Ravana,
infamous in heaven as a warmonger,
with the slightest pressure from His little toe
All our karma is erased.⁴³²

Appar begins his attack with an apparent reference to a physical symbol of the Jain monks' discipline the bald head, which has been ritually shaved or plucked which can be taken as reference to the nature of the poem itself as an expose of the Jains.

According to Appar's hymn, the Jain approach to spiritual life is strictly literal; their bare skulls do not symbolize a renunciation of attachments and thus an escape from karma but, instead, delusion in their minds. In contrast, the bhaktas of Siva adopt the right internal state of meditation on Siva's feet and immediately gain release from *karma*.

⁴³² Hymns from 1 to 10, Patigam 6, 5thTirumurai of Tevaram by Tirunavukarasar.

In Appar's poem, the nudity of the Jains is not only an illustration of incorrect practice and attitude but also an offense to morality. Appar condemns the Jains' exposure of their bodies as a signifier of their lack of virtue and their destruction of the Tamil moral order. In particular, the poet is outraged by the image of naked Jains, standing and eating before young women, from whom they have presumably just received food. Whereas the *bhaktas* in Appar's poetry are represented as moral people who are fed by generous householders, here he implies that the Jains abuse the householders' kindness. To underscore the point, he represents the Jains as greedily cramming riceballs into their mouths, instead of eating in a detached and disciplined manner. At stake is the moral fiber of Tamil society.

These very human indictments are intensified by Appar's assertion that Siva himself destroyed the Jains. They were uprooted, destroyed, and driven away in great number, given as one thousand according to verse nine. These images of the Jains' destruction can be taken in two senses: first, that the truth of Siva destroys the premises of Jain knowledge and practice; second, that Siva's destruction of the Jains is one of his heroic acts on the local, as opposed to the cosmic, level. Indeed, the images of Siva in these passages underscore the violence of the act: He is the One who swallowed poison, who kicked Yama, and who broke the neck of evil Ravana. The Jains are defeated by the presence and power of Siva; in contrast, the *bhaktas* benefit from proximity to him. By destroying the Jains, Siva took Pajaiyarai vatatali as his own and "restored" it for the *bhaktas*.

“My lord is supreme,
having massacred Jains and Buddhists,
who are ignorants spreading evils things to the people,
Like torturing an elephant by removing it's skin.”

In the post-*Sangam* transitional period, we have the Keelkanakku literature which speaks about egalitarian social framework based on individual merit and identity by the heterodox movements of Jainism and Buddhism. We also have inscriptional references to Jaina kings being converted to brahmanism by the *bhakti* saints. Can we suppose the marginal and subordinate were also to

be the believers of Jainism and Buddhism since they provided space for social liberation? The following song suggests that by emphasizing on the notion of purity and pollution, the brahmanical religious movements attempted to convert the people:

“Unclean Jainas who live without taking bath,
Disguising Buddhists who cover by Suffern rope,
Are holders of evil principles.
So, go to the foots of lord of Tirukolaka,
Who vanish our sin.”

“The samanar and buddhar are knowledgeless persons
Who speak whatever they want and they will do whatever they want, they do
Nothing good for you.
Our lord is lord Shiva
Who protects us.
So submit your soul to his feet.”

“Sakiyapaduvar and samanapaduvar(the followers of Buddhism and Jainism)
do not have good morals,
They lose their knowledge. So,
Go to the feet of lord shiva
Who resides on the Niva river,
Who will give countless wealth.”

“Buddhar and samanar are the people who tell lies and teach bad things to you,
That will give you nothing for your life.
Pronounce the five letters of lord Shiva,
That will provide you everything.

“Samanar and budhhar who lost their moral conduct and who roam here and there,
How will they teach good things to you?
Our lord Shiva, residing on the Niva river,
Who has created and is protecting us
Submit your soul to his feet.”

“Shaved head samanar are not knowledgeable persons
They provide us nothing for our life.
Oh! Lord of Tirukolakka,
Please give us wealth as you desire.
We will follow your footsteps.”⁴³³

“The people who followed the sakiyam and samanam, have lost everything,
They have attained nothing except wandering.
Oh! Lord of Tirukolakka, we come to your feet,
Provide us sufficient wealth.”

“The sakiyar and samanar do not wear dress and roam here and there,
They will beg for food from our women,
What is the use of going behind them?
See! Our tender-hearted lord of all the rivers who will provide us sufficient wealth,
If you follow his feet.”

“Even if I meet death,
I will never leave reciting your name.
Even if the unclean samanar and buddhar try to divert our mind by evil teaching.”

⁴³³ Hymn 1, Patigam 3, 4th Tirumurai of Tevaram by Tirunavukarasar. Translation into English by myself.

In the songs, the term Samanar is used to refer to the Jainas, and Buddhar or *Âlar* or *sakiyar* for Buddhists. It may have been that those who refused to convert to brahmanism among the marginals and subordinates, were further marginalized socially by imposing the concept of pure and impure. The fact that the appearance of the Buddhists and the Jainas is constantly denounced reflects this attempt to impose an image of them as impure.

Literature belonging to the *Siddha* tradition has rarely been brought into the centre of historical analysis, though the two volume collections of Siddha poems published as early as in 1899 by Ramalinga Mudaliar. There are probably two reasons for this reluctant approach of historians towards this literature, Firstly, the absence of authentic historical material about *Siddhas*, and secondly the tendency among the historians to treat bhakti movement as a counter force to the orthodox Brahminism. This, in fact, overshadowed the importance of the *Siddha* literature. However, recent attempts by K. Kailasapathy and K.Meenakshi to critically analyse this literature has yielded fruitful results in studying these texts in the context of early medieval *Tamizhagam*. It is believed that there were 18 *Siddhas*. Among these, with the exception of one or two, all belonged to lower caste groups. The period of the early *Siddhas* is said to be approximately between the 7th and 10th century CE. An analysis of the contents of *Siddha* poems shows its similarity with the Tantric texts. On the basis of the medical texts of the *Siddhas*, it is believed that they initiated the healing tradition, which later came to be known as Siddhavaitiyam or *Siddha* medicine. Later *Siddhas* like Teraiyar, Pohar, Roma Rishi and Puli Pani are considered to be great healers of the medieval period.

Philosophically, *Siddhas* were theists and 'believed in a transcendental God. However, they were not devotees in the sense of 'idol-worshippers'. Most of the poems express the idea that the contemporary social evils developed due to the impact of brahmanism. Thus, the message of anti-ritual, anti-ceremonial, anti-caste, opposition to orthodoxy, etc. are widely prevalent in the *Siddha* songs. At the same time there was much emphasis upon the right conduct, moral behaviour and character. Unlike the bhakti poets, the *Siddhas* insisted more on purity of character than external purity. There are several striking differences between the *bhakti* and *Siddha* tradition. Though the *bhakti* tradition began as a counter movement against the orthodox brahmanism, in course of time it gradually came under the hold of brahmanism. Though many of the *bhakti* poets were from lower castes and they seemingly opposed the caste system, during its

later stage the movement lost its vigor and the domination of *brâhmana* and upper-caste non-*brâhmana* engulfed the entire movement. With the wane of Buddhism and Jainism, “the movement virtually became a part of the establishment by the beginning of the tenth century.” Therefore, rather than eradicating caste system and removing the orthodox Hindu rituals and ceremonies, it inversely ‘helped in the consolidation and extension of classical Hindu society associated with *varnâsramadharmâ*’. As a result, the *brâhmanas* and other members of the upper castes people were able to uphold their power by further strengthening the caste system and agamic mode of temple worship and rituals.

As stated, the emergence of the *bhakti* movement at the initial stages contributed to the sidelining of the importance of the *Siddhas*’ protest movement. Moreover, “*bhakti* poets were successful in getting patronage from the rulers and were also able to captivate the common people with their soul stirring songs and create a mass following; the *Siddhas*, on the other hand, were unable to influence neither the rulers nor the people and thus were marginalized. They were considered religious *pancamas* (outcastes) by the orthodox..” Since the religious orthodoxy helped for the legitimization of state power and social inequalities, the *bhakti* tradition provided more ideological support to the state as well as the upper castes. The religious orthodoxy of the *bhakti* tradition proved to be more influential with the kings and upper castes as its supporters. However the *Siddhas* continued their protest and the onslaught on social inequality and ritualism. But they could not “shake off the influence of the *bhakti* cult.” Similarly, some sects of the *bhakti* movement took over some of the *Siddha* practices. “The extinction of these sects may be attributed to their marginalization as ‘unconventional’ religious practices and to their absorption or integration into the mainstream of the *bhakti* tradition.”

The songs in the *Siddha* literature indicate that there was a long-winded resistance movement against the brahmanical *bhakti* tradition and its material manifestation. A song warns the masses,

“You are in deep poverty as that of heat in the May,
Why do you want spiritual authority? because,
That authority is the only reason for your poverty
Kuthambaye!
That authority is the only reason for your poverty.”⁴³⁴

Another song portrays the direct attack of the local cultural groups on the brahmanical culture;

“You have lost your house, and
You have not even a small place to stand, then
Why do you want tēvâram and spiritual authority
Kuthambaye!
Why do you want tēvâram and spiritual authority?”⁴³⁵

The following poem clearly indicates the hold of spiritual authority on the mind of the people. The *Siddhar* tradition resisted this and preached against losing one’s life for no returns:

“One who has done self realization,
why does he need spiritual authority to protect him?
Kuthambaye!
why does he need spiritual authority to protect him?”

The newly emerging temple and spiritual culture subjugated the common masses to be enslaved by the temple and other brahmanical institutions. Realizing the fact that god and spirituality were used to exploit the social and economic resources of the common masses, the voice of the *Siddhar* arose:

⁴³⁴ Song 5, Kudhambai Sittar, translation by myself.

⁴³⁵ Song 8, Kudhambai Sittar, translation by myself.

“The truth which you realized and experienced, the truth is before you. Then,

Why do you search truth in the temple

Kuthambaye!

Why do you search for truth in the temple?”

The resistance against the brahmanical *bhakti* also appears like this:

“You are living with sufficient resources by realizing where you are, then

Why do you need magical practices (mantiram) to live?

Kuthambaye!

Why do you need magical practices to live?”

I have highlighted the notion of *bhakti* and its motives in simple terms of the relation between the saint and devotee, devotee and deity, the deity and saint. From the above songs and examples we can clearly see that the devotional movement was a proselytizing one. On the one hand it was a movement from which the proselytizers had established their sacral identity and devotion by propagating brahmanical religious traditions. On the other, it influenced the mind of the common people causing them to accept the brahmanical religious traditions. Though it was an act of personal submission, one cannot reject that the personal submission was influenced by the hegemonic ideology of brahmanism. The god and devotion were always portrayed as the *brâhmana*. He controlled the god and the cosmic action.

One can assume that the *bhakti* movement was a popular movement that spread across the society from the urban to remote rural settlements to bring the masses into its domain. People were brought into the brahmanical fold by sanctioning the moral identity of the community of *bhaktas*. That is, those who followed the brahmanical saints were capable of attaining the feet of god, either Shiva or Vishnu. Those who did not, were given the identity of the devil or an animal, which was below human dignity. Moreover, the brahmanical culture had interacted with the indigenous culture that several scholars have referred to as brahmanization or Sanskritization. It was an attempt to exploit the social capital of the indigenous people.

The *bhakti* traditions marginalized the indigenous culture by adopting different modes of exploitation. The *Vaishnava* tradition kept itself aloof from the common masses; they maintained a separate cultural identity by retaining Sanskrit as the sacred language and following the Vedic traditions. The saints had traveled across the entire *Tamizhagam* to pilgrim centers, and recited the *Ramayana* and carried the Vedic traditions.

The texts *Paripadal* and *Tirumurugarruppada* provide number of clues to understand the transition from the worship of tribal or deities, a dominant tradition in the early anthologies, to formal religious systems, which emerged from the Puranic *Vaisnava* and *Saiva* traditions. According to Champaklakshmi, in the newly emerging Puranic tradition, major aspects of local or folk cults got ‘completely merged or remained major components’. The concept of *bhakti*, drawing largely upon the akam or love theme of *Sangam* poetry, was systematically developed initially by the *âlvârs* and subsequently by the *nâyanârs* to carry these Puranic forms to the Tamil masses in their own idiom, namely an ‘intensely human religious awareness’. Therefore, *bhakti* tradition seemed to be the diffusion of the Puranic tradition with indigenous cults, however upholding the domination of the former. The major themes, myths and iconographic forms of *Âlvâr* and *Nâyanârbhakti* were drawn from the *Purânas* and *Âgamas*. Contradicting with the general tendency of treating *bhakti* as it initiated a movement “of protest and reform particularly aimed at caste hierarchy and brâhmana exclusiveness in Tamil society”, Champakalakshmi argues that “this view represents an inadequate understanding of the hymns, the chronological position of the hymnists, both *Vaisnava* and *Saiva*, and the later hagiographical accounts about the hymnists and other *bhakti* saints, some of whose historicity is not beyond doubt. It also points to a lack of clear perspectives of the historical processes that made *bhakti* a major ideological force in the restructuring of economy and society with the brahmanical temple as its focus.”

The over emphasis upon the devotee’s status or *bhakta* as higher than all occurs, but the superiority of orthodox *brâhmanas* was never questioned. For example, *Tontaratippoti* states that even those who recite the *Vedas* and know the six *angas*, if they speak ill of the devotee of *Visnu*, are equal to the *pulaiyan*. Similarly, ‘the *Caturvedins* become slaves if they are not devotees of *Visnu*’. A song of *Nammâlvar* also presents the same ideas.

“The four castes uphold all clans
go down, far down to the lowliest outcastes of outcastes [*candâla*]
if they are the intimate henchmen of our lord
with the wheel in his right hand,
his body as dark as blue sapphire
then even the slaves of their slaves are
our masters.

Therefore, in *bhakti*, ‘the enemy was not brahmanical or Puranic religion but Buddhism and Jainism, which is defined here as ‘alien’ to Tamil culture. Hence, it is represented in their hymns that kings who had been seduced by the false doctrines of the Jains and Buddhists, were being rescued and brought back to the fold of the true religion’.

The *Saiva* traditions had been more successful in their dissemination of ideas and beliefs related to the worship of Shiva. It had adapted to the local cultures with the aim of bringing a wider social community into the brahmanical social ambit. The saints used Tamil as the language of communication, and the cults and deities of the indigenous communities were taken into the brahmanical fold. Therefore, one cannot simply argue for the opening up of space for commoners. The tradition brought the common masses into the public space as a community of *bhaktas* by enveloping them in the uniform ideology of brahmanism, while at the same time *brâhmanas* and Sanskritized economic elites materially exploited the indigenous cultural groups. The fact of the Saiva-Jaina conflicts points to a tussle for patronage and for acceptance in the wider society. It can be seen in many instances in the songs of *Nâyanârs*.

The ideology of *Bhakti* stood as the basis for feudal society in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. As we have seen in the previous chapter, before the arrival of *Bhakti* tradition, the society in early medieval *Tamizhagam* was non-caste society and its production solely depended on communal holdership and kin-labour. This society slowly steadily evolving as caste society under the dynasties of Pallavas and Cholas. Although the rulers conquered territories, they could not construct loyalty among the subjects. Thus, *Bhakti* came to be used as an ideology to construct loyalty in the Feudal state. It was also the transitional stage in which the ideology of *Bhakti* was

employed by both *Brahmins* and the ruling class as means to consolidate their power in the countryside.

Bhakti movement in Tamil region largely involved in localization of devotional cults especially Shiva, Vishnu and Durga. In the post-*Sangam* literature especially in the songs of *Paripadal* and *Tirumuugatrupadai*, one can get an idea that the cult of *Tirumal* and *Murugan* were getting Puranic connotations. The rooting of Siva at the expense of local cults at particular temples or sites by the *Nayanars* was concomitant with the spread of Puranic myths and beliefs in the region. This provided for the incorporation of indigenous deities and cults into the Saivite pantheon through association and identification with similar deities who make their appearance in the *Puranas*. Thus we must appreciate that *Bhakti* tradition in Tamil region came about as an assimilating force of indigenous deities and Puranic myths.

The temple culture became dominant in place of kingship and palace. In the medieval period, the imperial temple became a center of culture, it legitimized and actualized the dynamics of kingship, it represented the evolution of Hinduism, and it served as an economic nucleus for imperial donations, taxes, and trade. Given the importance and magnitude of these developments, it was not assured that the emerging religious perspective of *Siva-bhakti* would have a role in them. The medieval imperial temple embodied the coalescence of sacred power, political authority, and material wealth. With few exceptions, the hymns of the *muvar* represented a worldview mistrustful of such connections. In addition, the poets were agreed that Siva himself constituted the center, yet they had resisted localizing him in any one type of religious place, such as a temple. Temples were mentioned in the *nayanmar's* hymns, probably indicating very early temples in brick or nondurable materials, but they did not represent the preeminent locus of *bhakti*.

The *bhakti* hymns do not criticize other Hindu gods overtly; rather, through puranic imagery they describe other gods as less powerful than and thus subordinate to the gods to which, they were sung.

The Tamil *Bhakti* movement can also be considered as social protest movement. Just as there is no real social protest on behalf of the exploited masses of the common people but only individual social conflict of the devotees, there is no fight for freedom and equality on behalf of the

oppressed. Only the devotees of Siva are equal. The Bhakti saints did not reject a caste-ridden society. They shifted the emphasis to the relation between the devotee and his object of veneration, 'and the inner tensions and outer conflicts resulting from this relation'. These activities are voluntarily undertaken by a community of *bhaktas*, and, indeed, the hearer of the hymn is encouraged to join them. The community's relationship with Siva marginalizes all other relationships, which is why the most intimate term, kin, is used to characterize the connection among *bhaktas*. Kin is usually restricted to biological ties in common usage, which connotes caste in the Indian context. Appar's use of kin rejects such criteria—though not its associations of fundamental similarity among the group members—and thereby supports the principle that one acquires spiritual power and does not inherit it.

In their endeavour to understand the social implications of bhakti movements, anthropologists have tended to make a distinction between the egalitarian message of these movements and their acceptance of inequality in secular contexts. According to Ishwaran they served as a 'safety-valve' and 'were essentially geared not to eliminating the Hindu Brahmanical system but to making it more workable and acceptable to the discontented masses'. He argues that 'there is a selfcontradiction built in *bhakti* movements between consciousness and existence'.

CHAPTER V.

SPACE AND IDENTITY OF PARAICHERI AND THEENDACHĒRI

IN EARLY MEDIEVAL TAMIZHAGAM

Historical scrutiny begins when something is not revealed to the light in social reality. The duty of historian is to study the present, trace causal relations between the present and the past and investigate what actually happened in the past and why this present situation is. In this line, as a researcher, I was struck when I studied the present social condition of *Paraiyas*, the so-called untouchables. The quarter where the *Paraiyas* live is called *Paraicheri*. The *Paraicheri* is always situated far away from the core village. They have their own tradition, customs, habits, way of life, etc.; the people from these cherries are being treated as untouchables by the caste Hindus. Even though our liberal constitution alongside many statutory measures attempt to create social intercourse between the caste Hindus and the *Paraiyas*, drawing water from the public well, entry into the temple, drinking tea in the same glass used by the caste Hindus are not popularly prevalent in Tamil Nadu. On the other hand, when I went through few Chola inscriptions, I found the *Paraiyas* described as cultivators and their settlement called as *Paraicheri*. At the same time, I found few cherries mentioned as *Theendachēries* described as the settlements where untouchables lived. But today, *Paraicheri* (the settlement of *Paraiyas*) itself is as the settlement of untouchables.

Then the hypothetical question arises to me here, who are the *Paraiyas*? What was their historical identity? Were *Paraicheri* and *Theendachēris* same or different in early medieval *Tamizhagam*? If we agree with inscription that the *Paraiyas* were cultivators, then who were untouchables who lived in *Theendachēri*? Is there any impact on the present *Paraicheri*? Why should the *Paraiyas* today live outside of the mainstream village? Each and everyone structure their own space in response to the natural and cultural interactions. Then, why should other community identify the space structured by certain community as segregated and secluded space? Does spatial interaction involve in determining one's status and identity? Did Brahmanical caste system play any role in secluding certain section of the society from the mainstream village? As it has been popularly written in many history text books, was it the legacy of British colonial rule?

By keeping the aforesaid hypothetical questions in forefront, I would like to analyze the history of *Paraicheri* and *Theendachēri* with the help of inscriptions and contemporary literature. Almost 170 inscriptions of 11th century AD bring out the information about the *Paraicheries*⁴³⁶ and 120 inscriptions of the same century give us an account of *Theendacheries*⁴³⁷. Not only that, there are many contemporary literatures which specifically trace the culture of *Paraiyas* and their social interactions. In this line, few available literatures need to be mentioned here. They are *Sangam* literature (specific attention on *Perumbanaatrupadai*) written in the 5th century AD, the grammar text *Divagaram Nigandu* written in the 9th century AD, and *Valluvan Maalai* written in the 13th century AD. Since the special attention has been paid on understanding the secluded section from the view point of *Bhakti* tradition in the previous chapter, I would like to restrict myself with the above mentioned literature along with relevant inscriptions.

Although in tradition, today, the name *Paraiya* is often identified with certain occupational groups of playing drums, one cannot deny the fact that the connotation *Paraiyas* does not have single and uniformal identity. Variety of *Paraiyas* having different names living in different parts of *Tamizhagam* follows different occupations⁴³⁸. The 1871 Census of Madras Presidency states that there 348 categories of *Paraiyans* had been living in Tamil speaking area⁴³⁹. 2011 Census of Tamilnadu enlisted 116 categories of *Paraiyas* who are coming under scheduled caste reservation. The same report speaks about 323 categories of *Paraiylas* living in different parts of Tamilnadu and they were unidentified by government of Tamilnadu⁴⁴⁰.

As mentioned above, the present condition of *Paraiyas* in Tamilnadu, irrespective of internal class differentiations are being treated as untouchables by caste Hindus. Untouchability, depressed class, *Harijans* and Scheduled castes are various terminologies interchangeably used by scholars, politicians and administrators to refer the *Paraiyas* in different points of time⁴⁴¹.

⁴³⁶ SII, Vol 5, No. 2, pp. 2-26.

⁴³⁷ SII, Vol 12, No. 2-4, pp. 67-128.

⁴³⁸ K.R. Hanumanthan, *Untouchability: A Historical Study Up to 1500 AD. With Special Reference to Tamil Nadu*, Koodal Publications, Madurai, 1979, p. 74.

⁴³⁹ Moffatt, *An Untouchable Community in South India: Structure and Consensus*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N. J, 1979, p. 82.

⁴⁴⁰ *Census of india 2011*, collected from www.mhrd.nic.in

⁴⁴¹ Edgar Thurston, *Schedule Castes and Tribes*, Vol. VI, Cosino Publications, New Delhi 1975, p. 117.

Purpose of the usage of different terms for identifying the *Paraiyas* carried multidimensional aspects. By looking at the present condition of the *Paraiyas*, the politicians bring up the political propaganda by saying that the *Paraiyas* were the natives of the land and others were alien. The natives enjoyed high status for centuries. When the Aryans (the *Brahmans*) came to south, they snatched the *Paraiya's* land and enslaved them. Moreover, they were excommunicated from the village and later they were treated as untouchables living in the cherries⁴⁴².

Some politicians try to seek Buddhist identity to the *Paraiya* community. These politicians attempt to trace the history of *Paraiyas* from the *Sangam* literature in which the *Paraiyas* were portrayed as a group who played sacred drums in auspicious occasions. They ascertain the view that the *Paraiyas* were basically Buddhists even before the arrival of *Sangam* age and they were actively involving in agricultural production. According to them, *Paraiyas* were the people who got civilized first in the Tamil land due to the influence of Buddhist thoughts. But, the position of *Paraiyas* community got destructed when the invaders came to south. Basically these politicians refer to the *Brahmins* who migrated from gangetic valley as the invaders⁴⁴³.

The Dravidian politicians speculate that once the Tamils followed egalitarian social order in the *Sangam* society. Each and every one enjoyed high status in the society. No one treated other fellowman inferior or superior. They ate whatever they produced. They did not have any notion of hierarchy in defining the status and identity of the people and their groups. They feel that later, when the *Brahmans* came to south, they collapsed Tamil culture penetrated caste system, introduced the notion of purity and pollution and the familiars came to identify themselves high and low based on one's birth and occupation due to the influence of Brahmanical textual traditions⁴⁴⁴. These are the different views put by politicians and activists whose intention and motive is to support their ideology and politicize the innocent common masses only for the sake of securing vote banks in the centre and state elections. Nevertheless they do not bear historical validity because they lack sufficient sources to sustain their arguments. However, I would like to

⁴⁴² *Observation of mine from the present day conception of the condition of Paraiyas by scholars in Tamilnadu*

⁴⁴³ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p.90.

⁴⁴⁴ Partha Chatterjee (ed), *Wages of Freedom: 50 Years of the Indian Nation-State*, OUP, New Delhi, 1998. P. 73.

bring out briefly when and in what way the *Paraiyas* were identified in the course of history in the following few passages.

The term *Chēri* means a village or city as it has been derived from the 9th and 13th century Tamil grammatical works namely *Nigandu and Abidhana chindhamani*⁴⁴⁵. Even today, names of many villages in Tamilnadu end with *Chēri*. Many of inscriptional references state *Chēri*, simply as a settlement of people. But, this term has got its connotation changed in different points of time. Now, it is being used to identify the settlement of untouchables. The term *Chēri* is not being used in isolation; rather, it is often associated with distinct prefixes such as *Paraichēri*, *Pallachēri* and *Chakkilichēri*. These prefixes identify different untouchable communities namely *Paraiyas*, *Pallars* and *Chakkiliyars*. As said above, existence of these two settlements not only tells us mere prevalence of social order in two different places, but also it shows more significantly variety of social dimensions⁴⁴⁶.

The notion of space and identity and their importance in the study of history

In recent times, the studies on space and identity have opened hot discussions among the social scientists to study the social interaction of the people. Identity is in reality a subjective, evolving concept, defined by the process of identification. Space can be understood in two terms that is, private space and public space. The private space defined by the people's participation within the ambit of family, community and related occupations.⁴⁴⁷ Whereas public space denotes the participation of the people in the space which is locus of interactions of many communities.⁴⁴⁸ In the private space the people will not be immuned to access. But in the public space, disabilities to access to space emerge which is basically determined by the forces of production, relations of production and cultural dominance of certain community.⁴⁴⁹ Although this concept is used to study the present day secluded sections of the society, I assume that it might help us to understand the social status of certain communities in the historical *Tamizhagam*. Therefore, it is

⁴⁴⁵ D R Nagaraj, *The Flaming Feet: A Study of the Dalit Movement*, South Forum Press, Bangalore, 1993, pp. 7-8.

⁴⁴⁶ GhanshyamShah, H Mander, S Thorat, S Deshpande and A Baviskar, *Untouchability in Rural India*, Sage publication, Delhi, 2006. p. 14.

⁴⁴⁷ Robin D. Jones, *The Interiors of the Empire: Object, Space and Identity Within the Indian Subcontinent 1800-1947*, Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2008, pp. 55-60.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 74.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, pp. 76-84.

more significant for me to unravel some of the concepts which are dealing with space and identity in the following passages.

Space is a central concept in geography, used in the form of absolute, relative and relational (cognitive) space. Absolute space is an understanding of space as a distinct, physical and imminently real or empirical entity. Relative space has the location of, and distance between, different phenomena (horizontal connections) as the focus of geographical inquiry. The meaning of relational (cognitive) space is that space and place are intrinsic parts of our being in the world - defined and measured in terms of the nature and degree of people's values, feelings, beliefs, and perceptions about locations, districts, and regions. We relate to other people and the physical environment. Thus relational space is consciously or unconsciously embedded in our intentions and actions⁴⁵⁰.

Space is organized into places often thought of as bounded settings in which social relations and identity are constituted. Such places may be officially recognized geographical entities or more informally organized sites of intersecting social relations, meanings and collective memory. The concept of place, the uniqueness of particular places and place-based identities are hotly contested concepts in the contemporary context of increasing globalization and the perceived threat of placelessness.

Place, sense of place, and placelessness were some key concepts used in humanistic geography during the 1970s to distinguish its approach from positivist geography whose principal focus was space. Place was seen by positivists as more subjectively defined, existential and particular, while space was thought to be more universal, more abstract phenomenon, subject to scientific law. The humanistic concept of place, largely drawn from phenomenology, was concerned with individuals' attachments to particular places and the symbolic quality of popular concepts of place which link events, attitudes, and places and create a fused whole. It was concerned with meaning and contrasted the experienced richness of the idea of place with the detached sterility of the concept of space. Place is an emotional bounded area, often the dwelling-place, to which

⁴⁵⁰ Nancy Fraser, *Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy* in Craig Calhoun (ed), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, 1996, p. 8.

an individual or a group has a strong emotional relationship. People can even derive their personal identity from it. Outside this place starts the immeasurable space, of which the individual or group has some knowledge but does not feel at home at or have any affectionate feelings towards. The way in which people identify with a place is very different from individual to individual.

Identity can be defined as the sense that people make of themselves through their subjective feelings based on their everyday experiences and wider social relations. If places are no longer the clear supports of our identity, they nonetheless play a potentially important part in the symbolic and physical dimension of our identifications. It is not spaces which ground identifications, but places. There are many symbols of identities such as culture, region, language, nation, etc. Identity is viewed in relation to an other or others who are seen as possessing a different identity. It can be said that our identity is defined in terms of difference from the objectified other⁴⁵¹.

Landscape is considered to be an icon for identity. Landscapes constitutes visual encapsulations of a shared past that this conveys. They can also be thought of as one way in which the social history and distinctiveness of a group of people is objectified through reference (however idealized) to the physical settings of the everyday lives of a people whom we belong, but most of whom we never meet⁴⁵².

Taking early medieval *Tamizhagam* as and the settlements as ecological defined social categories such as u'rar, kammalas, paraiyas, etc., one can view the participation and interaction of the people and the communities in the space and one can also evidence the kind of access and disability to public space existed there. The inscriptions and the literature also substantiate the study of the space during the early medieval *Tamizhagam*. As I have already mentioned that the settlements of *Paraiyas* had separate water tank, temple and separate cremation ground.⁴⁵³ But the views of scholar like karashima on the people in the *Paraichēri* as cultivators are more contradicting. Because the inscriptions themselves give us the picture of the condition of the *Paraiyas*. That is, the *Paraiyas* had cultivated the portion of the land. But it is not clear

⁴⁵¹ Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, OUP, New Delhi, 2006, p. 23.

⁴⁵² Ibid, p. 27.

⁴⁵³ SII, Vol. II, No. 7, lines 55, 56, 57, pp. 67-82.

who was the holder to the land cultivated by Paraiyas. They had drawn water from different water tank (*paraikulam*) for irrigation.⁴⁵⁴ They have used separate cremation ground (*chudukadu*) for cremation.⁴⁵⁵ They worshiped particular gods and goddesses such as aiyan, pidari,⁴⁵⁶ etc., the participation of the *Paraiyas* in the great temple (srikovils) is found nowhere in the inscriptions.

All these instances make me to rethink time and space of the people based on location of the settlements and their participations. It also makes me to raise some questions whether there were special distinctions between communities in the accessibility of resources, or whether the terms such as *Paraiyas*, *u'rars* and *kammalar* were identified as so-called Hindu caste names in terms of identification of social hierarchy, etc.,

Who were the *Paraiyas*?

The Tamil word *Paraiyan* means a drummer. But, the *Paraiyas* mentioned inscriptions of 11th century were not only portrayed as drum players but also they were identified as cultivators. Inscriptions state they held piece of land. They had separate cremation ground⁴⁵⁷. They drew water from separate water tank, they worshiped in a separate temple. While inscription around Thanjavur temple portray *Paraiyas* as cultivators⁴⁵⁸, the inscription found in the Tiruvarur temple dated 11th century AD mentions two kinds of *Paraiyas*, *UzhavuParaiyas* and *NesavuParaiyas*⁴⁵⁹. The *Uzhavu* stands for cultivation. Therefore, The *UzhavuParaiyas* could be considered as the *Paraiyas* who cultivated the land. The Tamil term *Nesavu* stands for weaving. Therefore, one can also assume the *NesavuParaiyas* as the people who wove cloths. In generic term, there is a possibility for us to come to a conclusion that the *Paraiyas* were both cultivators and weavers.

When we take up the cases of U'rnatam, Kammanacherry and *Paraicheri*, the actual confusion comes into existence in actual portrayal of community. That is, the people who lived in the U'rnatam were called as *U'rars*. The people who lived in the Kammanacherry were called as

⁴⁵⁴ SII, Vol. II, No. 4, line 7, p. 63.

⁴⁵⁵ SII, Vol. IV, No. 2, line 16.

⁴⁵⁶ SII, Vol. IV, No. 4, lines 2, 3, 4, 7 and 16, p. 87.

⁴⁵⁷ SII Vol. IV, No. 14-17, pp 126-167.

⁴⁵⁸ SII, Vol VI, No. 14, p 16.

⁴⁵⁹ SII, Vol 22, No. 2, p. 52.

Kammalars and the people who lived in the Paraicheri were called as *Paraiyas*. The status of *U'rars* was portrayed in the inscriptions as landholders and cultivators. The *Kammalaars* were carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths and stone masons. The *Paraiyas* were mentioned in the inscriptions as landholders and cultivators. What distinctions can we make out from these two sets of settlements and the communities respectively the community of U'rnattam and the community of Paraicheri? Because, both these communities were portrayed as landholders and cultivators. But each settlement had its own identity in structuring and restructuring its space.

Inscriptions provide us ample of evidences for understanding the occupations followed by the people in these settlements. For instance, one of the Thanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja Chola states that in the settlement of U'rnattam, cultivators, landholders, ploughman, harvesters, stone masons, sculptures, cattle herders, washerman, templeguards, dancers, musicians, money lenders lived in peace and harmony⁴⁶⁰. Similar situation is also found in the inscriptions with the Paraicheri. So we must carefully locate the community, its space and identity in historical scrutiny and then we must understand whether each settlement has to be identified as the space for origin of caste and community or whether different multiple castes had originated from the settlements mentioned in the inscriptions irrespective of the name of the settlements. In order to bring out social dimension of *Paraiyas* in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*, we must study both epigraphic sources and literary sources together and pick up few possible clues and then we should understand what happened in the past.

In *Tamizhagam*, *Sangam* period came to an end at about the 2nd or 3rd Century A.D. The *Sangam* literature particularly Purananuru texts in its 335 song, mentions the category of *paraiyan* in the following verse.

Without the following four - Varagu, Thinai, Koll, Avaarai the Food Categorization is not complete,

Without the following four - Thudian, Panan, Paraiyan, Kadamban the citizens' Categorization is not complete.

⁴⁶⁰SII, Vol 12, No 6, p 74.

These 4 types of workers are considered as Music workers, Thudian – player of the instrument by name Thudi, Panan – Singer, Paraiyan – player of drum, Kadamban - player of the instrument by name Kadambu.

According to PERUMPANATTUPPADA I a Tamil work of the 4th century A.D, in the description of the city of Kanchipuram the Paraicheri was isolated and was kept away from the city⁴⁶¹. The Tamil Dictionary of 9th Century A.D, Divagaram, has a classification as Paraiyas (Paraiyar)⁴⁶².

The settlements of Paraiyas and untouchables

Inscriptions of Pallavas and Cholas provide us vivid description of villages in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. Topographical features such as settlements of different communities such as Paraicheri, Kammanache'ri, U'rnattam, pond, water channels passing through village, cultivable land, cremation ground, sacred temple, local deities, etc. Are clearly portrayed in the inscriptions. Yet, retrieving spatial structure of Paraicheri as a distinct settlement from the inscriptions seems to be difficult task, because Paraicheri is often portrayed as an integral part of mainstream village. However, one cannot neglect the fact that certain terms used in the inscriptions which had specific and peculiar connotations in regard to the settlement of Paraicheri. Few of those terms are ParaichuduKa'du, Paraikulikulam and Paraikazhani⁴⁶³. Paraichuduka'du means the cremation ground of Paraiyas. Paraikulikulam refers to the pond in which Paraiyas used to bathe and ParaiKazhani means the land which was cultivated by the Paraiyas. In the inscriptions, one can see the location of Paraicheri mostly lying north to the U'rnattam and Kammanache'ri and in few instances; the Paraicheri appears located in the eastern side of aforesaid settlements. While I was reading the inscriptions of Cholas, I have come across few inscriptions which spoke of names of villages and their topographical features.

In early medieval *Tamizhagam*, mainstream village did not necessarily have settlements with common topographical features. In many of inscriptions, Paraicheri, Kammanache'ri and Maruthavaperu seemed to be frequently appearing in the village. In many instances, the so-called

⁴⁶¹ See the description from song 10 of *Perumbanatrupidai*.

⁴⁶² *Divagaram Nigandu* is a grammatical text in Tamil which states many instances in which how the Paraiyas came to existence, this particular verse taken from this same text

⁴⁶³ SII, Vol 12, no 5, p 56.

Urnattam or the settlement of Urars and Kudiyirukkai were absent. To substantiate the aforesaid fact, I would like to bring out few inscriptional date as follows.

One of the Chola inscriptions picturizes the spatial structure of a village called Palaiyur. It was the village which was situated in the Inganadu under the Cholas (Nadu was a territorial and administrative unit of that time). In this village, there existed the Jaina temple called Palli, the land enjoyed by Jaina teachers called Ganimarattu, Kammanache'ri, the settlement of Kammalars, the Paraicheri the settlement of Paraiyas, the Kulam pond, the Madai the channel passing through that village⁴⁶⁴. Here the absence of U'r Nattam is so significant. Moreover, in the absence of certain commonly found social categories and the communities in the inscriptions, it makes me to presume that the village asserts including pond, lake, tanks and other resources were controlled and administered by the social categories and communities which seemed to be predominantly playing a vital roll in the village. In some villages, other than commonly appearing social categories and communities, there seemed to be new settlements taking their spatial structuring. For instance, the inscription of Rajendra Chola talks about yet another village namely Arappar which was situated in the above said Nadu. The topographical features found here are Pallid the Jaina temple; Ganimarattu the land enjoyed by Jaina teachers, Maruthuvape'ru the settlement of physicians, the Paraicheri the settlement of Paraiyas, Ko'vil the temple, Aiyyan and Pidari, the god and goddess and Kazhani the cultivable land with water from the pond. One must notice here that along with the Physicians and Janis, only the Paraicheri seemed to be existing in the village. Moreover, the cultivable land in this village was divided into two types 1. The land held by the Jains and 2. Land enjoyed by others which presumably included the Paraiyas and the physicians.

In few villages of early medieval *Tamizhagam*, inscriptions tell us that there existed only the Paraicheri. To substantiate the fact, I would like to give the following instance. In the inscription of Rajadhiraja Chola dated around 1042 AD, a description of a village called Tanirkundram is given. It was the village in which there found Sriko'vil the sacred temple, Kulam the pond, Paraichuduka'du the cremation ground of Paraiyas, Paraicheri the settlement of Paraiyas and Madai the channel passing through the village. In this village, one can notice that

⁴⁶⁴SII, Vol 3, No 4, p 17.

except Paraicheri, there existed no other settlement⁴⁶⁵. Moreover, as far as my study of inscriptions in early medieval *Tamizhagam* is concerned, it was in this village only that the Paraicheri alone constituted a mainstream village community and Srikovil the temple often associated with U'rars, for the first time appeared. This fact will be discussed in the context of process of inclusion in detail with appropriate historical speculation in the following passages.

While few inscriptions inform us the lonely existence of Paraicheri in the village, many inscriptions tell us that there were few villages which did not have the settlement of Paraicheri. For instance, the inscription of Rajaraja states that in the village of Uchipadi of same Nadu, there was U'rnattam the settlement of U'rars and Iraiche'ri the settlement of toddy toppers along with other physical features and we have no evidence of the existence of Paraicheri⁴⁶⁶.

In contrast to the above mentioned descriptions, large number of inscriptions of 11th and 12th century AD in early medieval *Tamizhagam* provide us a clear picture of a structured village constituted by four common settlements. To substantiate this fact, I would like to bring out the following piece of information drawn from inscription. One of the inscriptions of Kulothunga Chola II dated around 1084 AD brings out the description of The Village of Ki'zhVadugakkudi in the Inganadu. This village consisted of the U'rnattam village-site, the ponds, the sacred temple, the burning-ground, the Irachcheri, the Kammanaseri the Paraichcheri, the Vannaracheri, the ponds and wells of the Paraiyas (paraikkulikkulam)⁴⁶⁷. In this village, one can find all four major settlements existing and more significantly, the settlement of Paraicheri and Vannarache'ri mentioned that they were lying north to other settlements. Moreover, the absence of specific term such as Paraichudukadu the burning ground of Paraiyas does not suggests that the Paraiyas had no separate spatial structuring. Instead, it hints the point that Paraiyas had supreme legitimacy over the common asserts. An interesting aspect found in this particular inscription is, for the first time, the separate Bathing pond of Paraiyas known as Paraikulikulam came to be appearing in the mainstream village. This piece of information can hypothetically be understood in two ways, 1. The Paraiyas could have constructed a separate pond for batheing so that they could protect the interests of their community and 2. The Paraiyas were forced to construct a separate pond by the sanskritized community so that their purity and sacred identity sanctioned by Brahmanical

⁴⁶⁵ SII, Vol 2, No 2, p 13.

⁴⁶⁶ SII, Vol 2, No 3, p 23.

⁴⁶⁷ SII, Vol 8, No 2., 92.

tradition would be maintained without any intensive threat within village community. But, both these propositions require unwarranted historically specific data.

While I was reading the inscriptions of 12th century AD, for the first time I came across the term Theendachēri which has got its own historical significance. I feel that if I could make out the following description taken from the inscription of Kulothunga II dated around 1173 AD. The inscription states that there was a town called in Tamil, Nagaram (agro-based market centre and it cannot be equated with present-day urban centre) whose name identified was Tiruttengur. This Nagaram was situated in the Kongu nadu. This town consisted of the U'rnattam the settlement of U'rars, the ponds of this village, the ponds in the fields (pulam), the Theendachēri, the Paraicheri and the burning-ground. The settlements inscribed in these inscriptions are U'rnattam, Paraicheri and Theendachēri⁴⁶⁸. As we know the well familiar fact that U'rnattam and Paraicheri were two distinct settlements which constituted separately in the mainstream village, yet, the term Theendachēri the settlement of Untouchables gives a striking point in understanding the process of social stratification in a proper manner. Though the inscripational data only highlights the term except mentioning the term, one can put up hypothetical assumption that whether this Theendachēri(the settlement of untouchables) should be understood in the modern context as the space segregated only to those who were untouched by the Brahmanized community and the touch to this people should be considered to be pollution or as projected by the Brahmanical scriptural tradition or whether it was a mere settlement constituted by the people who were secluded by the mainstream village communities. This hypothesis lacks historical validity since they lacked relevant primary data. Therefore, the historical fact unsupported by relevant contemporary sources must be considered as part of fragmented history.

in the 11th century AD, few villages carry the names which had their own historical significance. That is, few villages carry the names of certain community. Moreover, the absence of that certain community in the village is so surprising. To substantiate aforesaid fact, I would like to mention the following information taken from the inscription of Kulothunga Chola I. dated around 1082 AD. The inscription states that there existed a village known as Maruttuvakkudi in Innambar-

⁴⁶⁸SII, Vol 22, no 5, p 63.

nadu, (a subdivision) of Vadakarai-Rajaendrasimha-Valanadu⁴⁶⁹. Literally Maruthuvaperu means the settlement of physicians. Yet, in this village that particular settlement was absent. On the contrary, this village consisted of the U'rattam (the settlement of U'rars), village-site, the sacred temples and sacred courts (tiru-murram, this was the place where important decisions were resolved by the village community) and sacred flower gardens, the Paraicheri the settlement of Paraiyas and the burning-ground. Here in this small piece of inscription, one must notice that this village consisted only the U'rattam and Paraicheri. The absence of particular spatial structuring belonging to particular community puts the readers of inscriptions in puzzle.

Yet another inscription of 11th century AD portrays the existence of three communities in a village and their spatial segregation. To substantiate the fact, I would like to highlight the inscription as follows. Inscription states that there was a village known as Anpanur in Mipalaru, (a subdivision) of Pachchirakurram in Mara-nadu. This village consisted of the following topographical features and settlements. They are U'rattam, village-site, the thrashing-floor of this village, the ponds and banks, the Peruvalavay (channel), which passes through this village and irrigates the country, the channel which branches off from the Peruvalavay, passes through this village and irrigates (the village of) Settimangalam, the sacred temple of Mahadeva, (called) Tiru-Vanni-bhagavar (i.e., Sri-Vahni-bhagavat), in this village and (its) sacred court, the temple of Pidari and sacred court, the temple of Settaiyar and sacred court, the pond of Tiruppainnili-Madevar (Mahadeva) and banks, the Irachcheri of this village, the Paraichcheri, the burning-ground of the cultivators, the burning-ground of the Paraiyas, and the stone fold (karkidai) (for cattle)⁴⁷⁰. The special emphasis needs to be mentioned here in this context is that there existed three settlements 1. U'rattam, 2. Iraiche'ri and 3. Paraicheri. Each one of them got segregated cremation ground. An interesting point found in this inscription was the Karkodai which was nothing but a shelter under which cattle was kept temporarily for few nights to reserve natural fertilizers.

In early medieval *Tamizhagam*, there seemed to be a separate spatial structuring. That is, for the first time in the inscription that emergence of sacred pond was mentioned and this pond demarcates a social division between the U'rars and the Paraiyas. To substantiate this notion, I

⁴⁶⁹ SII, Vol 12, No 33, p 27.

⁴⁷⁰ SII, Vol 7, No 2, p 14.

would like to bring out the topographical feature of the following village drawn from the inscription of Kulothunga Chola I. Dated around 1082 AD. The inscription states that there was a village named Ingaiyur in Kir-Palaru, (a subdivision) of Pachchirkurram in the same nadu which consisted of the U'rnattam, village-site, the temple of Pidari in this village and sacred court, the temple of Pidari and sacred court, the sacred temple of Mahadeva in this village and sacred court, the sacred bathing-pond (tirumanjanakkulam) of this god, the Paraichcheri, the burning-ground of the cultivators, and the burning-ground of the Paraiyas⁴⁷¹.

From the later part of 12th century AD, the village communities were getting stratified and becoming complex interplay. This process needs more analysis from the inscripational data. One of the inscriptions states that there was a village named nur alias Panamangalam, (in) Panamangala-Vanakarai-parru, (a subdivision) of Kir-Palaru in Pachchirkurram in the same nadu which Consisted of the following topographical features. They are U'rnattam, village-site, the sacred temple of Mahadeva in this village and its sacred court, the channels which pass through this village and supply water to other villages, the temple of Pidari and its sacred court, the public pond (uruni-kulam) and its banks, the temple of Aiyan and its sacred court, the burning-ground of the U'rars, the burning-ground of the Paraiyas the Paraichcheri and the Irachcheri⁴⁷². Yet another inscription states that there was a village named Sattaadi (in) Panamangala-Vanakarai-parru, (a subdivision) of Kir-[Pa]laru in Pachchirkurram in the same nadu which Consisted of the village-site, the Paraichcheri, and the channel, which passes through the land of this village and supplies water to other villages. There was one more village called kkankudi (in) sempparru, (a subdivision) of Kir-palaru in Pachchirkurram in the same nadu, which Consisted of the U'rnattam village-site, the Irachcheri, the stables and the Paraichcheri⁴⁷³.

In early medieval *Tamizhagam*, village had been constituted by different social groups whose identity and spatial structuring acquired their own significance. Each social group was considered to be functioning as an independent social agent which had nothing common in sharing its values and identities. In other words, one can say that the social categories mentioned in the inscriptions had a distinct identity and spatial specification. each type of society, or 'social

⁴⁷¹SII, Vol 2, No 6., p 87.

⁴⁷²SII, Vol 22, No 4, p 62.

⁴⁷³ SII, Vol, 12 No 2, p 28.

figuration' as a network of interdependent individuals, generated a particular set of manners, psychic structures and intersubjective relations which were appropriate⁴⁷⁴.

As mentioned in the above passages that inscriptions frequently inform us the terms such as U'rnattam, Kudiyirukkai, Kammanache'ri, Paraicheri, Theendachēri, Vannarache'ri and Ilache'ri whose topographical features and location are mentioned in a specific manner. From the critical scrutiny of inscriptions, one can get a clear picture of these settlements, their identities and spatial structuring. If we read these inscriptions without making any contemporary etimological reference to the terminologies, we can clearly see that these terms had got different connotations in contrast to what we perceive today. Moreover, each settlement remained as a centre of production and each one of them constituted a set of people living in different locations in the same village, but they did not have any commonalities in productive relations. For instance, the people at U'rnattam known as U'rars had their own segregated settlement, they collectively dug up ponds, constructed tanks and they looked after their communal affairs without seeking any exogenous influence⁴⁷⁵. Moreover, inscriptions inform us that if the disputes rose among the U'rars, they only resolved them by drawing scriptural justification with which they were familiar. In this case, the story of Sibi Chakravarthy and the story of Manuneechi chola are often referred in the inscriptional records. Unsurprisingly, while reading few inscriptions of 11th century AD, I could come across an interesting piece of information that the U'rars had a separate cremation ground to which other social categories such as Kammalas and Kudiya'nor also got access, yet they were bound to enter into an agreement by which they should render free professional service to the U'rars for certain specified period⁴⁷⁶. Therefore, by looking at the information provided in the inscriptions regarding the settlements, we cannot simply perceive the notion that the social groups living in the same village had common identity and spatial structuring.

Paraicheri was no exception to this case. The people living in the settlement were identified as Paraiyas. Paraiyas were homogeneous social group whose identity can neither be equated with their occupational specialization nor can be put into a framework of Hindu caste system.

⁴⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Routledge, London, 1994. P 67.

⁴⁷⁵ SII Vol 9, no 1, p 13.

⁴⁷⁶ SII, Vol, 14, no 2. P 36.

Because, the Paraiyas. took up various professions other than agriculture such as playing drums, weaving, stone masonry, etc. more interestingly, in early medieval period in the period between 6th century AD and 9th century AD, people were not quite familiar with the Hindu concept of purity and pollution and therefore they did not identify the people with their occupation as pure and impure as we do today⁴⁷⁷.

While tracing the status and identity of the Paraiyas in the inscriptions of 11th century AD, I could come across an interesting piece of information. That is, a Paraiyas drum player at the court of Rajaraja Chola was paid 248 Kalanju of gold for his service and the Brahmin priests, dancers, musicians and other officials gave him high respect. The inscription further portrays that when the *Paraiya* took up the Drum called Parai in his hand, each and everyone at the royal court would stand up and salute the drummer and few vowed their head to the drum player as a symbol of their honour towards him⁴⁷⁸. At the same time, one cannot deny the fact that the *Paraiyas* were playing drums at the marriage and funeral ceremonies and they were paid cheaply yet the people still gave equal respect to them as they did with the royal court drum player⁴⁷⁹.

The question arises here; did drum-playing Paraiyas alone come from the Paraicheri? This question is not attached by any contemporary records. In contrast, the Paraiyas term is often prefixed with the terms such as Uzhavu Paraiya, Nesavu Paraiya and Pulporikki Paraiya which we will discuss in detail in later part of this chapter. However from the inscriptional data, one can presume the notion that before the 10th century AD, Paraicheri remained as a settlement of social group from which many sects came out and they started associating with certain occupation. This kind of identification of social groups with occupational specialization was a later phenomenon which was some how brought into the notion of purity and pollution by the influence of the process of castification. The above mentioned study needs more analysis which we would take up in the later part of this chapter.

Under the Pallavas and Cholas, the Paraiyas held high posts and they were paid with huge sums. Paraiyas were rendering their service to the state in the form of soldiers, scribes, calligraphists

⁴⁷⁷ *it has been said by me because, there is no such information found to support the influence of the notion of purity and pollution.*

⁴⁷⁸ SII, Vol 3, No 1, p 9.

⁴⁷⁹ *Such information can be observed from many of inscriptions dated around the period between 8th century AD and 10th century AD*

and temple-guards, etc⁴⁸⁰. the inscription of 8th century AD says that the Paraiyas sent woven clothes to the royal court of Dandivarman. The Pallava rulers patronized the Paraiyas drum-players at the royal courts, at the huge temple complexes and in the army. The inscriptions in the vicinity of Kanjipuram says that officials at royal court of Dandivarman were often cheered by the drum-playings of the Paraiyas. They further add that Paraiya drum-players at the royal court, temple and in the army were highly respected by the people⁴⁸¹. This piece of information makes me to recollect the status of legendary Paraiyas in classical *Tamizhagam*.

Paraicheri in early medieval *Tamizhagam* had huge tracks of land which got an access to irrigation. Inscriptions provide us ample information about location of the land,, its four boundaries, its productivity, the crops cultivated, pattern of crops, crop cycle, seasonal variations, harvesting pattern, etc. mostly the land held by the Paraiyas was fertile and they were mostly located near by a bund or a lake, or a pond or tank. While reading the inscriptions of 8th and 9th centuries, one can come to know the fact that the Paraiyas were well aware of monsoon seasons and it seems that they could forecast the rain and weather. They were quite familiar with the nature of the soil and its suitability for particular crops. They also equally knew the crop-rotation and crop-cycle through which they could yield more harvest according to seasons. The inscriptions of 8th century in the Thondaimandalam region bring to light that the Paraiyas collectively dug up ponds, constructed tanks, lakes and bunds⁴⁸². Unsurprisingly, in few inscriptions dated around 850 AD in Thondaimandalam inform us that the Paraiyas dug up few water channels connecting the nearby rivers and streams. The aforesaid efforts made by the Paraiyas collectively were to ensure prosperity of the people living in Paraicheri. In no way, they were part of mainstream village community.

The study on the right of Paraiyas over the land needs special attention. Because the epigraphical records do not offer a clear picture or uniformal definition, instead they carry multiple and complex picture. However, if we look into deep analysis of inscriptions, it will be so clear that there lies two important periods which can specifically be characterized by the Paraiya's right over land. They are 1. From 6th century AD to 10th century AD and 2. 11th century AD to 13th century AD.

SII, Vol 14, No 2, p 26.

⁴⁸¹SII, Vol16, No 2, p 43.

⁴⁸²SII, Vol 22, no2., p 33.

In the first phase, the Paraiyas held agricultural land, yet they had not individually owned it. In other words, one can say that communal holder ship popularly prevailed in Paraicheri. The Paraiyas used family laborers to cultivate the agricultural land. Families in kins, sects and gothras fixed their part of rendering service over the production in the field. From Each according to their family, sect and group based on fixed labour service, involved in productive relations.

The agricultural tools were obtained by them either from Kammanache'ri, the settlement of Kammalas or implements were made by some people within them⁴⁸³. The way in which the family laborers employed in the basic unit of production paved the Paraiyas to access the resources equally and let them to treat each other equal. But, by keeping the above said view, one cannot simply conclude that there was no hierarchy found among the Paraiyas. Because, the mechanism of appropriation and distribution of surplus produced by the Paraiyas made certain status distinctions between the families, yet they were not immune to the process of mobility.

Around 7th century AD, the inscriptions during the Pallavas in Thondaimandalam region tell us that there were few Paraiya individual land owners who donated the agricultural land to the *Brahmin* priests for the recital of Ramayana and Mahabharata in the village⁴⁸⁴. It does not mean that the Paraiyas were becoming individual land owners; rather, the right over the agricultural field was defined in terms of those who organized the production and supervised it. That may be the reason why the terms such as Valaparaiyan (the paraiyan who worked on the field), UzhavuParaiyan (the Paraiyan who ploughed the agricultural land) and Kavalparaiyan (the Paraiyan who guarded the agricultural field) were often referred in the inscriptions depending on temporary service of each section of the people within the Paraiyas in the production process⁴⁸⁵.

d During this period, the Paraicheri was not bound to pay share to the state except in few instances of Thondaimandalam. Similarly, the newly emerging exogenous land grants in the form of Brahmmadeya, Devadana and Agrahara brought no significant impact over the existence of the Paraicheri. But, the frequent rades of the local petty chieftains in the peripheral region

⁴⁸³ SII, Vol 12, no 6, p 69.

⁴⁸⁴ SII, Vol 12, No 1, p 8.

⁴⁸⁵ SII, Vol 12, No 3, p 58.

had changed, to certain extent, the composition and the characteristics of the Paraiyeri. The act of coercion by the feudatory chiefs during the time of clashes between them attacked the village men, plundered the village and crossed over the village troupes. Moreover, the strangers set the agricultural fields on fire. As a consequence, agricultural growth fell rapidly, therefore, not only, the Paraiyas got affected but also entire village community was totally disrupted. The peasants fled from the village, the problem of scarcity of resources rose among the Paraiyas agriculturalists and subsequent class differentiations became inevitable phenomenon.

In the second phase particularly in the period between 11th century AD and 13th century AD, the Paraiyas were often portrayed as individual land owners. Inscription of Rajaraja Chola says that Paraiyas held the land individually, kept it under irrigation of common village tanks, lakes and bunds of the village⁴⁸⁶.

The question arises here is, what happened to the lakes, bunds constructed by the Paraiyas? Had they been overtaken by other groups in the same village or had the state integrated all the resources together in order to extract maximum share from the village. To answer the aforesaid hypothetical questions, inscriptional data needs to be analyzed with due caution and attention. Around 10th century AD, the Brahmadeya grants got expanded to the wet and arid region of Thondaimandalam and in the Kavery deltaic region. The state under the Chola needed more resources to meet centralized organs and also to meet frequent wars and conquests. But, the established state by the Cholas and their predecessors did not have any stronghold at the peripheral level to gain the consent of its subjects and extract resources. Therefore, the rulers in various points of time in *Tamizhagam* used their close associates to act as intermediates to use attractive power to subjugate the people and extract their resources.

There came on their way the *Brahmins* being religious well sounded people to be employed by the rulers not only officials at the royal court but also provided with huge portion of land track that was held by the Paraiyas without their consent. Let me briefly explain this process described in the inscriptions of 11th century AD. These two processes led to the subjugation of the existing communities at the village level to dominant *Brahmin* and Vellala classes.

⁴⁸⁶ SII, Vol 7, No 1,p 18.

The Pallava, Chola and Pandiya rulers provided land grants to the *Brahmin* officials and priests for their services in the form of Brahmadeya, Devadana and Agrahara. These land grants consisted many villages. While granting these lands, the *Brahmins* were given prerogative rights over the land and its people. Particularly, these land grants were exempted from taxes, state control and moreover, the beneficiaries were endowed with huge administrative and judicial rights over that particular grant. However, administering a new area was difficult task for the strangers. Therefore the *Brahmin* beneficiaries acquired few extraneous rights over the people when they got these land grants. That is, when they began to enjoy their acquired rights over the land its people, there came resistance from the village communities. For instance, The peasant uprisings were mentioned by contemporary records of the Cholas.

In the beginning, the *Brahmin* land holders sought state assistance to suppress them. It might be the reason why in the 11th century AD, the inscriptions of Rajendra Chola mention two categories of Devadana grants namely 1. Kudineeki Devadana and 2. Kudineenga Devadana⁴⁸⁷. In the former case, when the *Brahmin* individuals acquired the grants, they were given the right to evict the existing cultivators and employ their own favourites who were brought from distant land. In the later case, the *Brahmin* individuals were advised to employ the native cultivators. The fact of the matter before us is, by the act of coercion, the *Brahmin* beneficiaries reduced the native cultivators into mere tenants and landless cultivators. When the uprisings rose more and more In the Later period, they realized that coercion would not be final solution to rule the people at the grass root level. Therefore, the holders of above said grants began to influence in the society by two processes 1. Act of attraction through religion and temples and 2. Act of penetration through the introduction of caste. Both these two processes worked successful to fulfill the aims of the *Brahmins*. In the first case, *Brahmin* priests received many grants from the royal court to build the temples and the rulers did it so to legitimize their power. But, construction of huge temples attracted the common people towards *Brahmin*-centered ideology and the people in secular categories began to move towards temple in actual terms towards *Brahmins*. Whereas, the people who had been following an established sects were not receptive. The moment the people started moving towards temples, it meant that they were being taken into brahmanical social stratification. In this case, the Paraiyas being distinctive

⁴⁸⁷ SII, Vol 12, No 3, p 33.

social group whose religious tradition was dissimilar with others were not receptive. Here the second process begins. Both Those who were attracted towards temple and those who were not were attempted by the *Brahmins* to incorporate and accommodate within Brahmanical social order, so that, their livelihood and legitimacy would not be disturbed. For this purpose, *Brahmins* began to introduce the notion of caste in the villages which were dominated by them. Let me analyze how the introduction of caste changed the status of the Paraiyas in the early medieval *Tamizhagam* in the following passage.

Inscriptions of 11th century AD and 12th century AD clearly tell us that the Paraiyas were neither secular social group nor religiously influenced heterogeneous group. That was the reason why, while all other social categories were being taken into the Brahmanical fold, the Paraiyas remained unreceptive. One cannot simply say that all the Paraiyas irrespective of their economic status remained aloof from the process of brahmanical proselytization. There were few Paraiyas who seemed to be moving towards *Brahmin*-centered social fold⁴⁸⁸.

However, in the process of incorporation through a systematic manifestation with the help of religion, caste came to be playing an important role in defining the status of an individual and the community. From The inscriptions of early medieval *Tamizhagam*, one can get two kinds of status offered by the caste. They are 1. Subjective status and 2. Accorded status. What do they mean? Subjective status means the status through which an individual claims for him. The accorded status means a status through which members of a given group or society assign to an individual, a group or category⁴⁸⁹. Caste as a determining factor attributed these two status to an individual and groups.

In the first case, the individual Paraiyas were claiming to be part of Brahmanical social fold, yet the community did not lose its identity by surrendering itself to the Brahmanical social fold. I would like to bring out my own perception of caste in this context in the following passage.

⁴⁸⁸ V Arasu, '*Tamil Sirupathirigai Choolalum Dalit Karuthdalum*' in Ravi Kumar (ed), *Dalit Kali-Illakiyam-Arasiyal*, Dalit Kalai Vizha Kulu, Neyveli, 1996, p 27.

⁴⁸⁹ Herbert Hyman (1942), in a monograph neglected by Indianists and most anthropologists, has distinguished between these two statuses

Indian society is divided into three communities. They are 1. Caste, 2. Outcaste and 3. Indigenous. First, the caste community consists of four castes that are hierarchically ordered) The *Brahmins* (priests) are the preservers and protectors of the eternal laws of the Universe (*Dharma*); the *Kshatriyas* (rulers and warriors) are the defenders and the guarantors of the safety and security of the community; the *Vaisyas* (business persons) are the conservers and distributors of wealth; and the *Shudras* (the laborers) are the working majority involved in the production of essential commodities. Although there is a clear separation between the first three castes, which are ritually pure and socio-economically dominant (referred to as the twice-born), and the fourth laboring caste, which is ritually suspect and socioeconomically dominated (referred to as the once-born), together they form the Hindu human community.

Second, related to, but outside of, these four segments of the Indian human society there exists a fifth outcaste community. This large group has been ejected from the contours of Hindu society; it still lives outside the gates.

Caste is an actual status of an individual which places him or her in a certain manner or position and sometimes it also provides platform to assert one's identity. The Sanskrit term *Jati* is synonymously being used to identify caste. *Jati* cannot be equated with *Varna* ranks. *Varna* is the ritual status of individual caste which opens a space for a community to horizontally identify their position. Caste can be understood based on the ranks that the individuals hold in a given social order. Caste rank involves at least two persons: one to claim it and another to honor the claim." The claim to caste rank is often made by adopting appropriate attributes; it is honored, if at all, in interaction. The two are therefore inseparable.

In the context of Paraiya community, when the notion of caste was introduced to put up fragmented social groups in a proper order, there occurred two processes 1. Each and everyone irrespective of the fact that to what group or community they belonged, wanted to get incorporated in the caste ranks, and 2. The people who already got incorporated into Brahmanical social order always looked for popular recognition of their position high in that order. Basically, it was the Brahmins who seemed to be ritually hegemonic groups who determined the ranks of individuals and their groups in the caste ranks. In this complicated process of castification of people in early medieval *Tamizhagam*, the claimants who wanted to assert his or her position high in that given order tended to look upward and this tendency led

to those who seemed to be resistive getting downward mobility by reaching to the bottom. As mentioned above, caste system could not work out unless each caste is given certain attributes and symbols. Though these symbols and attributes seemed to be extraneously imposed on the people who were reactionary to the system, they only remained decisive factors in the process of exclusion and marginalization of certain groups. It is also said that Caste is one phenomenon which defies the status differentiations.

The notions of *Karma* (duty) and *Dharma* (right) being central concepts of Brahmanical tradition marginalized the *Paraiyas* in substantial manner. It is assumed that Individuals accept their position in the caste system Because of the dual concepts of karma and dharma. It is one's karma or actions in a previous life that determine one's caste position in this lifetime. The only way to ensure a better position in society next time is to follow one's dharma or caste duty. So closely are notions of salvation in Hinduism tied to caste duty that a Hindu without a caste is a contradiction in terms. This systematic propagation of three-fold Brahmanical social theory strongly affected the ordinary social classes who were unfamiliar with these ideas. Moreover, the *Paraiyas* in particular were in many ways subjugated to these theoretical speculations of *Brahmins*. As we see in many inscriptions of 12th century that *Paraiyas* were advised by the *Brahmin* temple priests to give up their agricultural land for the enrichment of the temple and if they did it so, they would attain salvation. These kinds of unfamiliar interpretation for life and conduct had enormously put the *Paraiyas* to lose their land, high status and even the dignity.

The *Paraiyas* had different connotations in early medieval *Tamizhagam* and many present-day communities who proclaim to be *Shudras* and *Kshatriyas* originated from the common ancestors of *Paraiyas*. *Senai Kudaiar* mostly did Weaving job. *Pull Poriki Paraiya* had their living by collecting grass for Horses. They were dependent on Horse solders (cavalry). Later they called themselves as *Kuddirai Sevakar* (Care taker of Horse), then to *Seynai Kudaiaar*, and then to *Seynai Talaivar*.

The *Paraiyas* who were employed in the Chola army also called themselves as *Seynai Thalaivar*. Later the *Seynai Thalaivar* called themselves as *Chettiyar*, *Muddaliyar*, *Pillai*, etc., *KaiKolar* and *Sengunthar* dissected from *Paraiyas* during *Vijayanagar* rule. *Vijayanagar* Inscriptions inform us that *Kolliya Paraiya*, *Sengunthar* and *KaaiKollar* identified themselves as the descendants of *Veerabaku* one of the Commanders of Lord *Muruga*. Weavers from Northern districts of

Tamilnadu were called as Sengunthar and from Southern, districts were called as Kaikollar. The so-called Thevaradiyar that were employed in Temples were from these weaver classes. Later they called themselves as Pillai and Muddai.

Today, there are more than 348 categories of Paraiyas some who live in Tamilnadu. Few of the important / majority divisions of the Paraiyas as follow.

Valluva Paraiya

Dada Paraiya

Danda Paraiya

Tavalai Kaali Paraiya

Kudi Paraiya

Teeya Paraiya

Murasu Paraiya

Ambu Paraiya

Vaduga Paraiya

Aliya Paraiya

Vallai Paraiya

Vetiyaan Paraiya

Kooliya Paraiya

Perum Paraiya

Agaali Paraiya

Tamil Paraiya

Pullai Paraiya

As mentioned earlier the many divisions indicate the wide range of worker division within Paraiyas indicate they were from different working groups of a community with a common⁴⁹⁰ name as Paraiyas.

Retrieving the history of Paraiyas from the literature

The 13th century literature Valluvamaalai gives us an account of Valluvars in the following manner.

Valluvars are believed to have been the priests of the Pallava kings before the introduction of *Brahmins* and for sometime after their arrival. The exalted position of Valluvars in the social hierarchy during those times is indicated by inscriptions which refer to Valluvars in a respectful manner. Moreover, the Tamil saint Thiruvalluvar is believed to have been a member of this community. He has written the famous Tirukkural. And there is a subset of Valluvars claiming descent from him⁴⁹¹.

Though Valluvars were regarded as a low income and minority group, but maintained uniqueness among Hindu community by caste Hindus, Thurston mentions that Valluvars did not eat with Paraiyas. Valluvar houses were generally located at a significant distance away from the Paraicheri where they lived. Owing to their occupation as priests, all males over twelve wore the sacred thread. The Valluvars were also noted for their abstinence from beef⁴⁹².

The Valluvars are also called Pandaram or Valluva Pandaram. The priests of the Valluvars are sometimes called Vellala Pandaram⁴⁹³.

The important sub-sects of Valluvans are Tavidadari and Tiruvalluvan. Valluvars are broadly classified into two main sub-divisions: Arupadhu Katchi or sixty clans and Narpadhu Katchi or forty clans⁴⁹⁴.

⁴⁹¹ Swamynaddha dhasari, *Valluva Malai oru maru ayyu*, Navayana publication, Puducherry, 2008. P. 23.

⁴⁹² Ibid., p. 69.

⁴⁹³ Ibid., p. 72.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 78.

The Arupadhu Katchi considered them the descendants of Nandi Gurukkal and has his name as their gotra. The Narpadhu Katchi is of the gotra Sidambara Sayichya Ayyamgar. The subdivision alvar claim descent from Tiruppan Alvar.

Valluvars follow both Saivism and Vaishnavism. Saivite and Vaishnavite Valluvars dine together, but not intermarry. A particular class of Valluvars officiated as priest at Paraiyas funerals. This particular class of Valluvars was known as Paraiyas Tadas and was regarded as inferior by other sections of Valluvars. Another section of Valluvars wore a necklace of tulsi beads and are known as Alvar Dasari or Tavadadhari. Some hold that the true Valluvan is one who practices astrology and that those who officiate as priests aren't true Valluvars. The affairs of the community are handled by a caste-council. The community is headed by a Kolkaran or a Kanakkan.

The 9th century Tamil literature Divagaram Nigandu gives us an account of the life and culture of Paraiyas in early medieval *Tamizhagam*. The Divagaram gives us a detailed account of cultural life of Paraiyas such as Ceremony of attaining puberty, Making alliance for marriage, Marriage ceremony and its aftermath, Monogamy and polygamy practices, Ceremony of pregnancy, The ceremony of untying mangalsutra, The ceremony of adoption of a child, The status of widow, The impact of Brahmanism on Paraiya traditions, The worship of mother goddesses, The worship of boundary goddesses, Social categories, The death and funeral ceremony, The story of Vettiyan, The story of Thoti, etc.,

The text Divagaram states that the ceremony of attaining puberty in Paraiyas' life was considered as an important one. The women especially the mother of a girl used to be cautious about the time of puberty. There was a misnomer among the people that seeing or touching the girl who attained a puberty on the first day. So the girl who attained puberty used to be isolated from the usual habitation place and she would be kept in a shed. Elderly women accompany and advise her about the sexual and marital life. After a week or 9 days, the married women use to gather and make her bathe in special water. This was considered to be the most important milestone. The maternal uncle of that girl would bring some gifts and put trishan on her forehead. No matter whether the uncle was young or old, the villagers used to talk about the marriage of a girl with that man. Usually, the marriage of a girl who attained puberty would be fixed on the day when Manjal neeradai ceremony used to take place. Divagaram states

different kinds of practices followed by the Paraiyas living in different parts of the early medieval *Tamizhagam*. For instance, in Kongunadu (the country of Kongu Vellalars), during The ceremony of attaining puberty, the elderly men and women from the maternal uncle's place would come to the village of a girl where married women would make the girl bathe and she would be taken to a room where the married women would put seven Arisimavilakku on the forehead, shoulder, stomach, back, thigh, ankle of the legs and feet. It was practiced in order to strengthen the girl who newly entered into womanhood. In some parts especially, around Thanjavur, after the girl having bathed, she would be taken to the isolated a room where few maternal aunties of a girl would hit the back and hip of the girl with Ulakai (the tool used for husking paddy). This practice was considered to be done by the people for energitizing the girl⁴⁹⁵.

Paraiyas did not have any elaborate tradition in making marriage alliances. The Bridegroom should be elder than a bride in age. The man can marry either the daughter of paternal aunty or of maternal uncle. Nigandu states that unlike Kongu Vellalas, it was not compulsory for a girl belong to Paraiya community to marry a man who was younger than her. While the villagers sit for making marriage alliance, they share Paddy, vegetables and few gold coins. Mostly, the people belong to bride family used to give more of these things to Bridegroom family members⁴⁹⁶.

The marriage ceremony of the Paraiyas was a simple one. Tying Thaali was central locus of the Marriage ceremony. Thali was yellow thread in which few anas and flat gold or silver or bronze coin would be tied. The tying mangal sutra would take place in front of Valluvan, the priest of Paraiya community. The Valluvan enchant few Tamil Manthras. Even if the bride was matured girl, the bride and bridegroom would not begin to live together. The mother of bride would decide when they should begin to live together. When the bride and bridegroom go for union, few games would be played by the family members. Divagaram elaborately visualizes the marriage ceremony of Thangalan Paraiyas. Both the community members would go to the toddy shop, the bride family members offer toddy to the bridegroom family members and then they would come to an agreement about the marriage alliance. In making marriage alliance, the

⁴⁹⁵ R. Rasamanikanar, *Divagara Nigandum adhan samuga kannotamum*, New century book house, Chennai, 2002. P. 28.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, P. 36.

approval of a maternal uncle of the bride is important. If the bride was not fixed, the bridegroom family members would not eat food in bride's house⁴⁹⁷.

In the tradition of Paraiyas, Monogamy was in practice as has been stated by Nigandu. But, the Paraiya bridegroom might marry a second girl if the first wife seemed to be not delivering child for years. If that happens so, the newly married girl entitles all the rights and her children would become coparceners of their ancestral properties. Concubines were also in practice in the Paraicheris. But, the concubines would not have any right in sharing the family values⁴⁹⁸.

Divagaram highlights the ceremony of pregnancy taken place in the family of Paraiyas. When the woman conceives for the first time, in the seventh month this woman's maternal family members would come to her house. In front of the house, the elderly women use to decorate with flowers. Valluvan would come and enchant manthras. The pregnant woman would bend facing towards and the sister of pregnant woman would pour milk on her back. Unlike the Kongu Vellalars, this ceremony was not done to predict the child in the womb as male or female⁴⁹⁹.

The text Valluvamaalai highlights the practice of death and funeral ceremony prevalent among Paraiyas in the early medieval *Tamizhagam*. When man or woman dies in a family, everyone in the family would chant few Oppari songs by praising the deceased one. There were many folk oppari songs even still recited by the villagers especially in the Paraiya community. His relatives would be called upon and the dead body would be cleaned up with water brought up by his near relatives. If he was married man, the wife of that deceased would sit beside him rice or salt would be give to her. She would give it in the hands of deceased and somebody make the deceased to give it back to her. Like this, three times would be done. Later, the dead body would be kept in the decorated palanquin and taken to cremation ground. The deceased son would carry a pot of water and when the dead body reaches the cremation ground, the Vettiyan would order the dead body carriers to put down on the flore. The son of the deceased would come three times around the dead body and he would ask the Vettiyan, "let me finish the things?" if he nods his head, he will break the pot by throwing it on the flore near by the deceased head. The son of that man would take fast and shave his bear for 16 days. In case, the deceased was an unmarried,

⁴⁹⁷ R. Rasamanikkanar, *Divagara Nigandum adhan samuga kannotamum*, New century book house, Chennai, 2002. P. 43.

⁴⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 244.

⁴⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

the dead body would be kept near by a plantain tree and a thaali would be tied around it later it would be untied⁵⁰⁰.

Referring to the changes that unfolded in pastoral life, one can see that people switched to cultivation as the main occupation. “Concomitantly, rigid state formation also started in the Tamil land. From the 6th century A.D. onwards, the Pallavas in northern Tamil Nadu and the Pandyas in southern Tamil Nadu established their states.”

As migration of the *Brahmin* community started from the north to the south, its members were patronised by the rulers (the Pallavas), who provided them fertile land, called ‘Brahmadeyas’ or ‘Chaturvedimangalam’, with exclusive water rights. So far in Tamil Nadu, around 800 Brahmadeyas have been enumerated from the 6th century to the 13th century A.D. These lands were owned by *Brahmins*, and the tillers, who were landless farm labourers, lived in separate areas called pidagais (hamlets). Each chaturvedimangalam might have had three or four pidagais.

“As there were separate dwelling areas for landowners and farm labourers, their burial grounds also must have been segregated”. People also lived in segregated habitations known as kammala che’ri, Parai che’ri and Theenda che’ri. So, each community had separate habitations and burial grounds.

In support of the argument, one can see that such differences could be seen in the Raja Raja Chola inscription of the 11th century A.D. (South Indian Inscriptions, Volume-II, record No.5), “which speaks of Vellan sudukaadu (burial grounds of the Vellalas), Parai sudukaadu (burial grounds of Paraiyas), Eala cheri (habitation of toddy tappers) and Parai che’ri (habitation of Paraiyas). The stone inscription dated A.D. 1014, the last regnal year of King Raja Raja Chola-I, refers to the boundaries of a land.”

The stone inscription was reported from the Thanjavur region and has been published in South Indian Inscriptions, Volume-II as record No.5 dated A.D. 1014. The inscription speaks about land boundaries; when land was donated to a temple, the four boundaries were demarcated. So, during the donation, burial grounds or land given to Jains and Buddhists were exempted from the donated land.

⁵⁰⁰ Swaminadha dhasari, *Valluva Malai oru Maru ayvu*, Navayana publication, Puducherry, 2008. P. 122.

One can also refer to another stone inscription, dated to the 18th century A.D., found at the Kuduminathar temple in Kudumiyamalai village in Pudukottai district. “It speaks about burial-related services rendered by some persons of the Valayar caste and engaging in such practices was banned by their own community, which also appealed to their kin not to take up such menial jobs.”

“Though there is no evidence to show that each community adopted its own custom in performing the last rites, there is some historical evidence to show that when persons with royal background or some heroes were buried, their belongings such as swords, ornaments, diadems, haras made of metals and semi-precious stones such as carnelian, paste beads, glass beads, jasper and crystal beads, etc., were also buried along with the mortal remains. In some other places, we have unearthed earthen pots with their names, scripts and graffiti. From these pieces of evidence, we can differentiate the burial of royals and commoners. Gold diadems were collected from Athichanallur; the earliest – 1000 B.C. – burial site excavated 100 years ago on the banks of the Tamiraparani River in Tamil Nadu's Tuticorin district.”

The text Divagaram gives the story of Vettiyan. It states that “Vettiyanum Pinamum Kattipuraluga.” Vettiyan was the man who completes funeral ceremony. He was the one who burries the dead body of Paraiyas. He was the one who cremated the dead body in the later centuries. While he burns the dead body, the dead bodies would wake up due to tightening of nerves. Then the Vettiyan would beat the dead body. This act would continue till the last bone was being burnt.

Divagaram also states the story of Thoti in the following manner. Once, the snake, Adhisedan was carrying the universe on its back. It felt tired. So the snake went to lord Shiva. It requested to loosen its weight. Lord shiva commanded one Paraiyan to do the things so. The Paraiyan demanded Lord Shiva something for loosening the weight. Shiva offered the following things to Paraiyan. Manguli, (the salaree for burying the dead body), Thaandhuni (the cloth put up on the dead body), Vaaykarisi (the rice given to the dead body and put on its lap), Pindachoru (the rice cooked on the death took place) and Sootukuli (the salaree for burning the dead body). Then the Paraiyan thought that the things would be few only. So he sang a song, “Pazhuthavaiyum pazhutha pazhukkadhavaiyum Virattuga.” The old ones and those who are not old should die. Then lord shiva became angry and given some extra things to Paraiyan such as Marakkal (the

instrument for scaling paddy), Nilamalakkum Kaikol) scaling stick), Pullarukkum Arivaal (sickle for cutting grass) and Karagam thookum right. The previous category of Paraiyan was called as Vettiyan and the later was called as Thoti.

After having analyzed the Paraiya community in the context of early medieval *Tamizhagam*, I would like to sum up the entire process of social stratification and emergence of untouchability in the following passages.

Village as a micro-unit of agrarian production existed in the form of social contract of people belonging to different castes assembled in a particular order to constitute village. In the formative phase, lands would have been cultivated by the early occupants themselves, but the introduction of temples and brahmadeyas, and with those the ideology of ritual purity and pollution induced the bifurcation of cultivation from the right of possession. The temple establishment comes along with a set of transactional relations based on the ritual gradation of castes. The social, economic and political rights are embedded to the ritual status and this status remains unalterable as it is attached to birth. Thus the transactional emphasis of the temples amounts to a systemic control the human resources. Kani as the form of property in reality is not only a control over land, labour and water, rather it is a authority over a set of functions of the people from varied social locations that ensures agrarian production. All these conforms to a particular form of social life in which an individual engages from one among a set of mutually exclusive positions such as Kaniyalar, cultivator (tenant), labourer, or in service occupations such as barber, washer man, scavenger and the likes.

To elucidate this point further, let us view the role of village as a source of productive resources and as a social space where different castes were coordinated in process of agrarian production. We all know that caste system operated between the binary of purity and pollution. At the top of this ritual order are the *Brahmins* and the 'untouchables' form the bottom most layer. The ideology of ritual purity has condemned the most innate and productive occupation of agrarian societies - physical labour, as demeaning and inferior, and the most un-productive work in the agrarian world – priesthood is considered not only superior, but even sacred. This ranking is socially implemented through temples where the ritual purist *Brahmins* has entry into the sanctum sanctorum of the temple, and the touchable castes, including the Vellalas are eligible to enter the temple, except the sanctum sanctorum. The 'untouchables' being the most 'impure'

castes of the village are subjected to spatial restrictions and are denied entry in temples, residential area of the ritually pure castes and access to common water resources in the village.

As noted earlier, the agrarian villages in the wet zone were categorized into Brahmadeya, devadana or vellan vagai village. In any case, the village lands as a whole were divided into shares among kaniyalar (also called as Kaniyatchikarar or Mirasidars), and the number of shares depended upon the number of kaniyalars. No specification was made to any particular share, and the land is cultivated collectively, and the product is shared among the Kaniyalars. The initial set of castes in the wet zone agrarian organization was *Brahmins*, Vellalas, Pallars and Paraiyas among which the former two were ritually pure and the latter were ritually impure. The epigraphic evidences about the village space refer to 'Theendachcheri' which were to residential area of the untouchables, which shows that 'untouchability' was already in practice in Tamil region. We also know that lands and water resources in a village are controlled either by the temple or by those in control of the temple. This means that one should either be a *Brahmin* or a Vellala, to be in control of the temple and temple institutions and the village resources. By being born as an untouchable, one is subjected to the systemic denial of very basic right over productive resources and is also deprived of respectable social life. The ideology of ritual purity while entitling the ritually pure *Brahmins* and their chief patrons Vellalas to become Kaniyalars, at once denies the same to 'untouchables'.

The multitudes of inter-caste relationships in the locality strictly enforced rights and restriction on each and every caste. Every individual in the village community lived with the fear of being ostracized from social relations on violation of the codes of conduct. These are aspects of village social life in which one's social, economic and political rights are embedded. Thus, to be a member of the dominant castes means that one is on top of a set of socio-cultural relationships marked by economic dependencies that ensures absolute control over village life that is never under threat as it is institutionalized through a set of unequal inequalities.. To be a member of the 'lower' castes means absolute subjugation in which he/she is dependent on other castes for livelihood. Thus, in the view of Untouchables, 'Kaniyatci only meant the right to serve their patrons'.

Thus, birth in a particular caste determines whether one is liable for respectable social life or absolute dependence on those who are considered respectable. The early form of property, the

Kaniyatchi, is not an absolute right over land, rather it is a right that encompasses every aspect that ensures agrarian production and the production is shared in a particular way in which the people at the top of the social order remains very much secured. The rights connected to one's birth secure oneself from the forfeiture of the rights and privileges. On the other side, to be a member of the untouchable castes means that one cannot claim any means to a respectable social life as one is born in a caste which deems no respect and no social, economic and political rights. With this background one has to evaluate the agrarian system with reference to social, economic and political rights, privileges and denials.

Untouchability, in practice, manifests in every aspect of village social life that ensures complete subjugation of the untouchables in the village social sphere. The complex inter-caste socio-cultural relationship makes the 'kaniyalar' position in a village as a status rather than an economic right. A person becomes a Kaniyalr by virtue of his 'superior' birth and ritually pure higher moral practice and to be born in an 'untouchable' caste is a curse. Therefore a person's rights and privileges determined at birth and remain unchanged as one can however never attain a ritually pure status through practice of higher moral life. One can become a *Kaniyalar* only by being born either to *Brahmin* or *Vellala* parents. Thus, in those conditions, an individual engages with land and the productive resources either as a *Kaniyalar* or as cultivator (mostly *Vellalas*)/cultivating tenant (*Kudi*) or as a slave (*adimai*), who is attached to land as a part of the *Kani* right.

The end of the Chola kingdom is marked by the evolution of many local chieftains and warriors as land controllers. Warlords were donated land by the kings as remuneration of their services in the military expansion of the kingdom. However the agrarian organization of the core wet zones remained undisturbed by this as the new warrior chiefs gained control over uncultivated zones and lands occupied by the tribal people. Land control came to be attached to warrior chieftains, apart from the ritually pure *Brahmin* and *Vellala* alliance. Even though in some cases where the *Vellalas* resisted to recognize the authority of the warrior chiefs the *Vellala* chiefs were replaced by warriors, the *Brahmins'* supremacy over the agrarian organization remained undisturbed right from the Pallava - Chola period and also during the Vijayanagar period. The military power of the warrior chieftains broke the alliance between the ritually pure *Brahmins* and their *Vellala* patrons at once as they recognised the ritual 'highness' of the former and denied the *Vellala*

dominance. Henceforth, the undisputed privilege over the productive resources so far enjoyed by the Vellalas could sustain the military onslaught of warrior chiefs only by submitting to them. Privilege of being a land controller which was earlier enjoyed only by the *Brahmins* and Vellalas, now came to be enjoyed by individuals from other social origin who could establish themselves chieftains through their military power.

Even the earliest historic evidences suggest that the society was stratified into castes. Human relationship with land and other productive resources is mediated by his/her social origin. The local order of caste functions as the order of State not only because the State engages only with the agrarian elites who are in control of the agrarian sphere, but also the King as a superior devotee of the temples and as one who completely subscribes to the ritual ideology, implements brahmanism by endowing *Brahmins* and temples with donations of lands not only facilitated with irrigation but also with people to cultivate those lands. And later, warrior elites gained land control as a result of military expansion of the kings. It can therefore be inferred that, in the pre-colonial period land always belonged to the power, be it ritual or territorial. One has to be a *Vellala* or a *Brahmin* or be holders of honorific titles or warriors to become a *Kaniyalar* or a landholder. Land ultimately belongs to the ruler and it has to be granted. These grants are made only to *Brahmins* or to people holding honorific titles who are none other than *Brahmins* or *Vellalas*, or to warrior elites.

CHAPTER VI

Conclusion: social dynamism in early medieval Tamizhagam

Reconstructing the history of people in particular time and space is very difficult task, yet, an interest towards finding new evidences and new materials makes a scholar to be successful in accomplishing his or her task of completing the research. In this manner, as a research scholar having devoted my career for doing the research of particular people who were collectively identified as Paraiyas in early medieval Tamizhagam, I have done this PhD thesis entitled “Caste and community in early medieval Tamizhagam from circa 6th century AD to circa 13th century AD” and I could come up with some fresh historical findings in the light of existing views presented by scholars in various points of time. Although sources available are not adequate enough, plenty of inscriptions, copper plates and a corpus of classical Sangam literature and Bhakti literature have stood insignificant historical sources in retrieving the history of the caste and community in early medieval Tamizhagam. However, in this chapter, I would like to sum up the major findings that I have brought out in previous chapters.

In the first chapter entitled “Introduction”, I have brought out various historiographical perceptions on Indian past and I have given more emphasis on south India. Furthermore, I have systematically analyzed the views of historians on the history of south India in the context of my research, and simultaneously I have brought out my own critiques on existing works through which I have framed research questions. Moreover I systematically outlined themes and intention of the proceeding chapters.

In the second chapter entitled “social formation in classical poetic age”, I have found social relations evolving in an incipient stage. The physiographic zones where the people lived and the resources on which they depended for their survival structured the social interactions within each physiographic zone as well as between different zones. Although the way in which social interactions of the people described in the classical Sangam literature seemed to be a mythology of certain kind, the narrative pattern and content of each poem does not simply make us to speculate them as mere imagination, rather, they provide us a strong platform to retrieve history of certain people with minimal historical imagination.

The Tinai concept elaborately and thematically systematized in both interior (akam and) exterior (Puram) anthologies informs us that social formation existed in the classical poetic age was primary mode of social formation. This is because the people in each ecological zone have depended upon the resources available for their daily survival. Though the chieftains were the authoritative mechanism for accumulating resources from the people in the forms of their daily livestock, they were distributed among the people again not based on a secondary redistribution system, but on the primary redistribution based on the existing social relations. Tinai cannot simply be considered as isolated entities conditioned by particular forms of production. But, in real existence, each and every Tinai kept on interacting with one another in terms of reciprocal relations. The characterization of the five Tinai such as Kurunji, Mullai, Marudham, Neydal and Paalai according to their ecological nature, resource availability and nature of occupation of the people tells us that there had been evolving a sequential social relations.

In the classical poetic age, mostly the available resources were appropriated by individuals and tribal groups. Therefore one could not popularly find hierarchy prevalent in the society. At the same time, one cannot ignore that in the process of resource accumulation, extraction had not been happening in the society. For instance, in Kurunji and Mullai Tinai, the tribal nature of hunting, food gathering, cattle rearing led to resource extraction, yet it did not pave a way for social hierarchy to occur in the society. But, one can clearly see social hierarchy occurring in the Maugham and Nodal Tinai. Because, agriculture and exchange relations were meant for surplus production and the surplus production led to social differentiation. The social differentiation led to social hierarchy. I have elaborately discussed in the second chapter. It is clear from the brief survey undertaken above that the social interactions and relations were determined by the nature of the productive forces in the region and the productive relations that emerged here over time.

Individuals, their identity and status in the Sangam age have been largely discussed. Mostly identity of an individual was determined based on his or her occupation. Mere identification of the people based on one's occupation did not differentiate an individual from another. In other words, identity of an individual did not determine his or her status. The Sangam literature provides us a general classification of the people such as Thalaivan, Thalaivi, Tozhi, Narrai,

Sevilithai, Thozhi, Paangan etc. Although they seem to be general, each term has got its own significance in securing its identity. The way in which the Sangam literature describes who could become heroes and heroines and who could not be is very elaborately discussed. A stretch of evidence found in Tolkaapiyam about Agar Silar makes us to assume that there might have existed slavery in the Sangam age.

The social categories such as Panan, Paraiyan, Kaniyan and Tudiyan lived in the Sangam age as service rendering groups and they were also portrayed as non-producing community. I have discussed their roll in the society and I also briefly brought out in what way the influence of Pulavan brought down the status of the above mentioned social categories in the society. Let me briefly sum up in the following passage.

One cannot assume that Sangam society was a caste society or non-caste society. There was no unilinear process of social transformation; rather social formation emerges out of the ecological determinism based on the primary mode of production. So, while reading the primary sources, it was possible for me to distinguish between an individual, group, community, etc., based on the status and the social capital. In the Sangam age there were two stages in the making of the social order. In the first case, the productive forces and the productive relations were based on the accessibility of resources, which determined one's status. So those who labored and those who controlled their labor would have been mutually dependant, and the non-producing and producing community would have maintained a social equilibrium. In order to enhance status, the non-producing community would have provided service through their skills. But in the second stage, the earlier existing non-producing community had to confront other non-producing communities, which were newly emerging in the course of acquiring status in society. We feel that the brahmanical priests would have introduced the notion of purity and pollution, which they already inherited and practiced in the Gangetic valley. They transmitted these notions here to enable their upward mobility in the society through monopolizing the field of knowledge and education, ceremonial activities including marriage and the institutionalization of marriage. (However, the actual visibility of this process is provided only through the early medieval sources.) This may have led to the status of earlier non-producing communities to go down to the bottom of the society. Not only they, but their sacred instruments also were identified as impure. This leads me to think over whether the notion of an identity based on hereditary occupations,

clan and lineage ties, and group, tribe or community bonds could have resulted in the displacement of certain sections and their replacement by others in the society as scholars has posited? Or, do we need to see the notion of purity and pollution introduced by the adoption of the brahmanical social system as the reason for the evolution of caste society in the Tamil south? In my opinion, we need to consider both the external and internal stimuli in analyzing the evolution of an incipient caste society by the end of the early historical period in the Tamil region on the basis of the evidence from the Sangam literature.

In the third chapter entitled “social stratification in early medieval Tamizhagam”, nature of the society and its categories have been briefly discussed. Various definitions offered by the scholars in different points of time are also briefly summarized in the necessary places. I have elaborately analyzed how disabilities to access the resources and subsequent discriminations were produced in the stratified society. Stratifying forces in the society were caste and Varna. Varna can be understood as vertical Brahmanical social order which puts Brahmins on the top and Shards at the bottom. Whereas, caste is a horizontal division implicit within each Varna. Marriage, birth, heredity and hierarchy are common features of the caste system. An attention has been paid on how these two concepts were used by the scholars to understand the society in early medieval Tamizhagam. From my own reading of secondary and primary sources, I have understood that Caste does not mean class structure. In the class-based society, The poor, one day, can attain the status of the rich, but a Shudra could never become a Brahmana in the caste-based society. Therefore, it is very clear that one’s caste only tells us what kind of status he or she possesses in the society.

to locate my research in a particular historical time frame from 6th century AD to 13th century AD which is popularly characterized by historians as early medieval period, after having read and understood the relevant primary sources, I have brought out few significant characteristics which marked the transition form early historic period to early medieval period in Tamizhagam. They are 1. The transition from the tribal polity to monarchy, 2. Shift from material appropriation to material extraction and Transition from the local cults and belief systems to Brahmanism, Jainism and Buddhism. At the same time I have offered distinction between Gangetic plain and Tamil south in historical context.

From the deep analysis of inscriptional data, I have found that from the 6th century AD onwards, as mentioned above, the landscape lying between mount Venkatam and Kanyakumari popularly known as Tamizhagam had been undergoing rapid changes. Use of iron became widespread. New land tracks were brought under cultivation. Labor force was systematically organized to produce more surpluses. As a result, urban centers rose up and Trading networks had developed. Social structure became now complex by the interactions between little ones and great traditions. Caste became as an instrument of one's status and identity. Temples and assemblies functioned as resource distribution mechanisms. New tribal groups were on the verge of adopting socialization processes. State stood as coercive mechanism which determined the land relations. Land relations and status of an individual remained as undistinguishable phenomenon. Bhakti movements of two distinct cults of lord Shiva and lord Vishnu attempted to incorporate the people from different social strata into Brahmanical social order.

Taking particular names of the community and settlements, I have analyzed in what way they had stood as invaluable forces in stratification process. One cannot ignore the fact that the ways in which name of the people and place mentioned in the inscriptions helped me a lot to reconstruct the history of certain unidentified people. While I discussed the people and the community, I have systematically analyzed the notion of status and identity. I have placed these two concepts in the Indian scenario. From my own understanding, I have found that Status of an individual is nothing but a kind of recognition which he or she acquires by his or her talents and it is some times granted by ones birth. Status is conditioned by based on the way in which the labor of commons is used in producing goods and service and the way in which accumulated resources are being redistributed. Status acquired by talents does not promote the status sanctioned by birth. Birth determining one's status is unique feature of Indian caste system. Caste does not permit one's upward mobility and it also does not upgrade one's status. Identity denotes the peculiarity of a community or group of individuals, ethnicity, state or nationality. It is determined by the nature of accessibility of resources and disabilities in it. yet, sometimes, extraneous forces such religion and race play an important roll in sanctioning identity to certain community either high or low, either pure or impure, either superior or inferior. In the Indian scenario, a given identity to one's community through caste cannot be changed at all throughout

history. In the context of social stratification, I strongly believe that both status and identity constitute substantial elements in understanding the manifestation of various social categories described in the inscriptions and copper plates.

In early medieval Tamizhagam, the state founded by Pallavas was predatory in nature. During this period, the state was a mechanism which had been dominated by the group of elite class, it had been consolidated by the conquests and coercive powers of those elite ruling class. The initiative for wars and conquests were primarily was drawn by the king from the advices and suggestions of the court priests.

Inscriptions do often talk about the life of village headman. Since village was mere unit of production and interaction between communities which functioned according to availability of resources and requirements of the population, Village headmen could not become a hereditary chief of the village and he could not extract resources for his sustenance as well. But, when the state began using coercive force in extracting the resources through centralized control over rural production mechanism, the headman of a village was forced to rethink of his subsistence and his status. Therefore, later he became hereditary leader of a particular village and this process also facilitated process of citification of communities along with Brahmanism. Unsurprisingly, the community to which this village headman belonged could have been evolving a new caste which might possibly have been considered as superior as other communities. Thus, social stratification, in the beginning, stepped into pristine village community.

In the predatory model of the state under the Pallavas, the rulers were in a compulsion to construct loyalty between the state and subjects with some means. Because, the rulers were often identified as strangers. The rulers had done it successfully with the support of Brahmins who had both coercive powers by holding office in ruler's court and attractive power by holding ritual supremacy of Brahmanism. The Brahmins were basically priestly community. They belonged to hegemonic cultural group who often seemed to be acting as agents of structuring Brahmanical social order in India. The land grants were given to Brahmins and they can also be considered in terms of constructing ruler's loyalty and respect to the Brahmins. Each grant consisted of hundreds of villages. These land grants given to Brahmins can be classified into three types.

They are 1. Brahmadeya grant, 2. Devadana grant and 3. Agrahara grant. Each of these land grants got their own privileges and functions. These beneficial grants of land were frequently subject to special conditions, connected either with the maintenance of the land that is, it should be irrigated properly or with Brahmanical functions and behavior. In addition, frequently there were restrictions on alienation, such as that the land could be transferred only to other Brahmins, or even only to Brahmins belonging to a particular philosophical school.

I have elaborately discussed the status of Brahmins, their status and identity. From my own understanding of the inscriptions, I have understood that Firstly, the status of the Brahmins was upgraded by the Brahmadeya grant provided by the king to the Brahmins for their official efficiency. Brahmadeyas were basically individual grants and sometimes Brahmadeya grant was given to group of individuals in particular vicinity. They were, some times, tax-free grants. Yet, the Brahmins were not cultivators. They were basically people who held the land, left it for lease and collected land revenue, or they used to hold land and cultivated by the landless cultivators. In most of the times, when the Brahmadeya grants were granted to Brahmins, they were simultaneously granted with tenural rights over the cultivators who were constituted in the particular Brahmadeya. Part of the revenue was paid to the ruler and the rest was enjoyed by the grantee. The Brahmin who received Brahmadeya grant acquired administrative, revenue as well as legal rights over the people and their settlements.

I have also realized that these Brahmadeya settlements had larger impact on the prevailing societies. Prior to Brahmadeya grants given to Brahmins, these areas had different village settlements covering a large portion of wet land as well as semi-arid land. These villages had distinct land relations, distribution mechanisms and social structure. Communal holder ship was generally prevalent in these villages. They produced the grains and stuffs which they needed for and they exchanged surplus with people of other villages. Once they were brought up under Brahmadeya grants, villagers' communal rights over the land were questioned and finally taken over by the Brahmins.

I have found that Devadana grant given to the temple and kept under the supervision of Brahmins had largely enhanced the position of Brahmin community. When we look at the land relations and the way in which the labor force was mobilized to expand agriculture under this grant, one can see two types of Devadana grants prevalent from the 10th century AD onwards.

They are 1. Kudi-Neenga Devadana and 2. Kudi-Neekki Devadana. In The first type, when the land was given to the Brahmins for the temple management, the laborers were also attached in it. The local social elites became tenants in it and the ordinary communal cultivators became the landless cultivators and they were considered to be mere serfs on the land. At any cost, the peasants or agricultural laborers were not given freedom to flee from the land kept under the Devadana grant. In the second type, before the land was granted to the Brahmin or to the temple, the peasants and the cultivators were evicted from the land and then they were put up under the Devadana grant. The peasants and cultivators were given freedom to move from the villages. By keeping agrarian expansion and prosperity of the temples in mind, the rulers might have given these kinds of Kudi-neeki Devadana grants, so that, the Brahmins did not necessarily depend on the local elites for the agrarian expansion. Moreover, from the 8th century onwards, Devadana grants stood as the centre of production, appropriation and redistribution.

I could see that Agrahara grants were basically beneficial grants given by the rulers to the settlements of the Brahmins which consisted of few villages or few acres of land. They were most often associated with temples of the localities. Agrahara grants were tax-free grants. Agrahara grants stood as locus of Brahmanical cultural accommodation for all those who were subjected to assimilate the cultures of the great traditions. One cannot deny the fact that the Brahmins could establish and sustain their cultural dominance over the regions wherever they were given land grants because of guidance of the state and the process of localization Brahmanical culture.

After having analyzed the special land grants in a systematic way, I have concluded that Brahmins possessed high status in the society. They were the ones who stood as stratifying force through their Spastic knowledge and their influence in the state apparatus. However, through critical analysis of inscriptional data, one can get a view that identity and status of the Brahmins were elaborately structured by the process of agrarian expansion and centralization of the resources. Being a priest, not only a Brahmin could perform domestic sacrifices but also they could do it so to the royal lineages. An extraneous force, such as sacrifices and devotion stood as guiding principles for the Brahmins to attain their high status in the society. Brahmins association with the temples and their deities had brought a huge amount of veneration to the Brahmins. Unsurprisingly, one can question: acquiring the knowledge is universal

phenomenon. Why do we attribute it only to Brahmins? Why not others? Even if Shastric knowledge was peculiar only to Brahmins, how were the non-shastric people controlled by the Shastric Brahmins? These were few hypothetical questions which remained unsolved due to lack of appropriate sources from the primary sources especially from the inscriptions. Nevertheless, it was well evident in the inscriptions that a son of Brahmin went and recites verses of Ramayana or Mahabharata in the countryside. As a result the settlers of the particular village provided certain amount of land and grains to him. In the mean time, for the regular recital of Mahabharata and Ramayana, the villagers constructed a wooden house where the Brahmin could stay the night and recite them. Huge audience listened to those to stories which they had not heard before. Later, the one who enchanted verses of Mahabharata and Ramayana was invited to the places where they worshiped and given in charge of looking after the temple affairs. The one who was looking after the temple prior to the arrival of the Brahmin priests was reduced merely as the temple servant called as Pujari. Inscriptions do not provide an idea that who were those Pujaries and which section of the social strata they came from. Nevertheless, it was a long process which began in the northern part of Tamizhagam around 7th century AD and culminated around 13th century AD.

I have devoted much space to analyze other social categories other than Brahmins. One among them was Nattars. They were corporate grouped who were important decision-making community living in the Nadu and Valanadu level. Thereafter, I have paid more attention to Vellalas who were dominant Non-Brahmin social category. Vellella's were more influential persons in the village. Unsurprisingly, the term vellala appear in the inscriptions of the late 10th century A.D. As the person who held huge piece of land and cultivated by themselves or by the landless cultivators. Then, another social category palli often appears in the inscriptions. Mostly, the Palls were the cultivators who were not considered as pure by the Brahmins. I have also devoted a little space to write the life of Nagarattar, the merchants.

I have elaborately analyzed the settlements of few communities. Basically, the village in early medieval Tamizhagam consisted of distinctive residential localities - for example, Urnattam, Paraichcheri, Pulaichcheri, Vannarachcheri, kammalachcheri, kudiyrukkai, Ilachcheri, tindachcheri, talaivaycheri, talicheri, etc. The Urnattam seems to be the area where the

residences of the Vellalas were placed. Paraichcheri seems to be the residential area of the Parayas, Pulaichcheri- that of the Pulaiyas, Kudiyirukkai that of the cultivators (Kudi, kudiyanavan) Vannarachcheri residential area for washermen (Vannans), Kammalachcheri - residential area of the kammalas, Ilachcheri for toddy tappers, tindachcheri was the residential area of the untouchables, talaivaycheri seems to be the residential area of people who maintained the sluices. The different residential areas imply that the villagers were never equal to one another. We do not know about when these social categories came into existence, but even the earliest inscriptions note the presence of Parayas, Kammalas, Vellalas, Pulaiyar, untouchables, kudis, of settled agriculture imply that social categories have already existed even before the Chola period.

From the analysis of inscriptional data, I have found that in the villages of early medieval Tamizhagam, there were also few service rendering communities who were often dependants of the producing communities and Brahmin priests in the village and to the ruling class and merchants in the urban centers. The service castes in the village as well in the urban centers were mostly washer man, astrologers, physicians, dancers and musicians. They were remunerated for their service through grants of lands known as manias such as Vannan Maniyam, Kanimurruttu, and maruttuvapperu. There are inscriptional evidences that dancers and musicians also held land. Maniyams in general means Tax-free land, and therefore, the service castes were provided with tax-free lands which must have been cultivated by the agricultural laborers who mostly belonged to either Pallar or Paraya castes. Few service castes and their occupations were considered as impure and polluting. Remuneration for the castes kept engaged in menial and polluting jobs such as scavenging (totti maniyam) and grave-digging (vettiyan maniyam) had also been in practice.

Having devoted much space to analysis of Kaniyatchi form of labour, I have concluded that around 13th century A.D. actual disparity resulted in the society by the introduction of caste which was interpreted now based the notion of purity and pollution. Who were the Purakudis? Although inscription portrays Purakudis as cultivators who were brought from other villages, we are unable to get an idea that why these cultivators were taken from other villages. If they were

taken to cultivate the land in other village, what happened to the land which they held previously? And who cultivated it? Moreover, the terms such as Padiyal and Pannaiyal clearly tell us that although the Kaniyachi form of labor promoted the status of the Brahmins and Non-Brahmin Vellalas, it had reduced the village residents into mere wage-laborers and slaves who could be mortgaged, transferred and even sold to others by the Brahmins and Non-Brahmin Vellalas. In other words, one can epitomize that Kaniyachi form of labor helped in extending cultivation of large land track, stratified the society by introducing Brahmanical caste system and opened a path for the people to seek upward mobility in the Brahmanical social order.

In the fourth chapter entitled “inclusion and exclusion: an analysis of Bhakti tradition”, I have entirely depended upon the Bhakti literature and secondary works produced in various points of time. In the beginning, I have understood religion as faculty of mind that controls our emotional faculty and regulates social tensions. My own perception on religion is that No religion had been founded and propagated in a single day or night. On the contrary, every religion originated as a fear of human beings on nature, as an institution built on material exploitation, as a culture in response to that material exploitation, and as a counter-tradition to defend and to give divine justification for the material exploitation of particular group or community. Religion originates the moment when the human beings question their existence and surroundings. Religion continuously involves in the process of acculturation, assimilation and accommodation of different ideas and different people. This process often shapes and reshapes intellectual discourse of particular religious tradition. A brief paragraph has been made to understand various religious traditions that emerged prior to the Tamil Bhakti traditions. I have also critically situated Tamil Bhakti tradition in a larger framework of Brahmanism.

I have selected the works of Nayanmars and works of Alvars who were the Tamil saints and the followers of lord Shiva and lord Vishnu respectively. Depending upon this literature, I have located my argument in terms of inclusion and exclusion. From my own analysis of Bhakti literature, I have understood that Bhakti was one of the religious and reforming ideas which were produced by the followers of Hinduism. Although the notion of Bhakti was prevalent in

early text of BhagavatGita, its popularity came about in the 5th and 6 century A.D. in Gangetic plain. But in Tamizhagam, Bhakti or devotional movement began around 6 and 7th century A.D. In early medieval Tamizhagam, the Bhakti movement centered on two distinctive cults Lord Shiva and lord Vishnu. The saints especially Brahmin started composing hymns in praise of these deities. Basically, Bhakti movement stood as proselytizing movement which transformed socio-cultural and material lives of millions who began to follow the path prescribed by the Bhakti saints. The saints who wrote poetries in praise of lord Shiva were called as Nayanmars and those sang hymns in praise of lord Vishnu were called as Alvars. The Bhakti saints went from place to place and preached the people about words of god and the ways of worshipping deities. Mostly, the Bhakti saints imagined themselves as child, as a servant and as a friend to the deity. From the time of Pallavas onwards, Bhakti movement got state sponsorship and many rulers granted village and alms for the construction of temples which often seemed to the shelters of the Bhakti saints. Thus, The Bhakti movement generated the huge temple complexes. Although the saints hail from Sanskritic traditions, they preached the people in the vernacular languages. They opened popular space for all the sections of the people. Irrespective of one's caste and class, one could become the follower of the deities either Shiva or Vishnu. The historical instances tell us that the Bhakti saints also came from outcaste sections. Bhakti emphasized on the potentiality of women, their dignity and power. Bhakti tradition permitted women to adopt asceticism and become saints. But, in the process of inclusion, god was put up the centre of devotion and the followers were looked upon as centrifugal force revolving around the deity. In the later centuries, the saints who preached Bhakti traditions were converted into deities and placed in the temples along with important deities. In Bhakti literature, one can get an idea that as mentioned above, the Bhakti movement incorporated women, low caste and out caste sections in to its pantheon.

From the Tamil Bhakti literature, one can understand that The Bhakti hymns indicate the contact or union or communion between god and devotee. The Bhakti saints imagined Siva as one with the Tamil lands and culture. They see Him everywhere: Siva is in the hearts and minds of the Tamil people, Siva is in the stories of cosmic deeds and local bhaktas, Siva is in Tamil towns and lands, and Siva is in temples. Saivite Bhakti saints also portray the cosmic power of Shiva. One of the motives behind pursuing the ideal of bhakti was to get a pleasurable life, free from rebirth,

which could happen through the association with the object of the devotion. Bhakti saints used to represent themselves as servants of lord as well as servants of the devotees.

Tamil Bhakti movement opened popular social space, sacred space and uncontested space for all the followers of deities which seemed to be believed as preventive force that protected all the followers even from the death. In relation to this notion, Tirujnanasambandhar brings out Puranic story of Markandaiyan in which, when the god of death, Kootran came to capture him, Markandaiyan went and appealed to Lord Shiva. Shiva protected him from god of death. Bhakti tradition can also be understood as a divine force which was prescribed by saints to eliminate the poverty of people.

It was often mentioned in the bhakti literature that the Brahmans were portrayed as the ritual holders of Vedic customs and rituals, and their culture was visualized as the high culture. The commoners were not allowed to follow their culture; rather, keeping the Brahmin culture distinct, the people were asked by saints to devote their life and soul to the deity by accepting it as the centrifugal force. The conversations mentioned in Periyapuram between Bhakti saints and their followers reveal many facts which attach the evidence to the idea that Bhakti movement of 6th and 7th century A.D. involved in proselytizing efforts. In Natal's Tiruppâvai, one can clearly see the operation of the brahmanical conversion methods.

Tamil Bhakti songs emphasize importance of the Brahmans, their mode of worship and their livelihood of cows. They also specifically state that if the Velva (sacrifice) and proper worship of lord were continued without any interruption, the sky will pour rain and the kingdom will flourish. Therefore, the king has to sponsor sacrifices and temple worship.

From my own reading of the Tamil Bhakti literature, I have understood that During the time of the Pallavas, Saivism, Vainavam, Samanam and Sakyam were the four different ideological sects which had involved in proselytizing the people in early medieval Tamizhagam. Among them, Samanam and Sakyam were heterodox sects which had their influence in Tamil land even from the Sangam age. On the other hand, although present Brahmanical religious text writers appreciate the presence of Brahmanism, its intensification began around 6th and seventh century A.D. Each of these religious sects had their own norms, principles and methods. When

the strong monarchical state came into existence in the northern part of Tamizhagam under the Palavas, Saivism and Vaishnavism believed to be two wings of Brahmanism came to be patronized by the kings. At the same time, many Bhakti literature tell us once the rulers were followers of heterodox sect of Jainism and by the efforts of Bhakti saints, they were converted into Saivism and Vaishnavism. The Bhakti literature provide the evidence that not only Bhakti saints actively concentrated in converting the kings into Brahmanical pantheists but also they largely took a devotional journey in proselytizing the common masses. By this time, Religious supremacy of particular sect entirely depended on royal patronage and faith of the people. But, one cannot deny that their involvement in proselytisation often led to the sectarian conflicts between religious saints as well as between the followers of different sects. Both Saivism and Vaishnavism brought anti-propaganda against Buddhism and Jainism. At the same time, one cannot ignore that both Saivism and Vaishnavism had inner contradictions in their devotional ideologies which had often led to the break out of sectarian conflicts between Saivites and Vaishnavites. However, conflicts between two opposite traditions and the conflicts between the sects within the tradition had led to the social change.

While we read Bhakti literature, we could get two contradicting views in understanding social atmosphere which prevailed during that time. In one hand, Bhakti literature tell us that the notion of devotion broke Brahmanical social norms and incorporated the Shudras those who were considered as fourth Varna conceptually placed at the bottom of the Brahmanical social order and untouchables those who were kept outside of the order branded as Avarnas, into conceptualized spatial order. On the other hand, they provide us a vivid account that how the spatially recognized Bhakti saints belonged to Shudras and untouchables created a segregated space in Bhakti tradition as well as within the social order in which they were accommodated.

I have also devoted much space to understand the position of outcaste sections in the Tamil Bhakti era. I have analyzed the literature in different aspect. For instance, I have taken few verses of Tirunavukarasar's Thevaram and I analyzed them diachronically.

In his work, the Tirutondartokai, Cuntarar portrays Nandanar as a Pulaiya, Neelakanta paanar as a Paanar and Kannappar as a hunter. These castes were considered as untouchable castes. Bhakti songs tell us that irrespective of their castes, Kidnapper, Tiruneelapovar(Nandhanar) and Tiruneelakanta Paanar were included within the Bhakti tradition. But, Periyapuram, the

Bhakti literature of 11th century A.D. states that the Untouchable saints could become true devotee of lord Shiva only and only when they agreed to certain purificatory conditions such as crossing the fire and sacrificing one of their eyes. Both Thondaradipodi Alvar and Nammalvar were aware of fourfold classification of Brahmanical social order. Moreover, they denote the untouchables as Chandalas in their songs. But their songs clearly inform us that Bhakti stood as a force which incorporated the untouchables.

In the Tamil Bhakti hymns one can see the direct encounter between the Shaivism and Jainism and Buddhism. In many the Shiva saints kept on demoralizing the Jain and Buddhist monks and their teachings. Therefore I have devoted much space to analyze the songs in this thesis. I have also analyzed the Siddha tradition in the context of inclusion and exclusion. The songs in the Sridhar literature indicate that there was a long-winded resistance movement against the brahmanical Bhakti tradition and its material manifestation.

The Tamil Bhakti movement can also be considered as social protest movement. Just as there is no real social protest on behalf of the exploited masses of the common people but only individual social conflict of the devotees, there is no fight for freedom and equality on behalf of the oppressed. Only the devotees of Siva are equal. The Bhakti saints did not reject a caste-ridden society. They shifted the emphasis to the relation between the devotee and his object of veneration, 'and the inner tensions and outer conflicts resulting from this relation'.

In the fifth chapter entitled “space and identity of Paraicheri and Theendacheri”, I have taken two settlements which were identified in the inscriptions as Paraicheri and Theendacheri, and I have analyzed them in a greater detail. Have analyzed various views presented by the scholars on the term Paraiya. I have also brought out critiques on them. However, the term Cheri means a village or city as it has been derived from the 9th and 13th century Tamil grammatical works namely Nigandu and Abidhana chindhamani.

The Tamil word Paraiyan means a drummer. But, the Paraiyas mentioned inscriptions of 11th century were not only portrayed as drum players but also they were identified as cultivators. Inscriptions state they held piece of land. They had separate cremation ground. They drew water from separate water tank; they worshiped in a separate temple. In few passages, I have discussed briefly the settlements of Paraiyas, Kammalas and Urars.

After reading the inscriptions carefully, I have come up with the conclusion that the terms such as U'rnattam, Kudiyirukkai, Kammanache'ri, Paraicheri, Theendachēri, Vannarache'ri and Ilache'ri and their topographical features and location are mentioned in a specific manner. From the critical scrutiny of inscriptions, one can get a clear picture of these settlements, their identities and spatial structuring. If we read these inscriptions without making any contemporary etymological reference to the terminologies, we can clearly see that these terms had got different connotations in contrast to what we perceive today. Moreover, each settlement remained as a centre of production and each one of them constituted a set of people living in different locations in the same village, but they did not have any commonalities in productive relations. For instance, the people at U'rnattam known as U'rars had their own segregated settlement, they collectively dug up ponds, constructed tanks and they looked after their communal affairs without seeking any exogenous influence. Moreover, inscriptions inform us that if the disputes rose among the U'rars, they only resolved them by drawing scriptural justification with which they were familiar. In this case, the story of Sibiu Chakravarthy and the story of Manuneechi chola are often referred in the inscriptional records. Unsurprisingly, while reading few inscriptions of 11th century AD, I could come across an interesting piece of information that the U'rars had a separate cremation ground to which other social categories such as Kammalas and Kudiya'nor also got access, yet they were bound to enter into an agreement by which they should render free professional service to the U'rars for certain specified period. Therefore, by looking at the information provided in the inscriptions regarding the settlements, we cannot simply perceive the notion that the social groups living in the same village had common identity and spatial structuring.

Paraicheri was no exception to this case. The people living in the settlement were identified as Paraiyas. Paraiyas were homogeneous social group whose identity can neither be equated with their occupational specialization nor can be put into a framework of Hindu caste system. Because, the Paraiyas. took up various professions other than agriculture such as playing drums, weaving, stone masonry, etc. more interestingly, in early medieval period in the period between 6th century AD and 9th century AD, people were not quite familiar with the Hindu concept of purity and pollution and therefore they did not identify the people with their occupation as pure and impure as we do today.

The fact of the matter before us is, when Brahmins were given land grants, by the act of coercion, the Brahmin beneficiaries reduced the native cultivators into mere tenants and landless cultivators. When the uprisings rose more and more In the Later period, they realized that coercion would not be final solution to rule the people at the grass root level. Therefore, the holders of above said grants began to influence in the society by two processes 1. Act of attraction through religion and temples and 2. Act of penetration through the introduction of caste. Both these two processes worked successful to fulfill the aims of the Brahmins. In the first case, Brahmin priests received many grants from the royal court to build the temples and the rulers did it so to legitimize their power. But, construction of huge temples attracted the common people towards Brahmin-centered ideology and the people in secular categories began to move towards temple in actual terms towards Brahmins. Whereas, the people who had been following an established sects were not receptive. The moment the people started moving towards temples, it meant that they were being taken into brahmanical social stratification. In this case, the Paraiyas being distinctive social group whose religious tradition was dissimilar with others were not receptive. Here the second process begins. Both Those who were attracted towards temple and those who were not were attempted by the Brahmins to incorporate and accommodate within Brahmanical social order, so that, their livelihood and legitimacy would not be disturbed. For this purpose, Brahmins began to introduce the notion of caste in the villages which were dominated by them. Inscriptions of 11th century AD and 12th century AD clearly tell us that the Paraiyas were neither secular social group nor religiously influenced heterogeneous group. That was the reason why, while all other social categories were being taken into the Brahmanical fold, the Paraiyas remained unreceptive. One cannot simply say that all the Paraiyas irrespective of their economic status remained aloof from the process of brahmanical proselytization. There were few Paraiyas who seemed to be moving towards Brahmin-centered social fold.

While I have been discussing the caste and the status of Paraiyas, I have brought out two kinds of status namely subjective status and accorded status and I have also used these concepts to understand exclusion of Paraiyas in the process of Brahmanization.

Appendix I.

Inscriptions about *Paraicherries* and *Theendacherries*

Volume II, Part I, No. 4 On the South Wall second tier in Thanjavur inscribed during 29th regnal year of Rajaraja I which specifies the revenue in paddy and the revenue in gold and in money (kasu), which a number of villages had to pay to the stone-temple, called Rajarajesvara, which Rajarajadeva had caused to be built at Tanjavur. the villages were situated both in the Chola country and in other countries and had been assigned to the temple by Rajarajadeva until the 29th year of his reign, were elaborately mentioned in the inscriptions. The inscriptions also brings out informations about the village sites, Kudiyirukkai or urnattam, Kammanaseri, Paraichcheri, Theendacheri, Vannaraseri, Iraicheri. the extent of the land, which the king had given to the temple in each of the villages, is recorded in great detail.

Line 13. Tiruttengur, a town (nagara) in the same nadu, consists of the village-site, the ponds of this village, the ponds in the fields (pulam), the Tindachcheri, the Paraichcheri and the burning-ground.

Volume II, Part I, No. 5 On the north Wall upper tier inscribed during 29th regnal year of Rajaraja I.

Line 5. (The village of) Anpanur in Mipalaru, (a subdivision) of Pachchirakurram in Mara-nadu, alias Rajasraya-valanadu, Consists of the village-site, the thrashing-floor of this village, the ponds and banks, the Peruvalavay (channel), which passes through this village and irrigates the country, the channel which branches off from the Peruvalavay, passes through this village and irrigates (the village of) Settimangalam, the sacred temple of Mahadeva, (called) Tiru-Vanni-bhagavar (i.e., Sri-Vahni-bhagavat), in this village and (its) sacred court, the temple of Pidari and sacred court, the temple of Settaiyar and sacred court, the pond of Tiruppainnili-Madevar (Mahadeva) and banks, the Irachcheri of this village, the Paraichcheri, the burning-ground of the cultivators, the burning-ground of the Paraiyas, and the stone fold (karkidai) (for cattle).

Line 6. (The villages of) Ingaiyur in Kir-Palaru, (a subdivision) of Pachchirkurram in the same nadu consists of the village-site, the temple of Pidari in this village and sacred court, the temple of Pidari and sacred court, the sacred temple of Mahadeva in this village and sacred court, the sacred bathing-pond (tirumanjanakkulam) of this god, the Paraichcheri, the burning-ground of the cultivators, and the burning-ground of the Paraiyas.

Line 7. (The village of) nur alias Panamangalam, (in) Panamangala-Vanakarai-parru, (a subdivision) of Kir-Palaru in Pachchirkurram in the same nadu , Consists of the village-site (ur-irukkai-nattam), the sacred temple of Mahadeva in this village and its sacred court, the channels which pass through this village and supply water to other villages, the temple of Pidari and its sacred court, the public pond (uruni-kulam) and its banks, the temple of Aiyan and its sacred court, the burning-ground of the cultivators, the burning-ground of the Paraiyas the Paraichcheri and the Irachcheri.

Line 8. (The village of) Sattaadi (in) Panamangala-Vanakarai-parru, (a subdivision) of Kir-[Pa]laru in Pachchirkurram in the same nadu Consists of the village-site, the Paraichcheri, and the channel, which passes through the land of this village and supplies water to other villages.

Line 9. (The village of) kkankudi (in) sempparru, (a subdivision) of Kir-palaru in Pachchirkurram in the same nadu, Consists of the village-site, the Irachcheri, the stables and the Paraichcheri.

Line 10. (The village of) Mandottam in Kalarakkurram (a subdivision) of the same nadu, consists of the village -site, the thrashing-floor of this village, the Kammanaseri, the Paraichcheri of this village, and the Agaiyaru (river) at this village.

Line 11. (The village of) Iraiyanseri in Kalarakkurram (a subdivision) of the same nadu, Consists of the village-site, the site of the houses (kudi-irukkai), the Paraichcheri, the water-course (nir-odu-kal), (called) the Kannan channel, (and the other) channels which pass through this village and irrigate other villages, the village thrashing-floor of this village, the ponds of this village and their banks, the sacred temple of Madevar (Mahadeva) in this village and its sacred court, and the sacred bathing-pond of this god.

Line 12. (The village of) Venkonkudi in Venkonkudi-kandam, (a subdivision) of the same nadu consists of the village-site, the site of the houses, the public pond, the land lying waste as pasture for the calves, the site of the houses of the Kanmanaseri, the temple of Pidari and its sacred court, the road (vari) which leads to the burning-ground of the cultivators, the burning-ground of the Paraiyas, the land used as thrashing-floor, the temple of Aiyan and its sacred court, the eastern quarter in which Paraiya cultivators (UrapParaiya) live, the western Paraichcheri in which Paraiya cultivators live, and the Nattar channel, which passes through the land of this village.

Line 13. (The village of) Maganikudi in Venkonkudi-kandam, (a subdivision) of the same nadu, consists of the village-site, the thrashing-floor of the village, the sacred temple of Kalar and Pidariyar in this village and its sacred court, the flower-garden (nandavanam) of Pidariyar, in which coconut-trees grow, the channels which pass through this village and supply water to other villages, the Irachcheri, the burning-ground of the cultivators, the burning-ground of the Paraiyas, and the Paraichcheri.

Line 14. (The village of) Siru-Semburai in Semburai-kandam, (a subdivision) of the same nadu, Consists of the village-site, the stables, the hill (tidal) on which (the temple of) Madevar (Mahadeva) stands, the channel which branches off from the Kannan channel, passes the land of this village and supplies water to other villages, the burning-ground of the cultivators, the kanmanaseri the Paraichcheri, and the burning-ground of the Paraiyas.

Line 15. (The village of) Turaiyur in Kir-Palaru, (a subdivision) of Pachchil-kurram in the same nadu, Consists of the site of this village, the site of the houses, the wells (kinaru) and cisterns (totti), the burning-ground of the cultivators, the stables, the quarter near the gate (Talaivaychcheri), the Irachcheri, the Kammanaseri the Paraichcheri, the burning-ground of the Paraiyas, the channels which pass through the land of this village and supply water to other villages, the temple of Pidari, (called) Punnaitturai-nangai, and its sacred court, the sacred temple of Kadugal in this village and its sacred court, the temple of Durgaiyar (Durga) in this village and its sacred court, the fold for the male sheep of this village, the sacred temple of Kalar (and) Pidariyar in this village and its sacred court, the temple of Aiyan and its sacred court, the sacred temple of Pidari, (called) Kuduraivattam-udaiyal, in this village and its sacred court, the ponds of this village and their banks.

Line 16. (The village of) Karimangalam in the same nadu Consists of the site of this village, the thrashing-floor, the burning-ground of the cultivators, the sacred temple of Pidari, (called) Tiruval-udaiyal, and its sacred court, the temple of Kadugal and its sacred court, the Irachcheri, the Kammanaseri, the Paraichcheri and the burning-ground of the Paraiyas.

Line 17. Venni, a town (nagara) in Venni-kurram, (a subdivision) of Nittavinoda-valanadu, Consists of the site of this village, the ponds and their banks, the sacred temple, the temple of Aiyan, the Paraichcheri, the burning-ground, and the land used as a pit (pallavay) which is dug (for) the water from the tank (eri) (of the village) of Siru-Munniyur.

Line 18. (The village of) Pudamangalam (i.e., Bhutamangalam) in the same nadu, which adjoins his village (of Venni), Consists of the ponds and their banks, the burning-ground, the site of the Paraichcheri, and the site of the village.

Line 24. (The village of) Kodimangalam, which is enjoyed by the (royal) palace (? Salabhoga), in Takkalur-nadu, (a subdivision) of Arumorideva-valanadu, Consists of the village-site, the ponds, the sacred temple, and the Tindachcheri] the channel which passes through the land of this village and irrigates (the village of) Tiruminkunram. the channels which pass through the land of this village and irrigate (the village of) Paruttiyur.

Line 25. Veelvidugu-Pallavapuram, a town in Takkalur-nadu, (a subdivision) of Arumorideva-valanadu, consists of the village-site, the Paraichcheri of this village, the Kammanaseri, the ponds included in the village, the ponds in the fields (pulam) and their banks, the sacred temple of Tiruvadigal in this village and its flower-garden, the embankment kulai of the Pandavay (river,) the sacred temple of the god of Pugar-Isvara in this village and its sacred court, the quarter near the temple (Talichcheri), and the burning-ground.

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