INTRODUCTION

Community based mass migrations were taken place in India due to suppression of caste Hindus and rulers or natural calamities or persecution by alien rulers. For example Patnulkars of Saurashtra country migrated to South India and settled in Tirupati, Arni, Vellore, Tiruchirapalli, Tanjore, Madurai etc. They carried on their traditional profession silk-weaving and became part and parcel of the Tamil society. They are known as Saurashtras. Another case of mass migration is Vellalars' migration from Tenkasi (Tinnevelly district) and Kumbhakonam (Tanjore district) of Tamilnadu to Todupuzha of Kerala about the commencement of the Malabar era i.e. 825 A.D. Now they are known as Todupuzha Vellalas. Also the Mannadiyar living in the places like Kuthanoor, Pallassana, Athipotta, Kalloor, Mamppad and Kodumpu of the Palakkad district in Kerala are believed to be immigrant Veerasaiva Vellalar from Chidambaram in Tamilnadu. Similarly the Ilavas of Tamilnadu (now renamed as Illathu-pillaimars) are said to be the immigrants of South Travancore.

Such immigrants had two alternatives to mobilize their solidarity in the new places. One was to reinterpret Hinduism and claim a new identity within its fold, and the other was to renounce Hinduism and accept another religion and culture. The immigrants who sought reinterpretation and a new identity within Hinduism created different myths and legends about their origin.
linking the superior Brahmanical gods. This attempt provided ideology and identity for their mobilization. The organization of their society with the ideologies of higher value led to the social movements and change.

Many unprivileged classes of India utilised the protest ideology i.e. the reinterpretation of Hindu myths as a tool for their social mobility. For instance, the Ahirs in many parts of the Northern India, the Gopas in the Bengal region, the Gaulis in the Maharashtra area, and the Gollas in Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka. The Waddars, in Karnataka, a nomadic caste, engaged mainly in earthen work and stone work, claimed higher status in "Varnashra Dharma". Certain sections of the Waddars settled in towns and villages. Those who settled in the urban areas availed the modern education and pursued new occupations other than their hereditary. In 1930s educated leaders among them started to organise their community. They claimed Kshatriya Varna status through an appropriate myth and that claim provided the basic ideology for their mobility.

Similarly, in Tamilnadu many lower castes like the Konars, Vanniyars, Shanars etc., claimed Kshatriya status. Konars claimed lineage from the Yadhu dynasty. They systematically reinterpreted the Yadhava myth of origin of their caste and claimed higher status. Vanniyars, linking their origin from the divine line evidently based on their soldierly profession, claimed themselves to be Vanniya Kula Kshatriya, a higher status.
A group of Shanars of the Madurai district with an intention of social elevation within the fold of Hinduism waged a long battle. In 1874, they attempted to enter into the Madurai Meenakshi Amman temple but were not allowed by the police and caste Hindus. They fought legal battle through courts to get 'temple entry right' but they failed in their effort since court ruled that, "According to the Agama Shastras which are received as authoritative by worshippers of Siva in the Madura district, entry into a temple, where the ritual prescribed by these Shastras is observed, is prohibited to all those whose profession is the manufacture of intoxicating liquor, and the climbing of palmyra and coconut trees". Also observed "Only 'Aryans' not 'Dravidians' could Kshatriyas; the pollution of the father followed the sons into commerce, the profession and agriculture". Their claim of 'Kshatriya Varna' status was not only refuted by the Census Commissioner in 1891 but also felt "absurd, as there is no such thing as Dravidian Kshatriya". In 1901, a group of Nadars from Nazareth in Tinnevelly district submitted a petition to the Census Commissioner, in which they stated, "We humbly beg to say that we are the descendants of the Pandya or Dravida Xatra race, who, shortly after the universal deluge of Noah, first disafforested and colonized this land of South India..." However in 1921, their claim of higher Varna status was conceded by the Government and the name 'Shanan' was replaced by 'Nadar' an honorific title.
This primary success has accelerated their movement to social change.

As an another alternative, the 'mass conversion movement' of the Shanars to Christian religion altered their social position. They saw the Western missionaries as protectors, and in them they perceived the possible socio-economic change and advancement. Due importance was given to the education and it led their majority to desert the arduous calling of toddy tapping which had debased them in the eyes of high caste.

On the otherhand the immigrant Ilavas in Tamilnadu did not seek conversion for their social elevation. Instead, they claimed higher varna status by reinterpreting their myth of origin from the divine line - connecting the superior Brahmanical divinities of Hindu religion. Through this means they sought for social exaltation within the fold of Hinduism.

The Census of 1921 has accounted about the total strength of Ilavas (Iluvan) as 30,000. The various District Collector's reports (1960-1970) show that their concentration was mainly in Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram districts. As per the Tamilnadu Backward Classes Commission Report of 1971, they widely spreaded in southern Tamilnadu and their population was 69,577. Hence the Illathupillaimar community is reckoned as one of the important communities of the Tamil society. The history of the Ilavas of Tamilnadu did not invite the attention of
the scholars so far, though many of them made intense study about the Ilavas' movement and their regeneration in Kerala. The mass migration and their struggle for solidarity and social equality in Tamil Nadu allured me. Hence the present work is undertaken to enrich the Social studies of the Tamil society.

CHAPTER - I

MIGRATION OF ILAVAS TO TAMIL NADU

There is no unanimous view among the scholars about the origin of the Ilavas. Based on legends and traditions and few historical events, scholars have put forward various theories that the Ilavas were the immigrants from Ceylon.

But in this present study an attempt is made with the help of Tamil literary sources and also based on latest historical datas, to stress that they are descendants from the original Dravidian stock of South India. The first phase of migration of the economically depressed and socially neglected Ilavas into Tamil Nadu would have been occurred quite early during the 16th century when the Travancore rulers held sway over the southern region of Tinnevelly. In Tamil Nadu they adopted different titles of high caste Hindus to gain high social status and they were popularly known as 'Illathupillai' or simply 'Pillai' from the beginning of the 20th century onwards.
CHAPTER - II

STRUGGLE FOR SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL EQUALITY

The presence of the Ilavas, an alien community, threatened the age long social set up of the Tamil community of the southern districts of Tamilnadu. As a primary measure the Ilavas in Tamilnadu sought for the solidarity of the caste through the unification of villages, dispensation of caste titles, strict observance of 'Illam', caste councils, religious cohesion etc.

The immigrant Ilavas tried to find a place in the middle berth of the non-Brahmin community. This effort of the immigrants met with a stiff opposition from the upper middle classes of the non-Brahmin communities like Maravas, Naidus, Saiva Pillais etc. So they carried out a struggle to achieve the target of 'Social equality'.

The course of their struggle for social equality and the active force of social mobility among themselves were reflected from (a) Left hand - right hand (Idangai - Valangai) conflict, (b) The cognitive historical approach to origin, (c) The claim for social and ritual privileges, (d) The claim for higher varna status and the imputation of mythological origin and (e) Self-identity.
CHAPTER - III
ECONOMIC CHANGES

In the beginning they mainly engaged in the traditional profession of distillation and sale of arrack. Because of this they earned the nick name 'Sarayakara Pillaimars'. Their profession earned them a low status in the society. From the beginning of the 20th century majority of them began to desert their interior rural villages and started to settle in the developing towns and cities of Tamilnadu. In course of time change of profession and economic transformation occurred among them because of the agriculture, mill and factory work, migration to foreign countries, plantation work, trade, government service, co-operative movement etc.

Gradually as a result of the economic transformation another phase of social change occurred among them.

CHAPTER - IV
RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

As the religion is one of the broad groupings of cultural complex, it has a significant role in regulating their social life. The immigrant Ilavas in Tamilnadu claimed to be the descendants of Enathi-Natha-Nayanar (one among the sixty three devotees of Lord Siva) and demanded for religious privileges.
Besides, the socio-religious condition of Tamil country also one of the major factors which contributed to their participation in Hinduism. Major section among them gradually denounced the practice of worshipping of 'evil spirits' and constructed their own temples on the Saivite and Vaishnavite line. They also succeeded in getting the right to conduct festivals in some of the famous temples of Tamilnadu in par with the caste Hindus. In some of the temples they were given opportunity to conduct celebration during certain Hindu religious days of importance. By using the influence also they have been succeeded in getting certain religious privileges. They considered this to be a boon to claim higher social status.

CHAPTER - V

CUSTOMS, MANNERS AND CEREMONIES

The Ilavas had their own customs, manners and ceremonies which distinguished them from other communities of Tamilnadu. They considered the practice of 'Ilam' (house or lineage) division to be a highly prestigious and unique that distinguished them from others and even now they call their caste with that lineage prefix as 'Illathupillaimar'. This particular custom helped them to identify their caste members and thus integrated the caste found scattered in different parts of Tamilnadu and thereby showed a force to be reckoned by the rest of the Hindu community.
The ancient ceremonies like Talikettukalyanam (mock marriage), Thirandukuli (a festival related with puberty), Pulikudi (tamarind drinking observed during the seventh month of pregnancy) etc. disappeared because of the effects of Sri Narayana Guru's social reform among them. But now they celebrate the necessary ceremonies like ear boring festival, puberty ceremony, marriage engagement etc.

Wearing of pampadam (a peculiar ear ornament) once a most favoured ornament, became unpopular at present among them. They also began to wear the dress on Tamilian model. Some of the manners and ceremonies at present in practice among them, seem to be assimilated lately from the Tamils.

CHAPTER - VI

SELF-RESPECT MOVEMENT

Generally the changed personal laws or customs make a community for its rise in social position. But to attain this the community needed a prime mover with charismatic leading guidance. In succeeding such factor and elevating their status, the leadership of the Ilava community found in Sri Narayana Guru the infusion that was necessary to give the caste cohesion. He outlined many measures in infusing self confidence among the Ilavas. He continued his socio-religious reform activities in
Tamilnadu and that had its effects among the Ilava immigrants in Tamilnadu. This also contributed as one of the factors which were responsible for their social change. Influence of Sri Narayana Guru created an awakening and self-respect among them. His Sanskritization movement encouraged them more and more to participate in pure Hinduism after discarding the demon worship and it also distracted them from embracing other religions especially Christianity.

CHAPTER VII
POLITICAL AWARENESS

With an ideology for unity and uplift in 1933, they organised the 'Madras State Illathar Youth Sangham' as the first instance. But this association was not able to unite the caste, found in different parts of Tamilnadu. Even though this association failed in this attempt, the primary activity of this association stimulated a feeling of unity and mobilization. In the course of time they organised sectional associations like 'Sivarudrapillaimar Sangham' (1946), 'Nanguvattakai Seerkudi Vellalar Sangham' (1947), 'Illathupillaimar Sangham', 'Illathar Samooga Sangham', 'Siruvaikudi Vellalar Sangham' (1968), 'Akila India Illathu Vellalar Sangham' (1973) etc. These associations enlightened them for the necessity of unity and integration.
SOURCES:

The sources consulted for the study are varied viz., copper plates, palm leaf records, governmental records, private collections, printed books etc. The two copper plates issued during the period of Nayak Queen Mangammal (1689-1706) to i) Anchu I11am murai Panikkanmar of Madurai Tiruparamkuntram Matalayam and ii) Tiruchirapalli Srirangam Srinivasa Perumal Temple belonging to Sirukudi Vellalar, Coimbatore Perur Chidambaram Melamatam copper plate issued during the reign of Chikka Krishnaraja Wodeyar II (1734-1766 A.D.), Mysore ruler, to the Sirukudi Vellalar and monumental articles such as sword given by Nayak Queen Mangammal to the immigrant Ilavas are brought to light and referred to first time for this study.

Kerala State Central Archives sources like Mathilakom Records (magnificent collection of cadjan records received as a gift from the Sree Padmanabha Swami Temple which are in the Central Archives at Thiruvananthapuram) covering the period from 1525-1772 A.D. and Neet Record (Royal commands) from 1756-1873 A.D., are the other primary sources consulted for the study. Other important primary sources like The Regulations and Proclamations of Travancore Vol.V. 1097-1100 M.E., Report of the Backward Classes Commission of Tamilnadu Government etc. were also consulted. Various departmental records of the British Government available at Madras Archives, Madras, and Travancore Government's
Records available at the Secretariat Library, and the Kerala State Archives, Thiruvananthapuram were also consulted. Census Report of Madras and Travancore are the other primary sources which have referred. Besides, the Annual Report of the London Missionary Society, available in the United Theological College Archives at Bangalore, were also consulted. Further, personal interviews had conducted with nearly 100 members of this community to substantiate their behavioural patterns in the socio-religious, economic and political field.

Good number of secondary sources have been consulted. Majority of them gave information relating to the Ilavas of Kerala. The published books which helped in the study are: William Logan's 'Malabar Manual', Nagam Aiya's 'The Travancore State Manual', H.R. Pate's 'Tinnevelly District Gazetteer', Francis Day's 'Land of the Perumals' Or 'Cochin - Its Past and Its Present', Samuel Mateer's 'Native Life in Travancore', C.M. Agur's 'Church History of Travancore', Edgar Thurston's 'Castes and Tribes of Southern India', K.P. Padmanabha Menon's 'History of Kerala', L.A. Anantha Krishna Iyer's 'The Tribes and Castes of Cochin' etc. Journals like 'Illasudar' (Fortnightly) also helped me in the reconstruction of true history of the Ilavas in Tamilnadu.

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