Chapter-III

The Village and Its People: Towards Understanding of the Milieu
Chapter-Ill

The Village and its People: Towards understanding the Milieu

This chapter discusses the salient features of the Panchayat village and its people which are relevant for the study. This chapter projects the local milieu which provides the context for power formation and its dynamics in the study village. For this purpose, different aspects covered include: location, ecology, agriculture and irrigation, settlement pattern, population characteristics, caste and religious groups, landholding, institutions and party politics. Some of these are directly or indirectly relevant. While directly relevant features give us details about the different sources of power and power holders which are analysed in the subsequent chapters. The indirectly relevant features provide the setting for power formation and its dynamics.

The location and ecology shows the position of the study Panchayat in terms of communication facilities like roads, buses etc., its proximity to urban centres, interaction among different settlements of the Udayallipatti Panchayat and ecological characteristics of the area.
Details on agriculture and irrigation covers soil classification, different seasons of cultivation, cropping pattern, extent of cultivation, rainfall situation, irrigation potential, labour activities and so on.

The population characteristics include number of males and females, SC population, educational level of males and females and occupational pattern. The settlement pattern of the Panchayat is discussed to show the caste division as reflected in the physical structure of the village. The caste and religious groups are also discussed to show the details of composition of different caste and religious groups, the ranking of different castes at the local level and religious activities of the various caste and religious groups. The landholding pattern is described to give the picture of caste and landholding pattern and land distribution.

The institutions with elected component like statutory village Panchayats and various Co-operatives like Primary Agriculture Credit Society, Milk Co-operative Society and Sheep Breeders Co-operative Society are also discussed as they are also sources of power and they also provide external linkage with outside world. Another external linkage is that of party politics which includes mobilisation of votes and political awareness.
1) Location and Ecology of the Panchayat

The Udayallipatti Panchayat consists of six settlements viz., the main village, Udayallipatti—a multi-caste village with castes such as Kallars, Udayars, Konars, Pusaris, Paraiyars, etc., Chinnauranipatti—exclusively inhabited by Udayars, Alwanpatti inhabited by Kallars, Konars, Paraiyars etc., Sathrapatti consisting of Gounders and Mazavarayanvayal and Annanagar with only Pusaris living in them (See map.II).

These settlements are not remote ones and are well connected with roads to nearest towns like Pudukkottai, Thiruchirrapalli and Thanjavur and are served well with buses from early in the morning to late in the evening. These settlements are located 30 kms away from the district headquarter—Pudukkottai, and are nearest to the Block headquarter—Kunnondorkoil. In fact, the hamlet Sathrapatti, though comes under Udayallipatti Panchayat, is geographically a part of Kunnondorkoil.

At the outset, it must be mentioned that the units of this cluster interlinked and interdependent, and in some aspects they are independent and have exclusiveness of their own. For instance, they are interlinked in matters like statutory Panchayat. This cluster is also treated as a single
LOCATION AND CASTE COMPOSITION OF UDAYALLIPATTI PANCHAYAT

VILLAGE CASTE COMPOSITION
UDAYALLIPATTI: (MAIN VILLAGE) KALLARS, UDAYARS, KONARS, PUSARIS, S.Cs, ASARIS, VANNANS, NAVITHARS ETC.

HAMLETS CASTE COMPOSITION
ALWANPATTI: KALLARS, KONARS, ASARIS, S.Cs, ETC., CHINNAURANIPATTI: UDAYARS ONLY SATHRAPATTI: GOUNDERS ONLY MAZAVARAYANVAYAL: PUSARIS ONLY ANANAGAR: PUSARIS ONLY
revenue unit. Thus the territorial demarcation of this cluster appears to be more out of official classification than out of general social interaction of people living in it. For example, kinship network of various castes does not necessarily restrict itself to this boundary but goes beyond. They have their own boundaries.

To dwell on this point further, it is observed that physically the hamlets clustered around the main village have varying distances from the latter. The hamlet Alwanpatti is approximately three and a half kms by road from the main village while the hamlets of Mazavarayanvayal, Annanagar, Chinnauranipatti are just half a km away. Sathrapatti is two kms away from the main village with Gounder caste inhabiting it exclusively (See map.II). They have no interaction with other settlements within the Panchayat in terms of kinship network. It may be that even day to day interaction of the main village is more with Rakkathanpatti, an adjacent multi-caste village because of geograpical location than with Alwanpatti which is far away from the main village.

Thus, the study while taking into account these dynamics, focuses primarily on the main village in all its aspects which are relevant in the context and on its
constituent units in whichever domain they are interacting with the main village.

Though at a macro-level the terrain of the area looks flat at a micro-level it has gentle slopes, uplands and low lands. These differences in the level of terrain has made it possible to construct series of tanks across the slopes to catch and exploit rain water. Generally the settlements of the area are clustered in the upper or in the middle side of the slopes. The area was supposed to have been once covered with trees which are denuded. Now, the Panchayat has lands around 46 hectares classified as forest lands where social forestry department is growing mainly Eculyptus trees.

2) Agriculture and Irrigation

Agriculture and its allied activities dominate the economy of the village. Most of the population is engaged in agriculture and its related activities. The following are the broad features of the agriculture and irrigation activities of the village.

There are broadly two types of soils found in the village *i.e.* black and red soils. Black soil is mostly found in command areas of the tanks and red soil is distributed above these tanks.
As mentioned in the previous chapter, there are broadly two seasons (Bhogam) for cultivation of various crops in a year 'Kodai' velamai and 'Kala' velamai. The latter is more extensive in terms of acreage than the former. The extent of rainfall generally decides the area of cultivation. This situation is true as far as the study village is concerned. Whenever rainfall was scanty during the last five years it has forced farmers to reduce the acreage under cultivation.

The following data for the year 1989-90 shows that under first season cultivation is more extensive than in the second season.

Table 3.1. Extent of cultivation under two seasons and under different crops in the Panchayat in 1989-90.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Crop</th>
<th>First Crop</th>
<th>Second Crop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area under</td>
<td>Area under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultivation</td>
<td>Cultivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% of Cropped</td>
<td>% of Cropped</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paddy</td>
<td>48.770</td>
<td>35.920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.60%</td>
<td>79.12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ground-nut</td>
<td>199.910</td>
<td>3.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>39.31%</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varagu</td>
<td>193.945</td>
<td>3.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>38.19%</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red gram</td>
<td>32.680</td>
<td>4.200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.44%</td>
<td>9.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>3.980</td>
<td>3.980</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.78%</td>
<td>8.77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trees &amp; Fru-</td>
<td>28.520</td>
<td>1.300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it gardens</td>
<td>5.62%</td>
<td>2.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>507.805</td>
<td>45.400</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100.00%</td>
<td>100.00%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is also clear from the table 3.1 that the dry crops like groundnut and varagu—traditional cereal grown in Tamil Nadu—occupies major portion of the cropped area. It is not only the dry crops which dominate the village agriculture but also the dry land which constitute a major area under cultivation. In the year 1989-90, 42 hectares were cultivated as wet lands and 449.519 hectares as dry lands. Under land classification, around 195 hectares come under wet land and around 975 hectares are classified as dry lands, hence, reflecting the predominance of dry land agriculture.

The dependence on dry crops is the result of a scanty rainfall as well as cultivation primarily depends on tank irrigation apart from the topography of the area. Many respondents have complained that shortage of water for irrigation has become acute during this decade and all the more during the past four or five years. To cope up with the situation, farmers with resources have resorted to digging or deepening of wells. There seems to be a race for exploiting the ground water by deepening the wells each year in the face of falling water table. The reason could be that while demand for water has increased the rainfall has become scarce.

As far as tanks in the village are concerned the situation has been precarious, as common with wider area of Kulathur Taluk. Most of the tanks need two or three fills to
harvest one crop of three to four months duration. The Panchayat has 22 tanks with 195 hectares under their ayacuts. The average ayacut area per tank comes to approximately nine hectares which is less than the average Kulathur taluk ayacut average area per tank, which is 11.13 hectares. Hence, it has become essential that rainfall should not only be sufficient in each season but also to be evenly spread across the season for cultivating one or two crops in a year.

This situation seems to be having an impact on labour supply situation. During the lean season, agricultural labourers mainly from Muthuraja and Scheduled Castes migrate to places like irrigated areas in Thanjavur and Thiruchirrapalli town particularly Ordinance factory as (2) casual labourers. Earlier Pannaiyal (Jajmani) system had existed and now only a few farmers have 'pannaiyals'. There has been breakdown of Pannaiyal system over the years. Inspite of some Udayar and Kallar farmers' willingness to employ permanent labour, according to informants, it is difficult to get them.

Inspite of water shortage in general, farmers have wells with good irrigation potential to cultivate sugarcane and Banana crops. With this it is possible to see greenary around the village in pockets even during the summer season. Sugarcane is grown either for making jaggery, which is
made in adjacent villages in the crusher units, or for sugar factories.

For inputs like seeds, fertilisers and pesticides, farmers rely on private shops as well as government agricultural outlets. They sell their produce to merchants who visit the village and also in places like Pudukkottai and Thiruchirrapalli. Cultivators mainly rely on traditional instruments like plough etc., though a few hire tractors from outside for ploughing. None of the farmers own a tractor in the village. Most of them use either oil engines or electric motors for irrigation. Only a few still use 'Kavalai' a traditional mode of lifting water through bullocks. There are other agricultural activities like weeding, harvesting and winnowing which are still done by manual labour either by family labour or by engaging casual labourers.

There are other occupations which some persons engaged in are generally related to agriculture. For instance the main village Udyallipatti has been the centre for making bullock carts in the area. Some people are also engaged in basket making.

3) People

In 1991 Udayallipatti Panchayat had a population of 2140 persons with 1059 males and 1081 females living in 416 households. Out of the total Panchayat population 170 persons
belong to SCs constituting 7.94 percent of the Panchayat population. This is nearly 9 percent below the district average and 11 percent below the state average. In the year 1991, the literates numbered 980 with a rate of 45.79 percent of the Panchayat population. The table 3.2 illuminates the literacy ratio of the Panchayat village over the years.

Table 3.2 : Literacy level of the Panchayat Village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population M</th>
<th>Population F</th>
<th>Population Total</th>
<th>Literates M</th>
<th>Literates F</th>
<th>Literates Total</th>
<th>% of total population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>1316</td>
<td>292</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>43 6 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>819</td>
<td>793</td>
<td>1606</td>
<td>329</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>386</td>
<td>40 9 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>891</td>
<td>1783</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>465</td>
<td>42 10 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>1059</td>
<td>1081</td>
<td>2140</td>
<td>663</td>
<td>317</td>
<td>980</td>
<td>63 29 46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The literacy in the year 1991 was 46 percent of the total Panchayat population which is below the district average which is 49.70 percent of total population. The district average is less than the state average of 54.31 percent.

General enquiries regarding educational level showed that the village was lagging behind. Only a few persons had gone to cities and towns for salaried jobs. There
is only one engineer, one supervisor and one peon working. A few young men had undergone training in ITI and had left the village for jobs. Presently a few boys are studying at graduate level. The situation of lack of higher education is true among Udayars who have better land man ratio than other castes and can afford economically to send their children to school.

There are basically two major trends which can be discerned as far as education is concerned. Firstly, families which cannot afford to send their children for higher education or even upto high school and secondly, parents who can afford economically but not in a position to send because their children have to take care of lands and catties. Some of the young Udayar boys remarked with the researcher that they have to supplement their parents in looking after cattle and lands. This situation, according to them, has risen because pannaiyals from castes like Pusari and SCs are not available which has been the case earlier.

Further, two contradictory attitudes towards education exist in the minds of the people. On the one hand, the aspiration to get their children educated to put them in good jobs and on the other the negative attitude to education is expressed in the popular saying translated from
Tamil. "Instead of getting educated and ruining oneself it is better to take care of catties and become a man".

a) Occupational Pattern

Agriculture and its allied activities have been major source of livelihood, whether directly or indirectly for the majority of the population of the village as is the case with the population of the district. The table 3.3. based on 1991 census, outlines the occupational pattern of the population.

Table 3.3: Occupational pattern of Udayallipatti Panchayat (1991) (percentage in brackets)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Main workers</th>
<th>Marginal workers</th>
<th>Non workers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2140</td>
<td>773</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>1017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(36.12)</td>
<td>(16.36)</td>
<td>(47.52)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1991.

The table 3.3 suggests that most of the population is engaged in agriculture either directly or indirectly. The above data can be arranged in terms of main workers by categories at the Panchayat level (see table 3.4).
Table 3.4: Main workers by categories in the Panchayat in 1991. (In percentage to total main workers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Service, Industry etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>70.51</td>
<td>17.46</td>
<td>12.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1991.

These figures suggest that among the main workers, cultivators constitute the highest percentage showing direct dependence on land by the population. The above data is compared in the table 3.5 to the district and state level to find out the variations and similarities for all categories.

Table 3.5: Comparative statement of Main workers by categories in 1991 at the Panchayat, District and State levels (In percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Cultivators</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Service, Industry etc.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Panchayat</td>
<td>70.51</td>
<td>17.46</td>
<td>12.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>48.60</td>
<td>25.85</td>
<td>25.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>24.84</td>
<td>34.63</td>
<td>40.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Census of India, 1991

While in the Panchayat, the percentage of cultivators is higher than district which in turn is higher than the state. However, the Panchayat shows lesser percentage of agricultural labour than both district and state figures.
4) Settlement Pattern: The main village and its hamlets

Udayallipatti has three main streets running from east to west and small streets cutting them from north to south (see map. III). The north and northwest of the main street is occupied by Udayar along with Asaris, Muslims, Pandarams etc., while to the south of it is occupied by Kallars, along with Muslims, Asaris, Ronars etc. only exception being one Kallar buying a house in what is supposed to be Udayar area. The physical distance between areas of other caste houses and what is now called as Harijan Colony (Paraicheri) is a road which divides between these settlements. However, one prominent Kallar has not only bought but is also living in a house constructed by Muslim just adjacent to Harijan Colony. There are a few families of Pusaris who are treated socially above Paraiyars but below other castes. They are settled in the north western portion of the village. Generally speaking the physical and imaginary segregation or demarcation between different caste houses is no longer rigid and clear cut as was the case earlier. The earlier exclusivness of Udayar and Kallar areas is breaking down, though it is not so yet between Scheduled castes, Pusaris and the other castes.

As shown earlier the hamlet of Chinnauranipatti is exclusively inhabited by Udayars; Sathirapatti by Gounders
and Mazhavarayanvayal and Annanagar by Pusaris. Like Udayallipatti, the hamlet of Alwanpatti is a multi-caste village consisting of Kallar, Konar, Asari and Scheduled Caste houses. Generally all are just one or two street settlements. While hamlets like Chinnauranipatti, Mazhavarayanvayal, Annanagar are approximately half a km away across the main village, the hamlet Satharapatti is one km away and Alwanpatti is three kms away by road from the main village. It is necessary to point out both Satharapatti and Alwanpatti are not only physically at a distance from the main village but are also for general day to day interactions and other matters which will be dealt subsequently.

5) Composition of Caste Groups:

The Udayallipatti Panchayat is a multi-caste and multi-religious village. As on 1988, it has approximately 379 households with 1337 votes. These households and voters distributed between the main village Udayallipatti (here afterwards called the main village) and five other constituent settlements. As noted earlier, while the main village and Alwanpatti are inhabited by many caste and religious groups the other settlements are occupied by a single caste. The following table (3.6) based on 1988 voters list shows the various castes and religious groups living in the Panchayat village.(see pie graph 3.1)
Table 3.6: Caste and Religious groups and their voting strength in the Panchayat village in 1988.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caste (Traditional Groups occupation)</th>
<th>No. of H.Holds</th>
<th>No. of voters</th>
<th>% of voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kallar (Cultivation)</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>36.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udayar (-Do-)</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>15.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Konar (-Do-)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>9.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pusari (Agri.Labour)</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>8.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paraiyar (-Do-)</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>7.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gounder (Cultivation)</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>5.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asari (Carpentary Blacksmithy)</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>6.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muslims (Trading)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandaram (Priest)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egali (Washerman)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navithar (Barbar)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pillai (Cultivation)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>379</strong></td>
<td><strong>1337</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the table 3.6 it may be discerned that Kallar constitute the largest group of 127 households with 494 voters. After Kallars come Udayars with 60 households having 206 voters followed by Konars, Pusaris, Paraiyars and other caste groups.
Graph 3.1
Voting Strength of Various Castes
Udayalipatti Panchayat

Kallar 36.95
Udayar 15.41
Konar 9.35
Pusari 8.98
SC 7.93
Gounder 5.91
Asari 6.51
Muslim 2.02
Others 6.94

*In Percentage*
The classification of Kallars in terms of sub-
division or title holders (locally called pattapeyars) 
show that Kallars with Mangalar title constitute largest 
number of households and voters. The table 3.7 gives an 
indication of these divisions among Kallars.

Table 3.7: Composition of Title holders among Kallars.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title holders</th>
<th>No. of Households</th>
<th>No. of voters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mangalar</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattayar</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulaganthur</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palandor</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Veesandor</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thenkondor</strong></td>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>127</strong></td>
<td><strong>494</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5) Caste Groups and structure

After having dealt with the numerical strength of 
various caste and religious groups in the village, this 
section deals first with the broad features of different 
caste groups and their inter-relationships and subsequently 
with the religious groups and their religious activities.
In dealing with caste groups, only those features that are relevant i.e., original place from where they have migrated, if known, kinship network and distribution of each caste in and around the study area, social ranking of different caste at the village level, traditional occupation and continuity and changes in occupations, caste panchayat and tradition and role of caste associations are presented. The other features of caste groups such as religious activities of various groups and landholding of each caste groups are discussed separately.

Kallars

According to local understanding Kallars of the main village were from a nearby settlement called 'Verrimangalam' which no longer exists now. Gradually they were allowed to settle in the present village which was supposed to be earlier predominantly Udayar caste settlement. Beyond this, the Kallar informants were not sure from where they have migrated. Historically, Kallars of this area migrated many centuries before from northern Tamil Nadu.

As noted in the preceding chapter Kallars have endogamous territorial divisions called 'Nadus' which in turn is divided into many exogamous patrilineal clans. The main village belongs to broader and bigger nadu called 'Visenginadu' comprising of many smaller nadus. At a local
level it belongs to Vadamlai Nadu. Generally earlier Kallars of different nadus did not intermarry but it is no longer so. Within each nadu each exogamous patrilineal clan has a distinct name as it is locally called 'pattapeyar' or title. Families within the titles do not intermarry as they are considered 'pangalis' or blood relatives.

In the village there are around twenty different title holders. Among them, as we have seen earlier, Kallar with 'Mangalar' title are in a majority both in terms of number of households and voters as well as the extent of land holding. They are believed to be original settlers or clan or a kind of 'sons of soil' in the main village. The Kallars with other titles have primarily married into the families of Mangalars. They came to be called persons belonging to 'Ponnadi Kannikai' or persons married to girls in the village. The Mangalar title holders are in turn divided into three Karais viz., Upper, Middle and Lower.

It is interesting to note that the Presidents of village Panchayat so far have belonged to one of these Karais. Further, before 1947 village headman or 'Ambalar' was from upper Karai Mangalar family. Local people still refer to the family as Ambalar family. Ambalar was acting as an intermediary between local population and king for
collection of revenue and maintaining law and order. He also acted as an adjudicator of village disputes. In other nearby villages Kallars were also given Mirasadar title performing the duty of revenue collection. However, in the main village, there are two Udayar families which were earlier conferred with Mirasadar title.

In the study area Kallars are distributed widely and according to local informants they are present, in varying numerical strength in almost all the villages in the surrounding area. The kinship network of Kallars of the main village, however, extends only to the nearby areas. For instance, Kallars of Udayallipatti have more marriage alliances with adjacent Rakkathampatti and Oduganpatti villages than far away villages. The kinship network of Kallars makes it possible to seek help to settle family and caste disputes by relatives easily.

The kinship network was not only restricted to family and caste disputes but also to inter-nadu and inter-village panchayats. The inter-village disputes were generally solved by important elders of the different villages. However, these panchayats are no longer as effective as they were, despite this some important men of different villages are adjudicating disputes involving more than one village.
With Kallars of the area, there is a tradition of 'aggressiveness' and they are known for their dominance in behaviour. They evoke fear in the minds of other caste people with a threat to use violence. Though difficult to generalise this characteristic to all Kallars, informants from both Kallar and other castes by and large confirmed this point. It is found that during the period of field work, it was the Kallars who were in the lead in all village matters whether of temple festivals or settlement of inter-caste disputes.

Earlier, as noted in the previous chapter, Kallars were making a living by 'Thuppukuli' system. This was true in the study area too. The elderly respondents still recollected with pride the daring exploits of lifting catties and house robbery by their ancestors. Some of the Kallars involved in these exploits have become legendary figures. However, the early ways of living have disappeared over the years because of institutions of police, judiciary, etc. Kallars have now turned into settled agriculturists. In the village, they are now mostly cultivators and with education some of them have taken up jobs outside the village.

As it was mentioned earlier, Kallars are a part of Mukkulathor Association. Though generally respondents were aware of its existence and a few had attended a meeting
organised at district level in mid 80s, none of them, however, was an active-members of the association or has made any efforts to enlist as a member of the association. Udayars

Next to Kallars, Udayars is the populous caste with 59 households and 206 voters. The Udayars are represented both in the main village and in another settlement called Chinnauranipatti. In fact, it is exclusively inhabited by nearly twenty Udayar families. They have day to day interaction as well as marriage alliance etc., with the Udayars of the main village. They are divided into southern and northern sections, and upper and lower divisions in the main village.

The Udayars were supposed to have migrated from places like Perambulur and Udayarpalayam, Aanjanur and Vallam in Thiruchirrapalli and Thanjavur districts to Kulathur taluk of the Pudukkottai district. Each Udayar family is identified with a place of family deity or 'Kanikoil'. Same Kanikoil people do not intermarry. According to local informants their kinship network extends beyond the taluk boundaries. The Udayars of the village belong to 'Nathaman' division. The Christian Udayars are present in pockets of Kunnondorkoil Panchayat Union. The Hindu and Christian Udayars however do not intermarry.
Like in the wider areas of the Pudukkottai district the Udayars of the village do not have any caste panchayat of their own. In case of disputes either within or outside the caste, Udayar would approach **Kallars** or go to court for settlement.

While describing the caste traditions of the Udayars even informants from other castes concede that Udayars are hard working, thrift minded and frugal in their ways of living. They are called `Boomi Palagans' i.e. Sons of Earth. Most of the Udayars are still following their age old traditional occupation - cultivation. Only a few among younger generation have gone out to towns and cities in search of modern occupations.

The Udayars have caste association called Parkavakula **Sangam** which includes Nathaman, Surithimmar, Malayaman, Moopanar and Nainar. In 1985 the Sangam organised a meeting which was attended by political party leaders, including some ministers from the AIADMK Government and Congress leader **G.K.Moopanar**, irrespective of party affiliations. Some Udayars from the village had also attended the meeting in which the speakers mainly dealt on the education of Parkavakula youths so as to equip them to compete for various modern jobs. Subsequently neither
membership drive nor any other activity by the association was reported by the respondents in the village.

**Konars**

The Konars are otherwise known as Idaiyars. They are generally shepherds by profession. There are a few families of Konars who live in the main village and around 30 families live in Alwanpatti sharing the settlement with Kallars *predominantly* having 'Mattayar' title.

The Konars do not have strong caste panchayat system as Kallars. However, in case of disputes they try to settle them among themselves. Where it is not possible they approach Kallars particularly from Udayallipatti for settlement.

Though traditionally the occupation of Konars *was* cattle rearing over the years they have acquired lands and since then cultivation has become an occupation more important than cattle breeding.

**Pusaris**

The Valayars, as noted in the earlier chapter, are locally called Pusaris. Officially they are called Muthurajas. Generally people in the locality address them as Pusaris. The settlements of Pusaris are scattered with a few houses in the main village, and in other two settlements namely Mazhavarayanvayal and Annanagar. The ancestors of
Pusaris were supposed to have migrated from nearby areas. The marriage alliances are decided not on the basis of family deities but on the basis of familiarity of kinship network. As Dirks mentions they are wide-spread in the district. The Pusaris do not have caste panchayat of their own like Kallars. Largely they try to settle small disputes within the caste by the elders of the caste. However, in general, they approach Kallars from the main village for adjudication of disputes within and with other castes. Traditionally the occupation of Pusaris was netting game in jungle. Now mostly they work as casual labourers for digging wells in the area and some are cultivators. Of late, many people, particularly men, go to ordinance factory at Thiruchirrapalli to work as industrial casual labour.

The Pusaris also have an association called Muthurajas Association. None of the local Pusaris it appears is an active member though they are members of the Association. Some caste people from the village attended the Association meeting which took place not long ago in Thiruchirrapalli. Earlier they were engaged in the works like digging graves, making tents (Pandal) for marriages. Now, they have stopped doing them at the instance of their Association.
Paraiyars (SC)

The Paraiyars and Pallars are scheduled castes of the area. However, only Paraiyars are living in the village particularly in the main village and two families are living in Alwanpatti settlement. Earlier there was a clear cut physical exclusion of the SC settlements from the main village. Now, only a road divides the main village and what is now called, Harijan Colony. In fact, a prominent Kallar bought a house constructed by a Muslim which is part of the Colony and is living there. They are widely spread in Kulathur taluk and they are settled in all the Panchayat villages. Interestingly, a person from SC whose family was the earliest to settle in the village, is a priest of some of the shrines in the village.

Like Kallars, Paraiyars also have a tradition of caste panchayats. Generally disputes arising within the caste are settled by caste elders. If matter is not settled within caste they would approach Kallars for the purpose.

Traditionally, Paraiyars were mainly agricultural labourers and mostly worked as 'Pannaiyals' for Udayars and Kallars. Now that the Pannaiyal system has practically disappeared. Now they mostly work as casual labourers during the peak seasons in the village and in the lean seasons migrate to Cauvery delta, situated beyond the northern
boundary of the district. Apart from this a few young caste men are educated and have taken up jobs. One of them is an engineer and is the only engineer from the village.

Gounders

In the beginning of the chapter it was mentioned that Gounders exclusively habitating Satharapatti settlement have interaction with the main village as an officially demarcated unit as part of Village Panchayat and revenue unit. Apart from these two domains of interaction for disputes arising within castes generally they approach the Kallars from the main village for settlement. Most of them are cultivators holding lands under tanks which are exclusively occupied by the caste.

Asaris

The Panchayat Village has both Christian and Hindu Asaris. Like a few other castes, Hindu Asaris also have places of family deity which determines marriage alliances. Though locally they are called Asaris they come under the category of Kammalar Caste. The Hindu Asaris belong to Vishwakarma section.

Both Hindu and Christian Asaris are servicing castes. Traditionally they were assigned five occupations, as mentioned earlier. In the village there are now only Thachans (Carpenters) and Kollans (Blacksmith). As of now
some of them have migrated to urban areas while others have
given up the earlier profession of Goldsmithy to take up
other traditional occupations of the caste. A few young men
have taken up jobs as electricians and the like. Some of the
caste men own lands and cultivate them. The main village has
been the centre for making bullock-carts and continues to be
one though with less demand for it than earlier. Earlier
they were paid either in kind or cash, however, now only cash
is being paid for their work.

Both Hindu and Christian Asaris belonged to an
association called Vishwakarma Association. A few years back
two Asari young men visited the village seeking membership
drive and urging them to unite so as to bargain for better
wages. A few, it was reported, did enroll as members. It
seems there has not been any follow-up on this by the
Association.

Other Caste Groups

There are other servicing castes like Navithar
(Barbers) Egali (Washermen) are still pursuing their
traditional occupation apart from owning and cultivating
lands. Earlier for their services they were paid in kind and
cash now only cash is being paid.
The persons belonging to Pandaram caste are temple priests for the middle level castes like Kallars, Udayars etc. Apart from the traditional priestly occupation they also own lands. There is no Brahmin family left in the village now. However, till recently there was one Brahmin in the village who was the Karnam or village accountant. Some Brahmin families earlier owned lands under this Panchayat area though no longer residents of the village. Further, Brahmins from adjacent Kunnondorkoil owned lands falling under Udayallipatti Panchayat earlier.

The trading castes like Chettiar were once residents and owned lands extensively in the village. None of them is living in the village now and only their descendants still visit the village to take care of whatever lands left after selling their ancestral properties including houses. The Muslim households and a Pillai household are owning petty shops in the main village and they also own lands.

The above mentioned caste groups can be arranged hierarchically on the basis of local ranking as shown in the table 3.8.
Table 3.8 : Local ranking of different castes in the Panchayat village.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Position</th>
<th>Caste</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Upper</td>
<td>Udayar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kallar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Konar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Gounder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>Asari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pandaram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Egali</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Navithar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower</td>
<td>Pusari</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table 3.8 shows that Kallars, Udayars, Konars and Gounders are situated in the upper position of the local hierarchy and most of them are cultivators. In the middle, servicing castes like Asari, Pandaram, Egali and Navithar are placed and apart from serving other castes also some of them own lands. The lowest in the local hierarchy are Pusaris and Paraiyars (SC). However, compared to SCs, Pusaris are treated socially higher. Both the castes were earlier serving upper castes like Udayars and Kallars as Pannaiyals now they work as casual labourers. Though many of the castes have their caste associations none of the persons from these caste are active in their respective association activities.
6) Religious Groups and their activities

The Hindus constitute the majority of the village population, Christians and Muslims are fewer in number. The Christians of the village are from Asari caste and they still follow their traditional occupations. Despite change in the religious faith, some of them still wear thread across the chest like Brahmins at least during Avani Avitam. They now belong to Roman Catholic division. There is a church constructed recently in the centre of the village for them. The Muslims also have a place of worship situated in the fields outside the residential area.

For Hindus, temples and shrines are located in the residential area of the village and beyond but within village boundaries. One of them is Sri Veerapondor Temple which is situated half a km away in the south-west of the main village and is as much as 100 years old. Some temples like Piddari and Kaliamman koils are new ones constructed from temple funds and public donations (see map.III).

Of all the temples and shrines Sri Veerapondor temple has been the major centre of religious activities of the village. It is also known as Sannayasi Koil. Within temple complex there are four deities that is apart from the principal deity, Sri Veerapondor, Murugan-son of ShiVa and Parvathi, Madurai Veeran and Karuppannaswamy. Just in
front of this complex Vinayagar is situated at the edge of a drinking water pond called 'urani'. Veerapondor temple has trustee appointed by the government to run the affairs of the temple and it has around 52 acres of land which was given to Mangalars as grant by the Pudukkottai kings for its maintenance and to conduct festivals. Apart from this income, contributions from the public are also mobilised for particular purpose. The temple has hereditary pandaram as a priest for conducting daily pujas. The important festivals in the temple complex are Vijaya Dasami, Panguni Uthiram, Sivarathri, and Karthigai Theepam. For the last five or six years the festivals of the temple could not be conducted regularly because of dispute between two factions of Kallars. In these festivals 'Prasadam' is given first to Ambalar belonging to Kallar caste in the main village there by giving the status of first person in the village.

Two other temples which are located in the centre of the main village are Piddari Amman or Nachhiamman and Kalliamman temples. These temples also have Pandaram as the priest and these temples are maintained by public contributions and income from lands belonging to them. First prasadam in these temples is not given to Ambalar but to government officials or to outsiders. In Veerapondor and in the two other temples Harijans are not allowed to enter but they participate from outside.
There is a cluster of four shrines lying in the eastern end of the main village. Interestingly a SC person is the priest for all these shrines. In these shrines SCs also offer prayers along with people from other castes. This cluster includes Alaggappan, a deity of Kallars, Rudai Kalli, Ayyenar and Munian. Though Alaggappan is a Kallar deity, Udayars also visit and offer brass bells to be fixed in the temple for the deity having heard and fulfilled their prayers. Apart from these temples and shrines there are innumerable others spread over entire village boundaries as family deities or deities to protect against diseases. One of them is Kalliamman shrine constructed in 1990 by a SC leader with financial help from his fellow caste men, political leaders, government officials etc.

Along with these religious activities another trend is discernible during the recent years i.e., visiting temples of Murugan at Palani and Ayyappan at Sabarimalai, Kerala. Though a few people in the main village have started visiting these temples in the early eighties more recently thirty to forty people visit each year and some of them more than once after fasting and doing other rituals for a specific number of days. It is important to note that it is not only upper level castes like Kallars, Udayars who visit these temples, but also SCs and Pusarlis particularly to Ayyappan temple. One
of the persons from SC visited Ayyappan temple three times in recent years.

Enquiries with people who have visited as to why they have visited such far away place as a part of the religious activity evoked varied responses from different people. Some of them said that it is an individual faith and others commented that the very hardship involved in fasting and reaching the temples by walk appeals to them. One youth explained that during fasting days Ayyappan temple devotees have to call each other respectably as 'swamy' irrespective of caste, class and age. He believed that this temporary situation of mutual respect holds on even after returning from the temple.

7) Caste and Landholding

The Udayallipatti Panchayat is a revenue unit including the main village Udayallipatti and its hamlets i.e. Chinnauranipatti, Mazhavarayanvayal, Annanagar, Sathrapatti and Alwanpatti. Mostly people belonging to the Panchayat own lands in its jurisdiction. However, people from other villages or Panchayats or residents who have now left to towns and cities also own lands in the revenue area, though fewer in number compared to present residents. Further, even the residents may own lands in other Panchayats. To put it in
a nutshell, the aspect of caste and landholding in the study Panchayat, cannot be totally and precisely isolated and studied. Thus, with these limitations in mind an attempt is made to study the relationship between caste and their landholdings.

The study of caste and landholding is done by comparing land records of the revenue village at two points of time i.e. in 1960 and 1990, a gap of thirty years. The table 3.9 gives caste-wise landowners, their total holdings and percentage for each caste out of total lands owned in the village. (see also bar graph 3.2)

Perusal of the table suggests that both Kallars and Udayars together owned 50 percent in 1960 and 58 percent in 1990 of the lands. The Udayars in 1960 have possessed 26 percent of total land and has more or less same percentage of landholding in 1990. The Kallars have increased their landholding from 24 percent in 1960 to 32 percent in 1990. In 1960 total lands of Udayars was more than that of Kallars and in 1960 it is the other way round. However, Udayars in 1990 had 4.72 acres per owner compared to 2 acres among Kallars.
Table 3.9: Caste-wise landholdings of Udayallipatti Revenue village in 1960 and 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Caste</th>
<th>Land Owners (No)</th>
<th>Tl.lands Owned (acres)</th>
<th>Land Owners (No)</th>
<th>Tl.lands Owned (acres)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Kallars</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>615.60</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>391</td>
<td>859.39</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Udayars</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>664.08</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>699.01</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Konars</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>231.08</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>302.30</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Pusarisi</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>102.73</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>199.26</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Gounders</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>49.72</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>117.87</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Asarisi (H+CH)</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>34.93</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>67.90</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Muslims</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>54.34</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>43.15</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Chettiar</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>123.60</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>34.26</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Brahmin</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15.66</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>12.50</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Pillai</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18.35</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Pandaram</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13.59</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.51</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Naicker</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9.16</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15.59</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Egali</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Naidu</td>
<td>Not Known</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16.56</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>S.C.</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>-do-</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37.25</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Others</td>
<td>380</td>
<td>615.80</td>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>155</td>
<td>221.16</td>
<td>8.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>878</td>
<td><strong>2,544.40</strong></td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td><strong>2,653.75</strong></td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Temple lands,etc.</td>
<td>1,991.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,071.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grand Total</td>
<td>3,735.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>3,735.65</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Graph 3.2
Castewise Land Holdings in 1960 and 1990
Udayallipatti Panchayat

Percentage

Kallar  Udayar  Konar  Pusarl  Gounder  Asarl  Muslim  Chettiar  Others

Castes

1960  1990
While the total landholding of **Kallars** and Udayars has increased, the landholding of Chettiars, Muslims and Brahmins has decreased over the years. This is in confirmation with the version of various informants that the latter possessed much more lands earlier *say* even 20 *years* back than now. In particular, a few Chettiar families owned lands extensively before thirty to forty years. Probably this prompted one respondent to say that the whole village was a Chettiar village once. Gradually the descendants of these families sold off their lands, mostly to Kallars as they were their former tenants.

An interesting feature of the 1960 land record is that lands of Kallars and Udayars broadly fell under **different tanks**. This situation continues even *now except a few cases of Kallar lands in Udayar area*. According to elderly informants this demarcation has been there for a long time.

8) **Landholding Categories:**

Unlike in the past when land holding was concentrated in a few hands now the ownership is diffused. Some landowners from Udayar, Kallar, even Pusari castes can be identified as big landowners having 20 or more acres. The table 3.10. gives the landholding pattern in 1990. The data is also presented as bar graph (3.3) after the table.
Table 3.10: Different categories of landholders in 1990.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No.of landholders</th>
<th>Percentage to Total landholders</th>
<th>Total landholding (in acres)</th>
<th>Percentage to Total lands owned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a</td>
<td>460</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>158.53</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b</td>
<td>266</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>430.35</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>697.95</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>667.07</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>306.06</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>393.30</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1066</td>
<td>100.00</td>
<td>2653.76</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
- a. 1 acre and below
- b. 1.01 to 2.47 acres
- c. 2.48 to 4.94 acres
- d. 4.95 to 9.88 acres
- e. 9.89 to 14.82 acres
- f. 14.83 and above

The preceding table suggests that nearly 86 percent of the landowners hold less than 2.50 acres, while for the district as a whole it is around 80 percent and for the state it is 69 percent.

9) Institutions

In the study area only those institutions which have elected body like Village Panchayat and Co-operatives are studied in detail. It is not to say other institutions like revenue, health, police which are bodies of the state
Graph 3.3

Land Holding Categories
Udayallipatti Panchayat

Percentage

43

25

26

25

19

26

16

12

15

6

9

2

2

0

10

20

30

40

50

Land owners
Lands owned

a = <1 acre, b = 1.01-2.47, c = 2.48-4.94, 
d = 4.95-9.88, e = 9.89-14.82, f = 14.83>
governments do not have any role to play in the village. However, passing mention has been made to get an idea of different institutions operating in this area. Some of them are development oriented in the context of various rural development programmes and some are service oriented.

a) Village Panchayat

It was noted earlier that Village Panchayat is the basic unit of Panchayat system in Tamil Nadu. The Udayallipatti Panchayat consists of the main village and its four hamlets. It is part of Kunnondorkoil Panchayat Union consisting of 38 Panchayats which includes a Town Panchayat as well.

Each village Panchayat board consists of a President, a Vice President and members of different wards including two reserved wards i.e. one for women and another for SCs. The term of Village Panchayat Board is for five years.

In the Panchayat elections conducted in February 1986, for the post of President the contest was between the same traditional contenders i.e. two Kallars-HM and QM-with Mangalar title and both of them contested in the 1970 Panchayat elections as well. HM has been President for three terms. It was only in 1986 QM got elected as the President.
In 1986 out of 990 valid votes polled while HM got 454 votes and QM got 536 votes.

The President of Village Panchayat has an important role to play in the implementation of various rural development programmes. Under various rural development schemes the Udayallipatti Panchayat has acquired the following infrastructures over the years—common well and drinking water supplied through a bore well with over-head tank (a new one was under construction at the time of the study), Panchayat building with Radio and TV facilities, Maternity centre (yet to start functioning), Balwady (noon meal scheme centre) and school building. Many old roads were given facelift. Some new roads are paved from time to time, bunds of tanks have been strengthened and sluices of tanks have also been renovated.

b) Co-operatives

There are co-operatives like Primary Agriculture Credit Society, Milk Co-operative Society, Sheep Breeders Co-operative Society operating in the area. Some societies like Primary Agriculture Credit Society has been operating in the area for more than two decades, others are of recent developments. Each has its own boundaries or villages under their jurisdiction and operation. Like Panchayati Raj bodies, elections to the various Co-operatives have not been
held regularly. During one of the field visits, there was an election taking place for the position of President of Milk Co-operative Society in which a Kallar with Mattayar title won. He was earlier elected as a President to Sheep Breeders Co-operative Society.

c) Other Institutions

There are other institutions like Village Revenue Office, Primary Health Centre, Post Office, Police Station (established as an out post nearly 70 years back) and fair price shop in the main village. There are commercial banks, Land Development Bank and many government departments like Agriculture, Education, Health, Social Welfare, Social Forestry etc., operating through Panchayat union in this area. There are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) like Thiruchirrappalli Multi-purpose Service Society (TMSS) which is organising women for self employment and 'Kudumbam' an organisation working on ecological farming, are also operating in the area.

10) Party Politics

The party politics at local level is to be studied through the pattern of vote mobilisation, political awareness of voters and party preferences of voters. Before taking up these it is to be mentioned about what are all the parties
operating in the area. According to respondents earlier Congress and DMK were active in the village. After the emergence of AIADMK it registered its presence in the area. There were few cadres of CPM also present in the village.

The often repeated opinion of the various respondents is that generally people no longer vote on the basis of what elders of the village say as was common earlier but it is now more on the basis of their party affiliations or personal preferences. One elderly informant from Kunnondor Koil, during the course of the interview with him, recollected the voting behaviour of the people. Earlier, Congress party bosses along with candidate of the area would land up in Mirasidars or Ambalars houses and the whole village was called and told to vote for their candidate. Another informant reflected the trend in a similar way by saying "Earlier people voted according to what elders said and now each one, including members of the same family, has individual party preferences". It is common in the village to find different brothers having different party affiliations. For instance, in one Kallar family among four brothers one is a Congressman, another important party functionary in AIADMK, one belongs to DMK and while another belongs to Communist Party. This is generally applicable to people from other castes also.
Another aspect of change in political consciousness is that of mobilisation of votes through campaign. Earlier local leaders would call important men from other castes and ask for votes. Now each party cadre or local party leaders have to visit houses, including those of Scheduled Caste, to canvass for votes.

Now though local leaders may be recruited for mobilization of votes the appeals of political parties directly seem to play increasing role in the electoral process. Further, local party leaders based on party affiliation seems to have emerged more influential than that of caste and panchayat leaders. It may be in recognition of increased role of party politics in the villages, AIADMK government in 1986 announced that parties with their symbols could put up candidates for elections both for Panchayat Unions and Village Panchayats. However, this order was partially withdrawn allowing political party candidates for Panchayat Unions only without assigning any reason.

Another feature of this trend is the contribution of mass media particularly newspapers to political awareness. Though exact impact is not clear yet certainly it contributes to discussion on political matters at local level. It is common to find people obviously men in tea shops not only in the study village but also in wider area discussing about
politics ranging from state to national level. In fact, in the main village, the day starts with men assembling in the tea shops to have tea. When the newspaper subscribed by the Village Panchayat arrive by bus around 6 o'clock some of the readers would start reading the paper loudly. Even uneducated audience would listen to the news carefully. This starts off discussion and comments on what is happening in politics and about political leaders. Some times there would be heated discussion among different party supporters on actions or pronouncement of party leaders. This goes on for sometime till many of them drift away gradually to their fields for work. Observing these discussions QM once commented to the researcher.

"I am not happy about this, I also have party preference and belong to Congress party. No doubt there should be discussions about politics, but not in this way. Different party cadres and supporters abuse each other. Today different party leaders may abuse each other in the public platforms or through the press but tomorrow they would join hands together according to their conveniences. In this kind of situation why should we fight among ourselves".

**Summing-up**

This chapter, thus, has focused on relevant features of the Udayallipatti Panchayat which are necessary for the study. The description of relevant features while
focusing on the main village it has also taken note of interaction between the main village and its constituent units in whichever domain they have been interacting.

The main features of the Panchayat are as in the case of the district, people in the village are dependent on agriculture and its allied activities as a main source of livelihood. They also depend on rainfall and dry land agriculture. A marked feature in the occupational pattern of the Panchayat population is the higher percentage of cultivators among main workers compared to the district and state figures. Other feature of the Panchayat includes low level of agricultural mechanisation, predominance of tank irrigation, decline of pannaiyal system and emergence of wage labour.

The settlement pattern of the main village reflects the broad caste hierarchy at the local level. The caste structure is marked by hierarchy of local ranking with Kallars, Udayars etc., on the upper strata, servicing castes like Asaris, Vannars etc., are in the middle and the lowest among all are Pusaris and SCs who are mainly agricultural labourers. In terms of caste composition the Kallars are the largest single group. Among Kallars, Mangalar title holders are numerically dominant. All other caste people come to Kallars for settlement of their disputes. Among the temples
Veerapondor Koil is an important centre for religious activities of the village in which 'Ambalar' is given the 'Prasadam' first as a mark of status first person. Kallars are also trustees of the temple and manage its lands and festivals.

The analysis of the caste and landholding in 1960 shows that both the Kallars and Udayars were dominant economically. However, in 1960 Udayars had more lands than Kallars, now the situation is other way round. The land distribution is much more dispersed and the persons owning less than 2.5 acres constitute 86 percent of the total land owners. The comparative figures for the district is nearly 80 percent.

External linkages to the village are provided by the institutions like statutory Village Panchayats, Cooperatives and political parties. Interestingly, the Kallars have come to occupy formal positions in these bodies. The prevailing situation regarding party politics shows that the voters are more likely to vote according to their party preferences rather than what the elders of the village say, as was the case earlier. The mass media also seems to have contributed to the political awareness of the voters. The election campaigns seem to have changed from one of mass
mobilisation and contact at a place convenient to the voters to contact them at their doorsteps.

Thus, these features of the study village provide the setting for analysis of sources of power and power holders which are subject of discussion in the subsequent chapters.
Notes and References

1. The tables on cropping pattern were based on the data extracted from the land records of the Panchayat.

2. Pannaiyal- Permanent agricultural labour who are paid in kind and cash.


4. Title Holders or Pattapeyar - Each Kallar clan assumes a hereditary title through which blood relations are identified for the purpose of marriage etc.

5. Similar observation was made by Beteille. See Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power : Changing Patterns of Social Stratification* in a Tanjore village (Berkley : University of California Press, 1965), p.84.


8. This information was collected through many respondents. However, at present village land records show the lands against Veerapondor temple. Interestingly the tank under which the lands of the temple is situated is called Mangala kulam. At present both Udayars and Kallars cultivate these lands and share the produce with temple.
9. This dispute occurred in the beginning of eighties between two factions of Kallars over the theft of Murugan idol from the temple in which one faction accused of others of the theft. This led to irregular conducting of the temple festival in the subsequent years. The details of the dispute is given in the later part of the study.

10. Dirks also observed similar tradition in other parts of the district. Nicholas B. Dirks, op.cit., pp.298-305.


12. The tables on landholdings were formulated based on the land records of Udayallipatti Panchayat.


15. The researcher also observed similar practice in the tea shops situated in other surrounding villages.