Introduction

The researcher proposes to study the homes of *aRavaaNiGaL* (trangenders from male to female) at Ri. kalluppaTTi in madurai District, tamiz naaDu*, South India, analyzing their oral narratives from an ecocritical perspective. The various homes of six *aRavaaNiGaL* chosen for the purpose of this study are compared to *tiNai* home.

Fig. 1. Map of madurai city


The introductory part of the study deals with an overview of Ri. kalluppaTTi where the participants of the research live, its socio-economic conditions and the cultural and natural
aspects of the place in which they live. The next section gives the methodology of the research, review of literature and scope and limitation of the research.

Fig. 2. An Overview of Ri. kalluppati


Ri. kalluppati is a small town and also a pajaayat in the south of madurai District. The land is a desertic one with less agricultural lands and water resources. The demographic details of the place are given below:
Table 1

Demographic details of Ri. kalluppaTTi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Area (Sq.m.)</th>
<th>Total Revenue Villages</th>
<th>Population (Approx.)</th>
<th>Rural (Approx.)</th>
<th>Urban (Approx.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Persons Male Female</td>
<td>Persons Male Female</td>
<td>Persons Male Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>262.43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>83846 41890 41956</td>
<td>64816 32090 32726</td>
<td>19030 9800 9230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>262.43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>80479 40373 40106</td>
<td>72649 36391 36258</td>
<td>7830 3982 3848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>262.43</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>73851 37044 36807</td>
<td>66407 33235 33172</td>
<td>7444 3809 3635</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Ri. kalluppaTTi is a densely populated place which is massively increasing in human density every year. The Socio-economic features of the place, published as part of the 2001 census is summarized in the table below:
### Table 2

Socio-economic features of Ri. kalluppaTTi

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Item</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Density of Population per Sq.km.</td>
<td>319</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Percentage of Urban Population to total Population</td>
<td>22.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Number of females per 1000 males</td>
<td>1001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Percentage of Schedules Castes to total Population</td>
<td>21.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Percentage of Schedules Tribes to total Population</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Average size of household</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Percentage of workers to total population</td>
<td>51.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Percentage of Female workers to total workers</td>
<td>44.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Percentage of Agricultural workers to total workers</td>
<td>67.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Percentage of Agricultural Labourers to total Agriculture workers</td>
<td>62.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Percentage of workers in Manufacturing Industry to total workers</td>
<td>4.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Percentage of area sown to total Geographical area sown</td>
<td>53.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Percentage of gross cropped area to net area sown</td>
<td>99.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Percentage of nett area sown</td>
<td>100.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Percentage of nett area irrigated to gross cropped area</td>
<td>21.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Percentage of gross area irrigated to gross cropped</td>
<td>21.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Bovine population per sq. km.</td>
<td>50.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Number of draught animals per thousand hectares of nett area sown</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Percentage of villages electrified</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Number of post offices per lakh/thousand population</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Number of telegraph officers per lakh/thousand of population</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Number of Radio sets per / Lakh / Thousand Population</td>
<td>Not specified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Percentage of Literacy</td>
<td>68.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Percentage of Villages covered by prot. water supply</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Number of households per 100 resld. occupied houses</td>
<td>100.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nearly 46% of the land in Ri. Kalluppati is barren and desertic in nature. The 54% that is cultivated is used to grow “paddy, maize, kombu*, RaaGi, tenai, black gram, red gram, green gram, fodder cowpea, groundnut, sunflower, sugarcane, sappooTTa, banana, guava, tomato, Bendi, chilli, white long snake gourd, coconut, chrysanthemum, oyster mushroom and betel vine” (“Agriculture in T. Kallupatti”). Local communities largely depend on these agricultural lands for their livelihood and occupation. Villages in madurai are generally divided into scheduled castes with specific occupation. Most of the transgenders interviewed for the purpose of this study belong to scheduled caste communities.

The population of transgender communities in Ri. KalluppaTTi is less when compared to the ones living in cities and towns like, cennai, madurai, seelam and other places in tamiz naaDu*. The exact number of aRavaaNiGaL population is not officially recorded in the census of the place. It is usually seen that once the transgender persons attain their new identity (male-to-female), they are pushed out of the mainstream caste system by their families and communities. This displaced social status might be seen as one of the reasons for making a community-structure of their own for which they adopt the Muslim tradition of Jamaat. The Jamaatsystem is an influence from north India, to which many transgenders travel to at some point in their life while transitioning from male-to-female or after their sex-change operation. Inspite of adopting the customs and rituals of the Muslim tradition, aRavaaNiGaL in different regions add their own cultural elements to the varied practices. Transgenders have had influences from the Islamic social, community and empire systems, which they still follow in their lives. Thus the transgenders make historical connections with the eunuchs of Islamic empire to ascertain their tradition. As Reddy notes, “much of the literature focuses on the role of eunuchs . . . [in] the Mamluk Sultanate in what is now Egypt and the Delhi Sultanate and Mughal empire in the
present-day India and Pakistan” (Reddy 23). Reddy speculates that during the “medieval period of history,” eunuchs were present in large numbers in many Islamic empires, where they were given positions of importance and significance (23). This could be the reason for many transgenders in India for following the system of a religion where their worth was realised. At this juncture, it would be worthwhile to explain the term aRavaaNiused in this dissertation. The wordaRavaaNi could be translated “transgender” in English. Since a transgender is neither man nor woman, the word aRavaaNi seems the most appropriate among other words which are sometimes derogatory like aLi and poTTai. The word aRavaaNiis connected with the myth of aRavaaN and so it is used in this dissertation to refer to transgendered persons. The aRavaaN myth is often quoted by aRavaaNiGaL with pride and it is this deity which marks the annually held festival of kuuvaaGam in viLuppuRam district of tamiz naaDu*. Many aRavaaNiGaL from various parts of India and also outside India take part in the festival which is an enactment of the aRavaaN myth from mahaabaaRata. When paanDavaR and kauRavaR were fighting a ferocious war, aRavaaN from the paanDavaR’s side was chosen to be sacrificed if the paanDavaR wanted to ensure victory. aRavaaN wanted to experience the bliss of being married before he was to be sacrificed. Since no woman would agree to marry a man who was going to be killed the next day, kriSNa transformed himself into a woman and married aRavaaN. This episode is held in high esteem by aRavaaNiGaL who have a fondness for the deity kriSNa, as he was a man as well as a woman. The festival which goes on for two days is a time for hiJRaas(plural form of uRdu and hindi word for male-to-female transgenders) to socialize and have revelry and fun. On the first day the hiJRaas become wives of the male deity kuutaanDavaR (also called aRavaaN); they tie the taali or the sacred thread around the neck, which is a symbol of married women. This taali is given by the priest of the temple. The next day the hiJRaas become widows of the same deity
and express their anguish by wearing white saris, breaking their bangles, taking off the flowers from the hair, wiping off their poTTu* (a religious mark on the forehead worn by Hindu women) and wailing loudly by beating their chests. “Hijras participate by the thousands in this festival . . . and ritually reaffirm their identification with Krishna, who changes his form from male to female” (Nanda 21).

The transgenders in Ri. kalluppaTTi and all over India follow a fictive kinship pattern which is matrilineal. When the kinship is not related either by blood or marriage, it is known as “fictive kinship,” in cultural anthropology parlance (Ferraro 206). Ferraro talks of different forms of kinship like adoption, descent or marriage, college fraternities, members of same race and others who are not biologically or maritally connected; but he does not mention kinship within members of the same sexual identity. Perhaps the kinship shared by aRavaaNiGaL could be placed within the purview of adoption and connection which come through some similar traits. But the adoption Ferraro talks about is a legal process where after the formalities, the individual becomes a legal member of the family. If Jamaat could be seen as a council then the adoption of one aRavaaNi by another is an initiation into the aRavaaNi community or ‘family’ as they would like to call it. Further there are some functions which exist in the kinship systems. One is providing a “social continuity” (208) which is applicable in the case of aRavaaNiGaL. The present system where one aRavaaNi adopts another “appear(s) to invert the association of biology with permanence, by presenting their “chosen” ties as the “most reliable and enduring of kinship relations’” (Weston qtd. in Reddy 151). Since the relationships formed in the community are the ones that sustain and protect them, the kinship terms are the ones where uRdu and hindi words are used. These kinship terms are used only in the context of aRavaaNiGaL and not for any other person or relationship. One transgender adopts another and the link goes on. The older
transgender who adopts another is called the GuRu, which in hindi and urdu translates as teacher. The adopted child is known as ceela which is translated as disciple. Once an individual is adopted by a transgender, there is a certain obligation on the part of the ‘child’ towards her ‘mother’ or GuRu.

Every relationship has a name in some unique words that they use. These words are used as code signals between the aRavaaNiGaL. The words are combinations of tamiz, hindi and urdu. This language (if it could be called so) comes in handy when the aRavaaNiGaL are in public places among others who are not aRavaaNiGaL. This influence of hindi and urdu words could have come from northern India where Hijras were associated with the court of mogul rulers. As Nanda mentions: “Hijras today make many references to the glorious, preindependence Indian past when the Muslim rulers of princely states were exceedingly generous and renowned for their patronage of the Hijras” (Lynton and Rajan qtd. in Nanda 23).

The exact time and details of how the Muslim tradition came to be the mainstay of aRavaaNiGaL in tamiz naaDu* is not very clear. The aRavaaNiGaL themselves do not know this except that it has come from the traditions followed in mumbai and other places in northern India. And it is likely that since mumbai is the place that is famous for Hijras, many aRavaaNiGaL go to mumbai either on their own by leaving their natal house or by joining with aRavaaNiGaL whom they have befriended. The ones who have been there come back and introduce the practices followed in big cities such as mumbai. Whenever the connection with the Muslim tradition was mentioned, the frequent answer of the transgenders was “Our elders taught us everything.” The usages of these words give a communal feeling to the aRavaaNiGaL. Since language is a predominant cultural marker of a community, speaking this language among themselves in public places enables them to maintain discretion. These words are always taught
to those who come and join the community. The language is called ‘kooti,’ as the framework of aRavaaNiGaL includes not only themselves but also effeminate homosexual men who are called kootiGal. The transgender spectrum usually consists of male-to-female trans-people, bisexual and homosexual men. Though there are different categories of sexuality, the term ‘kooti’ is used to identify the aRavaaNi community as a whole. The specific meaning of the term ‘kooti’ is a man who has not been operated, but identifies with the female sensibilities and emotions and is a part of the aRavaaNiGaL kinship.

The occupation of aRavaaNiGaL in Ri. kalluppaTTi is dancing kaRaGaaTTam (a folk dance of tamiz naaDu*), singing oppaaRi (professional weeping) and involving in sex work. The folk-dance form kaRaGam and singing oppaaRi are indigenous to the people in madurai and other parts of tamiz naaDu* and so it is not a major diversion from their own culture. But what is worth mentioning here is that aRavaaNiGaL, like women take on the roles of a traditional woman dancers or mourners. kuRavan-kuRati aaTTam, kaRaGaaTTam, peiaaTTam and RaaJaa-RaaNi aaTTam are some of the dances that are performed in village fairs and other rural programmes while oppaaRi and maRaDi paaTTu are performed during funerals in nearby villages. Each dance has a specific way of performing and during ‘seasons’—the time of festivals, aRavaaNiGaL can have non-stop programmes which provide them with enough money.
During off-seasons, they have to depend upon the money they have earned from earlier dances or sex-work. Funerals can come during any time, as death is unpredictable and if an aRavaaNi receives a call from any village for a funeral, she attends it because she believes that it is her honour and it also fetches her money.
Fig. 5. amala and the joker in a funeral

Research Methodology

Primary Research

The researcher has a long drawn connection with the transgender community right from the time she was a ten-month old baby. The following incident narrated by her mother links the interest as well as commitment to the topic of transgenders and life according to them. In 1980, in the city of Bombay (now Mumbai), during the hours of the morning, the researcher’s father had left for his work. As soon as the father left, there was a knock on the door. The innocent mother opened the door, not knowing that the knock belonged to transgenders. She was afraid that they would harm her. She stood pushing the door and did not move until a neighbour ordered the transgendered individuals to leave. After a wordy duel, they left. It was again after some time that another group decided to visit the researcher’s house for extracting money but by then the researcher’s mother was familiar with the ways of transgenders. She made her child sit in the kitchen with a variety of pulses and grains so that the baby would be engaged in playing
and not make noise that would attract the transgenders. Now transgenders always get information about a baby being born and this explains their presence in the researcher’s house. That day, the mother engaged the child with pulses in order to keep her silent but this topic of transgenders has engaged the researcher for quite some time now.

For many years, the researcher did not have any connections with transgenders except for occasional interactions in trains and other public places. This is an instance which happened when the researcher taught in RiSi Valley School, madanappalLi, aandRaapRadeeS, for two years. Without any prior information on the topic of gender and culture, the researcher contacted one of the parents of the school she was teaching, during 2007. The parents, Dr. K. P. Jayasankar and Dr. Anjali Monteiro Jayasankar, were professors in the highly esteemed institution of Tata School of Social Sciences (TISS). The professor guided the researcher to get in contact with Ms. Pritham Chakravarathy as she had done a play with transgenders. Thus began a fascinating journey into the world of gender and its nuances. On 9th April 2007, the researcher along with her friend, Rayson K. Alex, met Ms. Pritham Chakravarathy at her residence in tiRuvaaNmiyyuR, cennai. The researcher was also to meet Ms. Priya Babu, a transgender. This was the first interaction of the researcher with a MTF (Male-to-Female) transgender. The meeting opened up many ideas, thoughts and doubts in the mind of the researcher. The researcher was at a loss for the exact topic that she needed to work on for her thesis. She had in mind the songs sung by transgenders in tamiz naaDu* little knowing that there were not many songs that were exclusively sung by them. She was only sure of one thing: That she would not change her topic for any other. The discussion with Pritham and Priya Babu enabled the researcher to gain knowledge about many facets of the life of the transgenders. Pritham, having travelled extensively and worked with the transgenders had many interesting vignettes to share
about their lives, literature, myths, stories, NGOs and other details which were very useful to the researcher at the outset of her thesis. Pritham was a mine of information which was delightfully excavated by the researcher.

While the researcher wanted to work on transgenders in tamiz naaDu* for her thesis, she wasn’t sure how to narrow down her work. The topic of transgenders was quite a broad one with many interesting subjects to focus on. The social status of transgenders was the first focus of the researcher. The researcher got in touch with some NGOs working for the rehabilitation of MSMs (Males who have sex with males) and was able to make connections with similar resource persons in iiRooD, seelam, tiRuciRaapaLLi and madurai. Then, the researcher traveled to many pockets like seelam, iiRooD, tiRuciRapaLLi and madurai where transgenders lived. While in places like iiRooD, seelam and tiRuciRapaLLi, transgenders spoke of their problems and other social issues, they did not seem to live together as a group or did not give the impression that they were a unit of people living together. But when the researcher visited transgenders in Ri. kalluppaTTi in madurai district, there was a drastic change that was observed from the other places. First, they were very rural in their background and second, their unrefined language, mannerisms and expressions were quite frank. They were a group who were very receptive and friendly. Hence the researcher narrowed down her place of research to Ri. kalluppaTTi. The aravaaNiGaL always referred to the other members of their home by saying ‘daughter,’ ‘mother,’ or ‘grandmother.’ Hearing these relationship terms showed that there prevailed a bonding between the members of the house. While aravaaNiGaL in other places talked about their problems and other similar topics, the ones in Ri. kalluppaTTi, talked of home, dancing and professional mourning. The constant reference to ‘home,’ caught the researcher’s interest and home was seen as a topic worth exploring. It is then that the researcher started talking to
aRavaaNiGaL in Ri. kalluppaTTi about home and other related topics. After narrowing the topic, the next question was how many respondents should be interviewed for the purpose of the study. First, the community in Ri. kalluppaTTi was very small one. Second, the members who were living and in constant communication inspite of leaving Ri. kalluppaTTi, were only six aRavaaNiGaL. Hence, it was decided that an intense study of the homes of six aRavaaNiGaL will be conducted for this study. Another point that interested the researcher was that, though the aRavaaNiGaL in Ri. kalluppaTTi were only a small group, they were living in the midst of non-aRavaaNiGaL. The fact that homosexually oriented individuals were living among heterosexual families in a rural place like Ri. kalluppaTTi was another topic which the researcher was interested in the initial years of the research. Since the topic of ‘home’ was more leaning towards ecocriticism, the researcher narrowed down to the concept of home. Though the concept of home is something everyone talks about and writes, the researcher did not find much material on what constitutes home. Though, there were many theories that discuss place, location and dwelling, there was a dearth on materials which discussed the basic elements of home. Since there was not much on home as such, the researcher had to rely on a dictionary to provide the different aspects of what makes a home. The dictionary gave a detailed step by step definition of the word ‘home’ along with the historical elements that made the home. Analysing the meaning of home and its features itself was a core part of this thesis. Further all the features that were elicited from the dictionary were also present in tiNai home. The concept of tiNai gave a theoretical framework for the idea of home. Keeping the features elicited from the dictionary, different homes of aRavaaNiGaL were identified and analysed. This dissertation is entitled, “An Ecocritical Analysis of the Oral Narratives of aRavaaNiGaL at Ri. kalluppaTTi, madurai dist., tamiz naaTu.” Why oral narratives and not literature written by transgenders, is another pertinent question that
arises while reading this dissertation. Though there were some books written by transgenders in tamiz naaDu*, the pieces were mostly creative ones which talked about their life experiences. While such literature did give a glimpse of their lives, it was in some ways incomplete as only a part of their lives were covered. After meeting and engaging with aRavaaNiGaL in Ri. kalluppaTTi, the researcher found that their lives had interesting and poignant stories to tell. So the researcher decided to ask aRavaaNiGaL in Ri. kalluppaTTi to narrate their life stories which could be used as primary materials for the purpose of this study. Now asking aRavaaNiGaL to narrate their stories was not as effective as they did not find it quite easy to narrate their stories seamlessly. It was then that the researcher decided to have a questionnaire and model the session like an interview where each aRavaaNi answers questions based on her home, family, childhood and other related topics. This method was quite effective as aRavaaNiGaL had a direction with which they could talk about themselves. Now, why the word ‘narrative?’ Kerby defined narrative as “... the telling (in whatever medium, though especially language) of a series of temporal events so that a meaningful sequence is portrayed ...” (qtd. in Rapport and Overing 283). Any discussion on home would start from the childhood and go on until a significant point (in the case of aRavaaNiGaL it would be undergoing sex change operation and living in a home comprising of similar individuals), the word ‘narrative’ seemed apt for a dissertation of this sort. Since there was no written account of the lives of aRavaaNiGaL in Ri. kalluppaTTi, the narratives are oral in nature.
The fieldwork was carried out by the researcher over an extensive period of time from 2007–2009 and early 2010 at Ri. kalluppaTTi staying with the aRavaaNiGaL and documenting their everyday life. The method of documentation involved non-participatory observation and participatory observation. Adopting this non-participatory method the researcher has documented the everyday conversations, activities, idleness and general behaviour of the aRavaaNiGaL. The participatory method involves the researcher mingling with the aRavaaNiGaL in their idle chatter, partaking food and general activities like watching Television, reading newspapers and travelling with them to and from places. The researcher also interviewed the aRavaaNiGaL with a previously written down questionnaire. The interviews were recorded using a Voice-recorder and video graphed using a Panasonic 3 CCD Camera. A still camera was also used to take pictures for documentation.
The first time the researcher visited them in September 2007, during which extensive footage of the forty-first day after the initiation-ceremony was procured. On the forty-first day after the sex-change operation, the ceremony is held which is attended by aRavaaNiGaL from different places. The day marks the healing of the wound and the complete ‘becoming’ (when indicated within single quotes, woman refers to symbolic woman) of woman from the man. During this visit the researcher spent three days with the aRavaaNiGaL, talking to them about many things as this was the first time the researcher was interacting with a group of aRavaaNiGaL. It was a time of mixed feelings for the researcher as it was not clear what to ask them and how to proceed with things. They had assumed that the group consisting of the researcher and her two friends were from some Television channel when they saw cameras and heard the many questions. The aRavaaNiGaL were ready to give some petitions about their condition and how they were not granted any facilities by the government. Gradually they understood that the researcher was there to know more about their customs, habits and other
aspects of their community life. This first visit enabled the researcher to gain a perspective of their mannerisms and general outlook. The researcher had still not narrowed down her topic.

The second visit was in November 2008. This time the researcher was welcomed warmly into paaNTiyammaaL’s ‘home,’ as the rapport was established by the previous visit a year ago and the frequent phone calls during that period between the first and second visit. In the second visit, the researcher met several aRavaaNiGaL whom she had not met in the first visit. The first visit was more like a pilot visit which nevertheless gave the researcher much material but in the second visit there was more focus. The topic narrowed down to ‘home’ as the concept was both cultural and ecocritical. During the second visit, the researcher went to Ri. kalluppaTTi with a questionnaire and many doubts from the first visit which had to be clarified. Siva, a social worker who works with TAI (tamiz naaDu* Aids Initiative), was the researcher’s friend and guide as the researcher travelled to Ri. kalluppaTTi from madurai changing two buses and spending over two hours in the journey. The journey was interspersed with Siva filling in the
researcher with details of aRavaaNi life, myths associated with aRavaaNiGaL, their occupation and other working details. Through him it was easier for the researcher to get paaNTiyammaaL’s confidence. Siva was introduced to the researcher by another social worker maheeS, who was at that time leaving madurai to find a job in cennai. Siva came in place of maheeS but the friendship between Siva and the researcher is still going strong. Siva’s presence with the researcher and her friends in the aRavaaNi community enabled interaction to be strengthened and at times when the researcher did not know how to convey a specific point the former helped by clarifying and explaining things clearly. Since paaNTiyammaaL and the aRavaaNiGaL staying in Ri. kalluppaTTi belonged to rural madurai, certain words they used were not understood by the researcher; it was at those times that Siva was of immense help to the researcher.

The researcher recorded every conversation that took place with Siva as well as those with the members of the group. Many aRavaaNiGaL were interviewed with the focus of homes—natal and kooti. Since paaNTiyammaaL was already acquainted with the researcher, she introduced the researcher to everyone present and also explained the kin relationship. Subsequent visits helped the researcher to learn more about the GuRu-ceela (mother-child and teacher-disciple) system within the aRavaaNi community. Certain words peculiar to the community called kootibaSai or kabbaDi baSai (kooti “language” or kabbaDi “language”) were recognizable by the researcher and above all gaining their confidence and building a spirit of camaraderie was possible. While asking questions about the natal home, the researcher was a bit uncomfortable as it meant recollecting the happy as well as not-so-happy memories of a home that was in distance far away but very close to the heart. Inspite of that, aRavaaNiGaL patiently answered questions and cleared doubts. Some respondents, who were very shy to face the camera and answer questions, were cajoled and assured by the others who had completed answering the questions.
Spending time with them and being a quiet participant in their conversations was an experience that changed and shook many preconceived notions of the researcher about gender and sexuality. While staying in Ri. kalluppaTTi what mattered was not gender but the bonding which was priceless and friendly.

Fig. 9. paaNTiyammaaL’s mother preparing coffee for the research team

The researcher spent grueling hours transcribing and translating the recorded tapes. The laborious part of the process of the thesis was transcribing which consumed lot of time and energy. All the interviews had to be sorted out and arranged to make the dissertation-writing easier.

The third visit took place after a year in November 2009. In the period between the second and third visit, the researcher was involved in building the concept of ‘home’ and trying to connect the various coordinates of the thesis. There were many phone-calls which were made
to paaNTiyammaaL and others. Two papers titled “‘Home’ in cagkam Love Poetry” and “Displacement of niche in Su. Samuthiram’s The Third Gender” were published in Indian Journal of Ecocriticism, Vol. 2 and Scott Light: Journal of English Studies respectively. While the first paper explored the idea of ‘home’ in early tiNai poetry, the second discussed the displacement of an aRavaaNi in the novel, The Third Gender. The time was also utilized for collecting secondary materials on the concept of ‘home’ and gender. Since there were not many resource materials available in Tamil Nadu on the subject of home and gender, the researcher had to rely heavily on online journals and articles published which could be obtained by the database available in libraries. The USIS Library in ceenai was a place from whose online database, the researcher could download articles and essays useful for writing the dissertation. The bibliography was gradually built with new entries.

Since the researcher was in contact with the respondents through phone, she was informed about paaNTiyammaaL’s visit to ceenai in March 2010; this enabled another meeting with paaNTiyammaaL, her ‘daughter’ sasikala and another aRavaaNi whom the researcher had not met previously. The meeting took place in the house sasikala was staying along with aayiSa, another aRavaaNi. During this meeting the researcher clarified the doubts that had arose from transcribing the previous interviews and talks. Loose ends were sorted out and clarifications of certain unintelligible words and phrases were made. This meeting was an unexpected one and so it gave immense joy to both paaNTiyammaaL and the researcher. This was the first time the researcher met paaNTiyammaaL outside her place/region.

After meeting paaNTiyammaaL in March 2010, the following April, the researcher visited Queen’s University of Belfast as an exchange student for six weeks (mid-April to end May). The resources which could not be procured from cennai were done from McClay library
of Queen’s University. This visit was quite resourceful as there was access to many books and online journals from the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, gender and culture. The researcher was able to gain insights on the idea of home across disciplines.

The first chapter of the dissertation analyses different features of the term ‘home’ from *Oxford English Dictionary* and arrives at a comprehensive definition of home. The features extracted from the entries in *OED* are further compared with *tiNai*, *oikos*, bioregional and ecofeminist homes. After arriving at tabulation, it is found that *oikos* and *tiNai* home is the only complete home as almost all the features from *OED* are covered in *tiNai* home. Now why the concept of *tiNai* home? *tiNai* is an ancient poetic convention followed by the tamizs of the *cagkam* period. *tiNai* is not a poetic convention alone but also an alternative social order which precedes the hierarchical caste system. Furthermore the people belonging to the *tiNai* order shared a close proximity to the physical environment to which they belonged to. Their relationship with the inmates of the ‘home’ as well as the non-human entities of the land created a nexus which was spiritual as well as praxiological. So ‘home’ was not only an idea which belonged to the abstract but a concrete and tangible feature to the early tamizs. Ecocriticism is a critical theory which gives importance to the interconnectedness of the physical and non-physical entities which is long engaged with place discourses. The concepts of place, land, dwelling and home have been the focal criteria for many ecocritics. While there is a different approach to this concept from scholars belonging to different parts of the world, the Indian school of ecocriticism favours the concept of ‘home’ as a spiritual as well as a cultural one. The Greek word *oikos* which is translated as ‘household’ in English talks about ‘home’ in the same spirit as that of *tiNai* which also means ‘home’ or ‘household.’ Only when the home is in order it can facilitate nourishment, comfort and warmth to the individual. While many other studies on transgenders
discuss their sexual status through the lens of gender and culture, the present study focuses on their various homes and reasons for their impermanence of home.

While ecocriticism has actively engaged with the concept of ‘home’ in relation to tribal communities, this study departs from the arena of primal groups to alternate sexual groups like transgenders. Transgenders can be rightly classified under the subaltern group which looks at history from the lower rung of the society. Transgenders are subject to the hegemony of the dominant group of heterosexuals in the area of sexuality, postcolonial studies and other subaltern areas.

**Review of Literature**

Since there are two kinds of literature used for the purpose of this study, it is useful to divide this section into two: 1. Literature on transgenders and 2. Literature on home.

1. **Literature on transgenders**

Though the broad umbrella LGBT (Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgenders) is meant to cover the entire section of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders, the literature is usurped by gay literature which is often the only dominant section in queer studies. While gays and lesbians stand safely within the binary classification of male and female, transgenders find themselves alienated. Only in the last twenty years or so, there is an increased sighting of transgender literature in the LGBT canon. Reviewing the resources available to the researcher through online journals, books, manifestos and magazine articles, it was found that there is no dearth of literature on Transgenders in the Americas, Europe, Australia and some parts of Asia. Since the topic of alternate sexualities is looked upon as taboo, there are only few articles found
sporadically. There are few books, articles and essays in the vernacular languages but the researcher has not used them in her dissertation owing to the cumbersome act of first translating the passages and then using them. In comparison to India, countries like US, UK, Australia and certain other countries have systematic scholarship and entire departments devoted to LGBT studies — For example, Yale University, University of Berkely, California, University of Arizona, San Diego State University, Cornell University, University of Adelaide, Australia, and many others. India is yet to see exclusive departments established to study alternate sexualities and hence the availability of literature is also scarce, though scholars in some pockets are working on LGBT topics and submitting their theses to either departments of English, Sociology, Anthropology or Politics. In India though there are essays, journal articles and manifestos, they focus predominantly on LGBT rights, identities and sexualities. After the repealing of Section 377 in the Indian law, transgenders along with their gay companions have started to come out of their metaphorical closets:

On 2 July, 2009, "the Delhi High Court pronounced that Section 377 should be read down to exclude consensual sex between adults." The report states, "We declare that Section 377 IPC, insofar it criminalizes consensual sexual acts of adults in private, is violative of Articles 21, 14 and 15 of the Constitution. ("Advocacy").

But this ‘coming out’ more often happens in big cities and some second-tier cities. Many studies and activism follow the transgenders in cities who are exposed to the media and are quite savvy when it comes to interviews and talks. There is a great divide between the transwomen who live in the cities and those who are part of rural areas like the ones in this dissertation. A few books which have delved into the depth of life, culture and systems in the aRavaaNiGaL community:
Gayathri Reddy’s *With Respect to Sex: Negotiating Hijra Identity in South India* (2005) published by Yoda press talks about a *hiJRa* (Hindi for *aRavaaNi*) community living under a water tank in Hyderabad. Reddy has spent extensive time with the taagki *hiJRas* (transgenders living under the tank are referred to as taagki *hiJRas* in Reddy’s book) and documented their life, beliefs, systems, family and rituals. The book can be used as a handbook to understand the *aRavaaNiGaL* better, before attempting to stay with them and conducting a thorough research.

*Neither Man nor Woman* (1998) by Serena Nanda, Professor of Anthropology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, is a detailed ethnographic study on the *hiJRas* from many places in North India. Using their narratives along with her personal anecdotes, Nanda talks about different aspects of their life from the adoption and initiation to their personal relationships with different people. Neatly divided into ten chapters, this book gives an account of the different activities and deliberations of a *hiJRa* life. While Gayathri Reddy has focused on a group living near the railway tank in Hyderabad, Nanda chooses *hiJRas* from many places like mumbai, ahmedaabad, Delli and caaNDiGaR. Her book along with Reddy’s provides invaluable information and guidance while undertaking a dissertation of this sort.

*The Transgender Studies Reader* (2006) edited by Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle provides the reader with different problems and issues that transgendered individuals face in the Americas. The book is a thick volume which also talks about transgender rights, activism and theoretical framework of transgender studies. The book is a compilation of essays contributed by many authors out of whom many are well-known transgenders, transsexuals and lesbians/gays.

Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality*. Vols. 1 and 2 (1076, 1992) translated by Robert Hurley provides an overall general picture of sexuality. The volumes trace the
development of different kinds of sexuality and give a historical perspective to the understanding of gender and sexuality.

Among many journal articles which talk about different issues and beliefs of the transgenders, two which are quite pertinent to my area of research were Ramaswami mahaaligam’s “Essentialism, Culture, and Beliefs About Gender Among the Aravanis of Tamil Nadu, India” in the journal *Sex Roles* (New York: Nov 2003. 49. 9/10). This essay talks about the belief of the *aRavaaNiGaL* about emulating the female, as it is considered to be the most venerated form of human sensibility. In the essay, mahaaligam discusses the cultural psychology of gender by studying the beliefs of aRavaaNiGaL's on gender transformations. While mahaaligam's essay discusses the psychology of the *aRavaaNiGaL* on gender transformation, my study discusses the problematics of home, relationships and kinship after the transition from male-to-female gender. mahaaligam's essay provides an impetus into understanding the cultural psychology of the *aRavaaNiGaL* which enables the researcher to frame some vital questions for her analysis. While madurai is the place where mahaaligam's research is based, it must be understood that the *aRavaaNiGaL* in Ri. kalluppaTTi are in no way connected to the *aRavaaNiGaL* in mahaaligam's essay except for sharing the same geographical location, madurai.

Su. Samuthiram’s novel, *The Third Gender* (2002) translated by Parvathi Vasudev from tamiz to English is the story of a transwoman Noori who was the first *aRavaaNi* in tamiz *naaDu* to come out in 2001, declare her status as a male-to-female transgender and start a network for individuals who share a similar sexual orientation. The heart-rending novel traces the life of nuuRi as a boy who experiences the pains of having a male body but a female psychological set-
up. The story is also one of the first fictional works on transgenders to come out of Tamil Nadu. This book not only gives the reader a glimpse into the changes and psychological layers of a young boy who wants to become a woman but also provides vignettes of the lives led by transgenders in India.

Transgender History (2008) by Susan Stryker, as the name implies is a brief history of the transgender movement in America. Stryker is a transsexual lesbian and has the advantage of being an academic as well as an activist. She therefore is an insider who has recorded the various timelines of the transgender movement. The book starts by introducing transgender terms and concepts followed by tracing the history of transgenders over a period of hundred years. The book, though, is limited to transgenders in USA, enables the reader to deliberate similar histories in places like India.

National Folklore Support Centre (NFSC) is a non-governmental organisation which works for preserving folklore from different regions and diverse communities in India. Their extensive work on transgenders gave the researcher secondary materials to support and enhance some of her own findings related to rituals, customs and relationships within aRavaaNiGaL (“Art and Culture”).

Out in Theory: The Emergence of Lesbian and Gay Anthropology (2002), edited by Ellen Lewin and William L. Leap and published by U of Illinois P, though not confining to transgenders strictly, discusses the emergence of ethnographic studies that includes gays, lesbians with a passing mention of transgenders. This book shows how recent anthropological studies do not limit itself to tribal communities but also extends to communities of diverse sexual identities. The book, a collection of essays contains “ethnographic and theoretical questions
involved in the anthropology of alternative sexualities and gender”; this book is a good starter for the researcher grappling with subjects within the framework of alternative sexual identities.

The doctoral dissertation of Tamara Jane Sanger, Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, The Queen’s University of Belfast, entitled “Desiring Difference? Transpeople’s Intimate Partnerships and the Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality,” (2008) enabled the researcher to know about “intimate partnerships involving transpeople (both male and female), focusing upon the cultural constructions of gender, sexuality, sex, and intimacy” (Sanger 1). The narratives collected over a period of time with thirty-seven transpeople (both male-to-female and female-to-male) and their partners in the U.K. and Ireland provide a glimpse into their relationships and behavioural patterns and issues. Since this thesis was also done with transwomen, it provides many points of cross references. The extensive bibliography also helped the researcher in referring related books on the issue of transwomen and relationships.

There were many news articles that appeared in the dailies during the period of this research out of which many focussed around empowerment and other activist-centered subjects. One article from the daily Times of India, which had an entire page devoted to the issue of transgenders in Bombay, was written by Salman Rushdie. The article, written with academic eloquence, combined with personal experience, expresses how the third gender needs to be understood and accepted. The page-long write-up also includes some narratives of few lines from hiJRas living in Mumbai (Rushdie 15).

2. Literature on home
Home! A Bioregional Reader (2008), a culmination of essays centering on home and living, is edited by Van Andruss, Christopher Plant, Judith Plant and Eleanor Wright. This book which addresses the bioregional way of life is divided into five sections which cover the tenets of bioregionalism, living in place, community-living, reinhabitation and restoration and self-government. More than being academic, the essays offer practical and spiritual insight to the concept of oikos or home.

The doctoral dissertation of David J. Gauthier, entitled: “Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and the Politics of Dwelling” (2004) from Louisiana State University and Agriculture and Mechanical College, argues how dwelling is deliberated by two philosophers: Heidegger and Levinas. The author provides a systematic unfolding of the philosophers’ works in which the idea of ‘dwelling’ is discussed. Reading this work enabled the researcher to understand the different nuances that make the dwelling place.

“Home: The Tryst of the Ecocritical and the Postcolonial,” a paper by Nirmal Selvamony, as the name suggests, is a tryst between the ancient concept of tiNai and the postcolonial meandering on the nature of ‘home.’ Carefully argued, this paper builds the momentum of the concreteness of ‘home,’ with suitable references and citations from an assortment of sources. The ‘homelessness’ of the postcolonial pales in comparison with the physical and concrete ‘home’ of the tiNai dwellers. Further lending credibility to the tiNai system, Selvamony’s extension of tiNai to the Greek oikos are the essays, “Oikos as Family” and “Tinai Studies,” both from tinai 3, a slim volume by Nirmaldasan and Nirmal Selvamony, published by Persons for Alternative Social Order. Since the dissertation heavily depends on the concepts of tiNai and oikos, these two essays provided succinct material for reading and deliberating on the idea of home.
The Ethics of Homelessness: Philosophical Perspectives (1999), edited by G. John M. Abbarno, published by Rodopi, is a collection of essays which deliberate on the ethics of homelessness. An essay by Robert Ginsberg titled “Meditations on Homelessness and Being at Home: In the Form of a Dialogue,” discusses and theorises “homelessness” thereby throwing light on the idea of home. The different arguments listed for having a ‘home’ were quite helpful while building definitions of ‘home’ to be used in the dissertation. The dialogue carried on between Robert and Ginsberg (both names belonging to the same individual) touches upon essential aspects which is often taken for granted by most of the people who belong to ‘proper’ homes. An American philosopher and photographer, Ginsberg who "works on human concerns, such as war and peace, injustice and joy, oppression and love" bases his questions on home and homelessness largely from his experience which is a reflection of the Western notions and ontology of home. Part five of the book which discuses “To Have a Home: What Difference Does it Make to be Home?” consists of two essays; one by Joseph Betz and the other by Ron Scapp, both trained in the discipline of philosophy which explains the abundance of quotes from many sources like the Bible, Greek philosophy and others to validate having a ‘home’ and thereby establishing legal norms to provide ‘homes’ for the homeless. Both the essays focus on the cultural implications of home and extend the possession of home to governmental policies. The book provided an insight into the problems and issues related to home and homelessness in the Americas and some European countries and largely depended on the Greek model of home and sustenance. The contents of the book enabled the researcher to probe into the Western notions of home and policies related to providing stable homes to the citizens.

Greta Claire Gaard’s, The nature of home: Taking Root in a Place (2007) published by U of Arizona P, is a culmination of an ecofeminist’s and a bioregionalist’s notion of ‘home.’
bioregionalist’s notion of reinhabitation is explored in depth by Gaard. This book, which is also a semi-autobiographical rendition, can be seen as an ecofeminist’s view into what makes a ‘home.’

Another essay which takes up the dialogue of ‘home’ is Michael Dorris’ essay: “Home” from *The Threepenny Review* No. 54 (Summer 1993). The title which is simply ‘home,’ travels along with the writer and author in his mindscape as he narrates his experience of having been in several places and finally arrives ‘home’ in the town of Cornish in New Hampshire. Along with his personal account, the deliberations of ‘home’ and ‘place’ are deciphered by the reader.

Lee Cuba’s and David M. Hummon’s essay, “Constructing a Sense of Home: Place Affiliation and Migration across the Life Cycle” in *Sociological Forum* 8.4 (Dec., 1993) “analyzes how mobile Americans construct a sense of home through place affiliations. Based on interviews with 432 migrants to Cape Cod, Massachusetts, this research indicates that migration does not preclude an emergent sense of home but that migration at different stages of the life cycle does produce different patterns of place affiliation” (Cuba and Hummon 547).

Thomas Berry’s essay, “From The Dream of the Earth: Returning to Our Native Place” in *Learning to Listen to the Land* (1991) edited by Bill Willers engages the reader with the experience of Berry’s return to his native land after many years. Though specific places are not mentioned in the essay, through the home-coming, Berry talks about ‘home’ and its different coordinates. The essay though quite philosophical in its presentation, enables the reader to understand what ‘home’ stands for in this contemporary world. The essay enabled the researcher to grasp some insights of a philosopher when he comes home after a long hiatus and the joy he experiences being amidst the familiar plants, trees, water bodies and birds. Though the essay is from a Western point of view, the researcher was able to connect some aspects of the home-
coming to the transgenders visiting their homes after leaving the same. While Berry's homecoming is seen from a spiritual and deep-ecological standpoint, the aRaavaaNiGaL homecoming is not as same as that of Berry's.

*Indian Journal of Ecocriticism*, Vols. I and II (2008 and 2009) edited by Swarnalatha Rangarajan, contain a mine of ecocritical essays. Volume II which was an issue devoted to place provided insights into different areas connected to ‘place’ and ‘home.’ These essays gave a theoretical base to the understanding of the concept ‘home.’

*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology* (1996), edited by Harold Fromm and Cheryll Glotfelty, one of the oldest and critical books in the study of Ecocriticism, grapples with applying critical concepts and ideas to the study of literature through the lens of ecology and the environment. The book provides a comprehensive range of titles and subjects which is essential to the understanding of Ecocriticism as a critical theory. Particularly, the chapter titled, “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place and the Pathetic Fallacy” by Neil Evernden was of significance to the present study as he dialogues the nexus between person, place and environment.

**Scope and Limitation of Research**

The scope of the study should be seen in the light of the social, political and cultural identity of aRaavaaNiGaL. The community has been ridiculed and oppressed for centuries. Studying such a topic is legitimizing and accepting the very existence of the community. The social recognition and respect that the community in tamiz naaDu* receives in this research attempt is invaluable. Another aspect of this study that needs mention, is the wider scope of it in the Department of English. Literary canons have changed to the extent that studies like folklore,
oral literature or narratives are part of English studies, thus bringing it from a global level to local, which is one of the features of ecocriticism.

The present study will provide a new dimension to gender studies by specifically dealing with transgenders and their ‘homes.’ Previous studies on transgenders evolve around the politics of gender and sexuality, queer theory, genetic make-up and deconstruction of established binaries of male and female. This study is a value-addition to the already existing general body of literature on transgenders by looking at their problems by connecting the ‘home’ and its nuances.

The critical theory of ecocriticism, which privileges relationship to a place as the most vital and primordial, is challenged and critiqued in the thesis. One of the concerns of this critical theory is the ‘home’ of an individual. The affiliation with multiple homes, which becomes a problem for the aRavaaNiGaL is examined in detail thus adding to the idea of ‘oikos’ and ‘home.’ When it is but natural to study primal communities in relation to ‘home’ and ‘place,’ this dissertation will move away and explore individuals with an alternate sexual identity in relation to ‘home’ and ‘community.’

Place-based topics like topophilia made popular by Yi-Fu Tuan, examines love of a particular place but this study’s focus is on the ‘home’ of an individual which includes place but does not limit itself to it alone. The connection between places and transgenders is an area which can be further explored. Since the transgenders travel to many places in their life-time after coming out of their homes, one can probe into the different places and their relation to them. Though the study enables one to understand the construct of home for aRavaaNiGaL, there are many areas which can be dealt in specificity to obtain a greater understanding of aRavaaNiGaL.
and their relationship to their land. Linguistic studies of the use of certain words and phrases along with the local language by the aRavaaNiGaL can be studied in detail, thus contributing to the already existing literature on aRavaaNiGaL in India.

Ecopsychology, a study which is connected to ecocriticism, could be another focus for studying the mentalscape of aRavaaNiGaL. While studies on feminism also centre on psychology, not much importance has been given to transgenders in this branch of study. This research can further enable the study of the transgenders and determine whether their environment and other factors contribute to their sexual identity.

A complete study on the system followed by aRavaaNiGaL and the history of their customs and practices can be carried out. Though that topic would make it a fertile one for sociology and anthropology, it can nevertheless be studied ecocritically as well. This community system can be compared with certain other matriarchal tribal communities from the southern and other parts of India and other countries.

The present study focuses on transgenders in a small town in southern India but northern India is known for a vast majority of hiJRa population. A comparative study on the different systems followed by transgenders in the north and south could be worth attempting. While the transgender population in the north and certain other parts of west and central India are considered auspicious, the ones in the south are ridiculed and ostracized by the mainstream society. This demarcation is something that the transgenders in the south lament and complain about more often. This change, according to geographical locations could be connected to place and popular mythology of people. This kind of a study will not only add to the body of transgender literature coming from India but also from other countries.
Intimacy and personal relations are part of any community or household and transgenders are no different. Though this study talks about ‘home,’ a separate study undertaken for understanding the intimate relationships in the transgender community in south as well as north India will again facilitate the gender studies and sociology canon. Furthermore, while *oikos* talks of the family, particularly a ‘heterosexual’ couple in reference to the household it would be interesting to know and understand as to what the Greeks had to say of transgenders, homosexuals and intersexed individuals when it came to the family and the interrelation to the land. While Greek literature has many references to homosexuals, hermaphrodites and even transgenders, they were shown as part of the Greek social setup and not in relation to the land and the homestead.

This dissertation will contain six chapters. The chapters are listed below, followed by a brief description of the contents of each:

Chapter 1: Conceptualising the idea of home

This chapter analyses six entries of home from Oxford English Dictionary and extracts thirty-four senses from them. From the thirty-four senses, thirteen features of home are further extracted. The thirteen features are used to determine the bioregional, *tiNai*, *oikos* and ecofeminist homes.

Chapter 2: Homes of *aRavaaNiGaL*

This chapter identifies five homes associated with *aRavaaNiGaL*. They are the following:

1. Natal home (NH)
2. Natal *kooti* home (NKH)
3. First *kooti* home (1KH)
4. Sub *kooti* home (SKH) and

5. Second *kooti* home (2KH)

Chapter 3: Natal Home and Natal *kooti* home (NH & NKH)

This chapter discusses the natal homes of six *aravaNiGaL* namely paaNTiyammaaL, sasikala, SailaJa, amala, vaasuki and maitili and natal *kooti* home of one *aravaaNi*, paaNTiyammaaL.

Chapter 4: First *kooti* Home (1KH) and Sub *kooti* Home (SKH)

This chapter will discuss the 1KH of six *aravaaNiGaL* and SKH of one *aravaaNi* namely sasikala. The features of home that have been elicited in Chapter 1 are used to analyse the features present (or rather absent) in 1KH of *aravaaNiGaL*.

Chapter 5: Second *kooti* Home (2KH)

The chapter illustrates the lives of *aravaaNiGaL* once they leave their 1KH and migrate to bigger cities and establish another home known as 2KH. The 2KH of two such *aravaaNiGaL* will be discussed in detail.

Chapter 6: The homes of an *aravaaNi* and *tiNai* home: A comparison

The homes of *aravaaNiGaL* discussed in the previous chapter is compared and contrasted with *tiNai* home. It also draws out the reasons for the homes of *aravaaNiGaL* to be incomplete while *tiNai* home is complete in all aspects.

Note on age, usage of gender pronoun and certain words and other information:

1. The researcher has used the specific term *aravaaNi* (singular) and *aravaaNiGaL* (plural), throughout this dissertation, which is the tamiz translation of the generic term ‘male-to-female-transgender.’ Since the umbrella term ‘transgender’ can be applied to
male-to-female transgender as well as female-to-male transgender, the researcher has refrained from using the term except in select places where it is absolutely necessary. Though the word transgender and *hiJRa* may also be used in some places, the standard word used would be *aRavaaNi*.

2. **Usage of gender:** Since the *aRavaaNi* sees herself as a ‘woman’ it is imperative for the researcher to use the personal pronoun ‘she’ while referring to the *aRavaaNi*, except when the *aRavaaNi* is referred to the time prior to the emasculation operation. Contrary to the norm, maitili and vaacuki who have not done the emasculation operation are referred to as ‘she’ respecting their demand and wish to be referred to as women.

3. The word ‘operation’ is used in the dissertation to refer to the emasculation operation. Though the correct word to be used in this context would be ‘surgery,’ the researcher has made use of the word ‘operation’ as the *aRavaaNiGaL* call it so.

4. **Age:** The age as given by the respondents in most cases is likely to be inaccurate as they don’t know their age or they are giving an age based on assumption.

5. The non-English words are italicized and transliterated. Please follow the pronunciation key to read those words.

6. The respondents who were interviewed are the ones who have relationship with paaNTiyammaaL, either by way of a daughter, granddaughter or granddaughter’s daughter in the *aRavaaNi* community.
7. While we could get the interviews of some of the parents of aRavaaNiGaL, we weren’t able to talk to most of them as they did not like being interviewed or the aRavaaNiGaL have severed connection with their parental home.

8. The parenthetical documentation of the interviews quoted in the dissertation follow a specific method. Each interview in the Appendix is numbered question wise. Please follow the name and number in the parenthesis (wherever applicable) and refer in the Appendix.

Chapter 1

Conceptualising the idea of home