Chapter V

CONSEQUENCES OF AGRARIAN CHANGE
1. INDICES OF AGRARIAN DEVELOPMENT

It is generally agreed that agrarian change leads to economic development. A number of indices may be used to measure agrarian change. They are extensive and intensive cultivation, increase in production, growth in per capita income and per capita consumption, employment generation, diversification of economic activity, distribution of income, etc., which lead to economic development of the nation in general and the region in particular. The economic benefits of agrarian change caused structural and institutional changes and political and cultural development, leading to modernization of traditional society. The material benefits resulting from the use of modern agrarian practices percolated even to the lowest layer of the society. Increasing practice of scientific agricultural method changed the traditional pattern of production. Increased production of cereals enhanced the per capita income of not only landlords and tenants but also the labouring masses. Further this ensures greater participation of agricultural groups in making decisions about the directions, economic and otherwise, in which they should move to improve their welfare.¹

Tanjore eminently fits as a region whose economic development is chiefly caused by irrigation projects. The construction of Mettur Dam stimulated the regional economy through many ways. They are:

1. New capital investment in land development, farm machinery and irrigation equipments.
(2) The purchase of additional variable inputs, generating additional employment.

(3) Increasing production demands a proportionate increase in transportation facilities.²

(4) Improvement in transport has facilitated rapid economic diversification and income distribution.

(5) Economic growth of the region has led to a continuous expansion of not only real regional income but also real per capita income.

Improvement in physical quality of life is the actual indicator of economic growth of any region. This is reflected through an increase in literacy, life expectancy and a decrease in infant mortality. An intensive agriculture consequent on an expansion and improvement of irrigation facilities in Tanjore inevitably led to the development of primary, secondary and tertiary sectors. Improvement in irrigation also led to the maximum utilization of land in the region as is seen from the table below:
Table - 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
<td>Per cent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total geographical area</td>
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<td>Forest</td>
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<td>12855</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Barren and uncultivable land</td>
<td>31205</td>
<td>31781</td>
<td>32185</td>
<td>36277</td>
<td>33313</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>4.4</td>
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<td>Land put to non-agricultural use</td>
<td>206103</td>
<td>191101</td>
<td>193983</td>
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<td>Cultivable waste</td>
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<td>42938</td>
<td>27933</td>
<td>18357</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
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<td>2.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permanent pastures and grazing lands</td>
<td>5264</td>
<td>6351</td>
<td>6369</td>
<td>4185</td>
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<td>.6</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.7</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misc. tree crops and groves</td>
<td>20420</td>
<td>34734</td>
<td>32120</td>
<td>18373</td>
<td>6986</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current follows</td>
<td>51151</td>
<td>27815</td>
<td>24469</td>
<td>16538</td>
<td>33457</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>4.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other follows</td>
<td>35796</td>
<td>34317</td>
<td>23711</td>
<td>12783</td>
<td>23995</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.7</td>
<td>3.0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Net area sown</td>
<td>568090</td>
<td>586361</td>
<td>613365</td>
<td>556107</td>
<td>529795</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>63.3</td>
<td>67.7</td>
<td>64.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area sown more than once</td>
<td>109998</td>
<td>183668</td>
<td>268940</td>
<td>339911</td>
<td>280383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>27.8</td>
<td>41.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total cropped area</td>
<td>678088</td>
<td>770029</td>
<td>882305</td>
<td>896018</td>
<td>810178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>70.00</td>
<td>79.52</td>
<td>91.12</td>
<td>109.10</td>
<td>98.59</td>
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The table shows that the net area sown in Tanjore rose from 568090 hectares in 1950 – 51 to 613365-lakh hec. in 1970 – 71. In 1980 – 81 the net cultivated area came down. This was the result of bifurcation of Pudukkottai district from Tanjore in 1976. More than a lakh hec. of fertile area became part of Pudukkottai. However, there was marked increase of cultivated land. In 1950 – 51 it was 58.7 per cent. It increased to 64.5 per cent in 1989 – 90. The area sown more than once also increased from 109998 hec. in 1950 – 51 to 2,80,383 lakh hec. in 1989-90. The optimum area of 339911 hec. sown more than once constituted 41.4 per cent in 1980 – 81. The table also makes it clear that there was a gradual reduction in the area of cultivable wasteland in Tanjore.

Thanks to the extension of irrigation facilities, the district could raise a variety of crops in more areas as is seen from the table shown below.

Table - 19

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Paddy</td>
<td>511985</td>
<td>573765</td>
<td>619878</td>
<td>626269</td>
<td>475833</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>2195</td>
<td>1246</td>
<td>1939</td>
<td>2086</td>
<td>949</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ragi</td>
<td>3212</td>
<td>3186</td>
<td>1728</td>
<td>868</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red gram</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>414</td>
<td>606</td>
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<tr>
<td>Green gram</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62147</td>
<td>49848</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black gram</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>85515</td>
<td>127751</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sugarcane</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>3752</td>
<td>5720</td>
<td>8129</td>
<td>19968</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other food crops</td>
<td>104265</td>
<td>95016</td>
<td>140828</td>
<td>17650</td>
<td>28707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total food crops</td>
<td>622742</td>
<td>677080</td>
<td>770703</td>
<td>803078</td>
<td>703662</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gingilly</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>192</td>
<td>28806</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Groundnut</td>
<td>3333</td>
<td>3376</td>
<td>15147</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>35789</td>
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<tr>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1580</td>
<td>3852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>611</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coconut</td>
<td>252</td>
<td>4143</td>
<td>720</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>24605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chillies</td>
<td>2231</td>
<td>2090</td>
<td>1899</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>337</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other non-food crops</td>
<td>48776</td>
<td>82449</td>
<td>93714</td>
<td>89254</td>
<td>12849</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total non-food crops</td>
<td>55346</td>
<td>92949</td>
<td>112202</td>
<td>92940</td>
<td>106716</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total food and non-food crops</td>
<td>678088</td>
<td>770029</td>
<td>882305</td>
<td>896018</td>
<td>810378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


According to the table, the area under food and non-food crops increased from 678088 hec. in 1950 – 51 to 8,10,378 hec. in 1989 – 90. Food crops also accounted for an increase of 80920 hect. Another important feature of agrarian change was that quite a large extent of land came under double cropping. In 1950 – 51 only 63568 hec. of land could be brought under double cropping. But in 1970 – 71 the district could boast of bringing 140969 hec. under double cropping. River irrigation is the mainstay of the agrarian economy of Tanjore. But the role played by tube wells and filter points in accelerating extensive cultivation in the district could not be underestimated. With the help of above facilities, the peasants in certain regions of Tanjore successfully raised triple and some times even four crops a year. Myrdal
rightly observes that rise in production in South Asia is due more to expansion of cultivated area rather than rise in yield rate.\(^5\)

Integrated Agricultural Development Programme (IADP) was intended to increase food production in the country. Tanjore farmers were fortunate in receiving the benefit of IAD Programme right from its inception. This programme envisaged optimum production through mechanization, use of fertilizers, pesticides, etc. As the only region selected for experimenting the IAD Programme in Tamilnadu, all steps were taken to create a network of centers for the easy distribution of agricultural inputs to the peasants for effective cultivation. With the help of demonstrations and extension programmes farmers were made to understand the techniques of new cultivation methods to increase production. Labour consuming weed control methods practiced by the agriculturists of Tanjore prior to the introduction of IADP were replaced by scientific methods involving machines and chemicals. These methods were found to be effective and cheap, thereby helping the peasants to reduce the cost of production.

Mechanisation of agriculture became an inseparable part of IAD Programme. Within a short period, Tanjore peasants became accustomed to ploughing their lands with the help of machines. Agricultural operators had become so mechanised that the wooden plough had become a rare thing in Tanjore. Japanese method of cultivation was adopted by a large number of peasants in Tanjore. In 1958-59 there were only 1,05,023 hec. of land put under Japanese method; but within one year it was increased to 144643.\(^6\)
To encourage intensification of agriculture, the government took serious efforts to supply improved high yielding paddy seeds suitable for Tanjore. For the easy means of distribution of seeds and other agricultural implements to the farmers, the district was divided into four agricultural zones. They were Tanjore, Kumbakonam, Mayuram and Pudukkotai. In 1955, 372 tonnes of improved paddy seeds were distributed to the peasants. Within ten years the supply of seeds reached the level of 13,000 tonnes by which 60,800 tonnes of additional food grains were produced. The quest for higher production resulted in the establishment of research institutes at Kattuthottam, Aduthurai, Pattukkottai and Orathanad. According to the statistical Abstract Report of 1968–69, the distribution of improved seed varieties had increased to 41804 tonnes.

Raising of crops with improved seeds made application of chemical fertilizers a compelling necessity. Hence the government came forward to extend its help to the farmers by creating network of fertilizer distribution centres throughout the district. These centres supplied 1,42,680 metric tonnes of fertilizers, 29961 liquid tonnes of pesticides and necessary know how to the farmers. To meet the excessive demand of fertilizers and pesticides, a large number of private dealers came forward to set-up distribution centres in the district. According to Agricultural Data Bank’s Report of Tanjore, there were 137 agricultural depots and 435 private fertilizer dealers spread over the district.
Extensive and intensive agriculture required an increasing amount of financial assistance. The Co-operative Credit System, which was in operation since 1904 could have solved the financial problem of the peasant community. But this was not possible, because co-operative credit system was not properly organised in the pre-independent period. So the farmers had no other way than getting money from the local moneylenders at high rate of interest.

The co-operative banking system was revitalized since independence. The new system with two wings of co-operative credit structures met the financial needs of the peasants. They were Central Co-operative Banks and the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). While the Central Co-operative Banks offer medium and long-term loans, the PACS distribute short-term loans to agriculturists. The societies continued to supply short-term credit to agriculturists in the district for seasonal agricultural operations. Statistical Atlas of Tanjore indicates that there were one Central Co-operative Bank and nine Primary Agricultural Credit Societies in 1940 – 41. Since the introduction of scientific methods, the district has two Central Co-operative Banks, one at Tanjore and another at Kumbakonam. There were 1160 PACS in 1960-61. This number further increased to 2170 in 1990-91. According to Socio-Economic Review Report of 1988-89, the Central Co-operative Banks advanced loan amounting to Rs. 2828.12 lakhs in the same year.

Government of Tamilnadu extended loan facilities to solve the seasonal financial needs through Land Development Banks (LDB). There are 9 LD
Banks in Tanjore with the working capital of 1130.21 lakh rupees. These banks disbursed Rs. 1109.07 lakh as agricultural loan to the farmers. Apart from the LD Banks, 8272 small and marginal farmers and 2529 landless agricultural labourers were benefited by various schemes coming under the Integrated Rural Development Programme. (IRDB). National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development (NABARD) and all nationalized banks also provide loan facilities to improve the economic condition of agrarian masses. An important effect of the programme was that increased availability of credit helped to reduce the market rate of interest. Another good effect was that it provided easy means of repayment. Gradually, it assured a more positive rate of preventing exploitation of moneylenders.

All these facilities helped agriculturists to increase paddy production. Season and Crop Report of Tamilnadu for 1950 – 51 states that the production of paddy was 910010 tonnes in the district. However, the production came down to 8,86,900 tonnes in 1960- 61. Inadequate rainfall and the lack of interest shown by the agriculturists to adopt scientific agricultural methods could be attributed as the reasons for the drop in production. But the situation began to change when the agriculturists evinced a keen interest in adopting new methods of agriculture in the subsequent years. As a result, paddy production for the whole district increased. Yield per acre also increased. This is evident from the Statistical Abstract of Tamilnadu for the year 1990 – 91. The paddy production in Tanjore increased to 1506820 tonnes with the highest yield rate of 3100 kg per hectare.
Protected irrigation facilities, introduction of improved high yielding seed varieties, application of fertilizers, etc., helped to produce a surplus. According to the report on marketed surplus of paddy and principal millets in Tamilnadu for the year 1987 – 88 in Tanjore, there were 16.4 per cent of surplus among marginal cultivators. But out of the total production of 24.6 per cent, the small cultivators produced 22.4 per cent, medium cultivators produced 24.5 per cent and big cultivators had 36.7 per cent as surplus. This surplus was disposed off in towns with the involvement of wholesalers, retailers and commission agents. Immediately after harvest hundreds of paddy merchants roamed around villages and purchased paddy at low rates on cash payment. In the absence of proper marketing facilities, peasants were at mercy of private profiteers. Hence the government came forward to protect the interest of agriculturists by opening regulated marketing committees in the district to enable them to sell their products at reasonable rates. This system also helped to minimize the interference of commission agents.

Marketing Committees continued to gain popularity among the agriculturists. Good storage facilities are available in the district to safeguard agricultural products from seasonal hazards. Both the Centre and State Warehousing Corporation and Tamilnadu Civil Supplies Corporation (TNCSC) have large storage capacity, not only in the district headquarters but also in taluk centres. Their relative success is evident from the fact that the quantity of paddy sold through this markets continued to increase from year to year. In 1970 – 71, there were 23 marketing committees through which 288 tonnes of
paddy was purchased from the agriculturlists. The number of marketing committees increased to 29 in 1990 - 91 and they could purchase 7449 tonnes of paddy. The committee also helped the farmers in getting remunerative prices. The following table shows the annual average retail prices of paddy and rice per quintal (100 kilogram) in terms of rupees in Tanjore.

Table - 20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Paddy</th>
<th>Rice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1950 - 51</td>
<td>09.08</td>
<td>11.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 - 61</td>
<td>41.35</td>
<td>53.51</td>
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<tr>
<td>1970 - 71</td>
<td>52.21</td>
<td>80.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 - 81</td>
<td>195.45</td>
<td>231.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 - 90</td>
<td>257.02</td>
<td>355.28</td>
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</table>


The average price of paddy per quintal as shown by the Season and Crop Report for the year 1950 - 51 was Rs. 09.8. Rice cost Rs. 11.77. By 1989 - 90 one quintal of paddy secured an average of Rs. 257.02 and rice was sold at Rs. 355.28. Government's role in fixing the support price of paddy and rice helped in keeping the prices at a remunerative level. It also facilitated in maintaining the market prices, free from adverse fluctuation, artificially created by private merchants. This price advantage promoted further interest in agricultural production.
Hence, big landlords were compelled to sell out their surplus land and concentrate only on limited area cultivation. The sell out sum could be invested on more profit oriented agro-based industries. Small and marginal farmers in view of their better economic condition consequent on the adoption of new methods of cultivation came forward to purchase the alienated lands. A large number of farmers invested their money on bore wells and tube-wells to ensure uninterrupted supply of water to raise different crops. As the modernization process picked up momentum, farmers invested their money on tractors, diesel engines, electric engines, harvesters, crushers, etc. As external vigilance was the prime requisite of peasants to achieve a high yield, they had to concentrate on the use of fertilizers, weedicides and pesticides.

Land and labour articulated with agricultural production. The introduction of GR ushered in a phase of agricultural modernisation. There had been a steady stream of technological improvements contributing to higher yields. The advances made in chemical fertilizers technology played a vital role in increasing crop production. The advent of cost reducing technologies had led to the rapid expansion of tube-well irrigation. The overall process of growth widened the labour markets in agriculture.  

The growth of productivity per unit of land offsets the effect of diminished holding size. This effect is not complete, more and more of small-marginal holdings find it necessary to supplement their income from land by hiring out their labour for wages. Wage labour is also getting increasingly casualised due to intensification of land use. Mechanisation and the weakening...
power of employers to control labour through social ties have probably also contributed to it.\textsuperscript{27} Though the HYV technology initially spread faster among the larger farmers, in course of time it came to be adopted practically by all classes. It has brought down the differences in the level of adoption as well as the intensity of input use. The rapid spread of mechanisation did affect to some extent the employment potential of the agricultural labourers and the overall employment elasticity in agriculture. It has been relatively increased in the rural farm and non-farm sectors. Public expenditures on both normal development programmes and on poverty alleviation have also contributed to the improvement in the economic condition of agriculturists. The nature of the rural-urban linkages in respect of labour market had also changed. In particular, the incidence of workers, residing in villages commuting to work to nearby towns had increased.\textsuperscript{28}

Extensive and intensive cultivation led to increase in labour requirements. In spite of the fact that modernization of agricultural practices involving large-scale application of machines, agricultural labourers were not rendered surplus. Because, the agrarian economy was more intensified and a large number of labouring masses were attracted towards secondary sectors. As a result of labour migration to towns and shift towards other non-farm sectors, labourers demand remained high. It made them to demand for higher wages. They justified their demand for higher wages in view of increased production from land and shortage of labourers. However, wages paid to agrestic labourers in Tanjore were found to be inadequate and uneven. Though
in some areas higher wages were paid in general labourers continued to be exploited by big landowners. Hence the labourers continuously demanded higher wages with the help of labour unions. When the landlords refused to accept their demand, problem arose between the landlords and labourers. Hence, the government stepped in by introducing legislative measures to fix minimum wages with a view to providing a reasonable standard of living to the working class. The following table shows the average wages paid to agricultural and other labourers of Tanjore from 1950-51 to 1989-90.

Table - 21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Agricultural Labourers</th>
<th>Other Agricultural Labourers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Field men</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>F</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950 - 51</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960 - 61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970 - 71</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980 - 81</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1989 - 90</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Rupees, Anna & Paise

** Rupees and Paise


The agricultural labourers in Tanjore got higher wages than the state average. However, fluctuation of wages was common. Some times labourers
received more wages than the average due to work on contract basis during peak seasons. In non-peak seasons when supply of labour far exceeded of the demand, labourers had to satisfy with lower wages. Kataria states that maximum generation of employment opportunities along with increase in labour productivity are not only required for sustained growth but also equitable growth and removal of poverty. Employment generation and enhanced labour productivity are linked with product market or effective demand. Employment generation in agriculture helped to improve the economic condition of the labourers. Increasing income brought about a change in the consumption pattern of the rural poor. The result was that there was an ever-increasing demand for food grains from the labourers. In the past they were almost on the verge of starvation due to lack of work and poor wages.

Agricultural development programmes normally increase the welfare of large proportion of the population of low-income groups. It is because agricultural production usually took place on the large number of separate management units, which include a high proportion of total population. The landless labour group would also feel the benefits of agricultural development because technological inputs create greater employment opportunities for hired labourers. New non-farm job opportunities provide avenues for the labourers to improve their economic conditions.

Consequent on modernization, agriculture and allied sectors absorbed a significant portion of labour force in Tanjore. It must be recognised that agriculture and other land based activities and a possible diversification may
provide employment to all the rural workers. Moreover, technological and
organisational changes are needed for a desired level of agricultural growth.
There is a likelihood of many people depending upon traditional agriculture
seeking jobs elsewhere. Some of these unemployed persons found
remunerative jobs from migration to urban areas. Agro-based industries to a
certain extent absorbed the rural work force, which involved diversification of
rural economy. The penetration of rural economy into urban areas would not
only meet the employment requirements of the fast rising work force, but also
reduce the wide disparities between rural and urban areas.

Agricultural growth resulted in the establishment of many agro-based
businesses. Agencies for the distribution of agricultural implements and other
allied items were established in the district. According to the 1981 census, in
the distribution of factories and average number of casual workers and
permanent workers per factory, Tanjore district stands tenth in the state. There
were 346 factories including 189 manufacturing food products and 20
workshops rendering repair services employing in an average of 30 casual
workers and 44 permanent workers per factory. The Tanjore District Census
Hand Book of 1981 shows that in all 10,245 casual and 15164 permanent
workers were employed in these manufacturing industries in the district. They
formed 1.82 per cent and 2.16 per cent of the total casual and permanent
workers respectively of the state as a whole.

Tanjore for centuries remained as a zone specialised in paddy
production. But in the 1980s the peasants of Tanjore have shown keen interest
in raising cereals and pulses and non-food and cash crops like cotton and sugarcane. This shift in crop option created more job opportunities to the rural population besides offering economic benefits to the peasants.

Increasing production of food, non-food and cash crops created pressure on the existing system of transport and communication calling for improvement of roads. Roads provide necessary linkage between the villages and towns or cities. In 1950-51 the total mileage of *pucca* roads in the district was only 2760. It had increased to 4692 miles in 1990 – 91. Increased road facilities had a direct impact on improvement in communication. Increasing transport through tractors, lorries, bullocks-carts, etc., created a widened and quick distribution system in the rural areas. In 1989 – 90 there were 1,746 vehicles used to transport goods in the district. With good transport system it became easy for the agriculturists to set the necessary inputs not only very quickly but also at reasonable costs. Transporting their produce also became easy for them. Incidentally construction of roads, operation of buses, lorries, etc., offered jobs to many rural masses, otherwise engaged in agrestic works.

Blessed by the river Cauvery, Tanjore has been the rice bowl of Tamilnadu from time immemorial. From the days of King Karikala who is said to have constructed the Grand Anicut, several attempts have been made to check the fury of the river. Through channels water from the river has been diverted to lands in remote villages of the district. Mettur dam provided the agriculturists of Tanjore an insured supply of water with which many areas were converted into double cropping zones. Since independence the
Government of India took many steps to augment food production in the country. Introduction of GR in the country was one such step taken by the government to achieve self-sufficiency in food production. Tanjore in Tamilnadu was the first to receive the benefits of GR. GR brought about a massive change not only in the agrarian pattern but also in the economic condition of Tanjore.

2. SOCIAL IMPACT

Economic development caused by agrarian change made a deep impact on the society of Tanjore. Expansion in irrigation and application of new technology in agriculture helped to maximize the returns. The direct, secondary and tertiary effects of this agrarian change embraced all sections of the society, including the urban population. However, the most important consequence of agrarian change was the redistribution of assets and wealth, which had contributed immensely to the arrival of freedom from economic servitude. Since there is a overlap between economy and society, the economic effects of agrarian change did affect the regional social system and its appended institutions. Traditional ascriptive roles, values, status and rights were being replaced by achieved ones. Consequently, every one irrespective of traditional status began to play a participatory role in political and social affairs. Socio-economic transformation also made an impact on traditional cultural pattern. Thus the agrarian change and its economic consequences influenced the society, polity and cultural traits.
i. Structural change

Tradition determined social hierarchy, exhibited in the form of caste, class and power was the first to face serious challenge from the changing agrarian situation. The upper castes with control over land decided the local economy, and influenced the village administration. Political and ritual rights were also distributed on the basis of hierarchical social arrangement. The nexus between caste, class and power was so deep that everything social - status, class hierarchy and power distribution - was made according to one's position in the differentiated caste order. It was unacceptable for a man of low caste to be seen acting in a manner reserved for the high castes and in most areas it was unacceptable for labouring and other dependent groups even to own land. Distance pollution was strictly enforced and the lower traits were not allowed to enter caste Hindu settlements. Very strict rules on dress, ornaments, etc., were prescribed on them. They were under many social taboos. Till the 19th century, caste played a dominant role in almost all areas of social life, reflecting the features of feudalism.

However, there is remarkable change in the caste system of Tanjore region today. Though the structure of caste remains constant, its appendages have to witness transformative changes. Positional change in the class order and redistribution of land and related merits, including wealth played a determinant role in the process. When land entered the market, the class system became fluid and with it the land based power distribution pattern was opened to challenge. With a shift in the power structure and class fluidity the caste
system with its rigid structures has to underwent changes. Land redistribution and resultant changes in the ownership pattern did affect the feudal structure, rights and role distribution pattern. Consequently the Tanjore society exhibited changes, manifested in the form of new status, values, norms, roles and symbols. The whole social fabric is transcending from tradition to modernity.

In the process of agrarian development, most of the Brahmin families, as they were lured by lucrative jobs, became absentee landlords. Educational requirements, employment opportunities in government sector as well as non-farm activities forced them to settle in towns. They were unable to exercise their hereditary rights over land due to their geographic isolation and absence of effective communication system. This situation encouraged tenants fraud, which affected the interests of Brahmin landowners, who already suffered much due to the increasing cost of cultivation. Moreover due to high demand of city life and investment in education and other fields, they had to dispose their land in part or whole. When, thus land entered the market, the tenant and labouring classes mostly the Kallars and Vanniyars, with their capital at their disposal could invest on land and thus became landowners.

Decline of trade and income from village industries, owing to the unhealthy competition from colonial traders and manufacturers made a sizable section of native traders and rural craftsmen to shift towards agriculture. They invested their capital on land and thus formed into a new landowning class. The emergence of cash wages and increasing labour demand for agricultural production and related works and employment generation in the Public Works
Department placed the agrestic labourers in a favourable capital position. The kind wages in the form of harvested grains were sufficient to meet their low consumption requirements, while the cash wages were kept under reserve. This small capital reserve was invested on land and thus they also became owners of small plots in slow process. The Brahmin model of absentee landlordism was now extended to sizable number of Vellalas and they were forced by situation to part with substantial portion of their traditional estates. This marketable land also reached the agrarian masses in a stage-by-stage process – from mortgage to outright purchase and from the tenant classes to the labourers. These developments certainly affected the structures of the traditional caste-class system.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, traditional caste structure began to lose its validity due to enhanced economic position of the lower traits and consequent change in the class formation. This situation goes in agreement with Jetley’s contention that major shift in economic organization is followed by changes in social institutions.\(^40\) It is more apparent in Kumbakonam, an important centre of Brahmanical dominance, than in any other place in the district. Here Brahmins lost their land control in their quest for getting employment opportunities in non-farm sectors. They sold their lands to Kallars and Vanniyars, the prominent peasant castes of the region. Incidentally this land transfers paved the way for the Kallars and Vanniayrs to assert their social dominance in this area.\(^41\) Their control over land improved their economic position, which in turn activated status consciousness. What is said of
Kumbakonam is true to the other delta areas of Tanjore region. Such status anxiety or assertiveness on the part of peasant castes has been a common feature in India.

The consequences of agrarian development made an impact on the status of agricultural labourers of this region. Intensive cultivation made agricultural labourers more casualised and it induced their liberalizing mindset. Initially, the casual labourers fought for meaningful wages. Later, due to their effective bargaining power during peak seasons, and an increase in annual workdays in form sector their economic condition improved considerably. With it, there was an urge for social mobility among the lower strata. They did not lag behind in asserting their social power and status. Thorner asserts that land transfers in favour of cultivators will check the concentration of power. Thus mobility interest set the trend towards change in the feudalistic social set up of Tanjore at large.

The impact of the change in the existing caste class-relations did affect the caste based ascriptive status, rights and roles. The rigidity of social laws, segregation and discrimination were affected by the changes effected in the mode of production. Brahmins and other traditional landholding castes lost their social power as a sequence to their declining control over land. They could not enforce feudal practices, since feudalism slowly was disappearing from the regional socio-economic matrix. Economic freedom granted by the change in the ownership pattern, affected the social character of the region. Feudal rights and obligations met with stiff resistance and the society is
marching towards a new equilibrium. The trend has weakened the caste system and made it much more fluid.

This systemic change is marked in role change, declining importance of feudal norms and institutionalised practices, alteration in social custom and manners. The value system too went through a process of change, exhibited in inter-caste and intra-caste relations. The old type of disabilities lost validity with the weakening of sanction laws, established to retain the discriminatory social arrangement. Inhibitory laws, taboos and feudal mores are being protested and social proscription and prescription are relentlessly resisted, demonstrating the assertiveness of the lower traits for a positive change in their ascriptive position, status and roles. Their assertiveness is expressed in the matter of dress, ornaments, speech form, settlement pattern, imitation, claim over public utilities, assets holding and use of all those denied to them by tradition. Sharda argues that wealth is a necessary condition for social mobility. Mobility interest in the agrarian society of Tanjore is felt more between the tenant and marginalized categories. Their positional change in the class system and consequent improvement in the economic position created social awareness and consciousness of identity. The supportive role of constitutional safeguards and protective legislations also encouraged their social expectation. The Untouchability (Prevention) Act of 1955 and the Tenants and Pannaiyal Protection Act of Tanjore, 1952 are the examples to cite the supplementary role of law in favouring the mobility interest. Other factors that affected the situation were improving educational skill, caste solidarity
cemented through caste organisations, ideological support and leadership extended by the left parties and the extension of political democracy, which provided the working class with political power in the form of vote bank, sufficient enough to threaten the fortunes of political parties. Relative deprivation and the concept of social justice activated their mobility interest and accelerated the process of social change in the regional context of Tanjore.

Class-consciousness has become visible in the hitherto caste conscious social system. Agrarian society of Tanjore was composed of different classes such as landlords, tentants and landless labourers. Service and servile classes were also part and parcel of the agrarian setup. Till the end of 19th century class structure was rigid and class-consciousness among the labour classes was almost absent. Though the colonial government was interested in promoting the agrarian situation, it was very careful in maintaining the traditional class structure intact.45

The survey conducted by Agricultural Economics and Research Centre, Madras indicates the weakening of operational landholdings in Tanjore. The organization made a sample survey in Tanjore twice in 1967–68 and 1984–85. It claims that the average size of the operational holdings had declined by 17.2 percent from 3.19 hectares to 2.64 hectares. The decrease in the size of operational holding of pure owners was 22.9 per cent and for the owner-cum tenants, the decrease was 11.8 per cent. On the other hand, the tenants had increased their operational holdings by 17.2 per cent.47 It
demonstrates the fact that ownership rights had been distributed over a relatively wider section.

Increasing instances of landownership and land transfers irrespective of caste position altered the existing class structures. Bose concludes that property alienation and new production relations affect caste relations and serve the ascriptive relation between caste and class.48 Land transfers, emergence of new occupations and increase in market economy are the vital forces that have brought desirable shifts in the class order. It has affected the traditional class structure and opened the door for the formation of new class order. As a result, the class system became open and class mobility became unchecked. The subsidiary occupations of agrarian sector came increasingly under the control of lower traits. Non-farm sector employment has become accessible to all classes. All non-traditional occupations have become distributed among enterprising individuals or groups of all castes. With it the class system has come out of the traditional structure and lost its rigid frame. The productive organisation of village has become more differentiated and complex than it was in the past. The mutual relations of landowners, tenants and agricultural labourers are today governed by a variety of legal rules and market forces in addition to traditional norms.49

The nexus between caste and class has become weakened. As a result of dilution of class structure, class-consciousness received a severe jolt and instead caste consciousness came to the fore; expressed in the form of caste organizations and use of new symbols of identity. When class system
incorporated various elements each from differentiated clusters, there came remarkable change in the inter-personal and inter-caste relations. The traditional master–client relations became subsumed under the newly emerged plural class system. It has affected the traditional social role expectations and the value system. It is followed by normative and behavioural changes, expressed more in the relationship between the erstwhile dominant social categories and the dependent clusters.

The extension of political democracy, identification of new symbols of unity, solidarity consciousness and the concept of freedom with justice has also played remarkable roles in inducing the caste alignments in the region. Class interest has now subsumed under caste and is purely localized. Traditional caste based ascriptive status and the prestige system has to confront with achieved status, social position, roles, norms, values and mores. Thus the whole fabric of Tanjore society is being exposed to ramification and change. Slavery and serfdom as class specificities are irrelevant to the declining specimen of the feudal structure of the region.

Power structure of the agrarian society was naturally decided by land. Land happened to be the most scarce resource in rural India. It is the biggest employer and almost the entire village population depended on land in one way or other. Naturally land accorded the owners, status, prestige and power. Ritual rights too were distributed on the basis of ownership and control over the productive process. In the feudal setup that prevailed in Tanjore, mirasidars were empowered with the power to enforce authority and punish their
subordinates. Feudal rights provided them monstrous power over the client castes. In many cases labourers were held in hereditary debt bondage by their mirasidars on whom they depended for food, clothing and shelter. The main reason for the pitiable position of the labouring and tenant population lay in the ability of mirasidars to control waste land and in the high value of existing cultivated land.

But a great deal of fundamental change is going on today among the labourers, tenants and small owners. They are casting more realistic eye on their neighbours, who have been residing on their backs. Their aspirations for positions of power and identity affected the existing power balance. Since landownership has been widely dispersed, economic freedom has been achieved and the traditional bases of power have been redistributed, the power structured has to be realigned. From mirasidars power has to transcend to the subordinate classes in a stage-by-stage mode. In the first stage it was from the Brahmin-Vellala owner class to Kallar-Vanniyar tenant class. In the second stage power sharing was made from the tenant classes to the labouring classes. However, the sharing was not equal, since land control was not uniform.

The traditional power equilibrium has been further challenged by the entry of new forces. They are enumerated below:

1. Disruption of joint family system and the consequent fragmentation of landholdings. Fragmentation of joint estates weakened the economic position of the family and naturally deprived of their landed power and the prestige attached to it.
2. Family feud and litigations are common occurrences in divided families, since the value of land went on increasing. Each member of the family is aspiring to get the most valuable among the family estates. Since the value of family land is quite uneven, there occurs a fierce struggle to own the most valuable among the family land in which the entire members are evenly involved. It has weakened the familial unity and brotherhood solidarity enrouting to weakening of power.

3. Education and communication has become a trendsetter in the redistribution of power. Traditionally economic dependency and social compulsions made the lower traits subservient to the wishes of their masters. They could not educate their wards for fear of dreadful consequences. But, since they came out of the traditional master-client relations, they could without inhibition send their children to schools. Economic improvement facilitated them easy access to communication media and it made them conscious of their share in the power structure.

4. Protective legislations and incentive packages offered by governments to the depressed social categories interacted with the changing economic situations caused by agrarian change. They could utilize the institutional support systems free from the intervention of their traditional masters, since they were freed from their dependent status to a position of near equality.

5. Since independence labour organisations and political parties have tie up with tenants and labourers. Particularly the Left Parties, influenced by
their ideological legacy patronised the powerless section in their aspirations to have a share in the power structure. Their new economic status as free men guided their drive for power.

6. Constitutional guarantee of rights and equality generated conditions, which made the working class aware of their due share in the emerging power structure. It has weakened the traditional bases of power and challenged it almost at every point. Thus new power equilibrium has emerged.

7. Democratisation of polity in the form of establishment of grassroots level institutions like the Panchayati Raj and extension of political rights to the denied sections also eroded the traditional power bases. In a democracy, mass strength has a determinant role in deciding the power equations. Then it is quite natural for the numerically strong erstwhile tenant and labouring classes to engrab power. Thus, political power has come out of the traditional structure and become redistributed among the powerless of the past. However, it should be remembered that political power becomes a reality only when economic freedom and social awareness are achieved. In the regional context, the economic consequences of agrarian change played a dominant role in offering the lower traits economic freedom and inducing mobility interest and thus making political democracy meaningful.
Thus, the redistribution of land and related resources created a power imbalance, favouring the traditionally denied sections. The change in the power structure equally affected the social system and made it more democratic. It has weakened the tradition of rights, roles, norms, values, etc. Institutionalised social customs, manners, practices and taboos have to disappear in slow process. Deprivation, sanction and discrimination in the distribution of scarce resources and social products have lost validity. The society has come out of the caste-class and power nexus and with it the traditional hierarchy has become a misnomer. Of course, the structural base of caste still remains. But, the vitality of caste as a system is being constantly resisted by the newly advanced section of the erstwhile tenant and labour classes. From servitude, the society is moving towards a position of liberation.

ii. Institutional Change

The economic consequences of agrarian change have direct bearing on the institutional set up of the Tanjore region. Chaudhuri argues that extension of economic frontier is the chief source of change in rural India. Increasing income from agricultural sector has covered a vast section of the society and influenced the traditional social institutions like family, marriage, kinship, education and polity. The accrued benefits of diversification of agrarian economy either destabilised or altered the existing customs and practices covering familial relations, marriage and kinship obligations. To begin with, the joint-family system has to face tremendous pressure due to the growing
materialistic consciousness of the society at large. The joint family system was one of the institutions of Hindu social set-up. It was a community in itself. It functioned on the basis of one for all and all for one. It was a training ground for joint responsibility and co-operation. In Tanjore this institution was popular due to the undivided holdings and operation of family labour in agriculture. In the traditional agrarian social structure, sentimental attachments, economic interdependence, cohesive action, etc., were common phenomena. Fitch rightly puts it “Family institution is a relatively permanent structure of social patterns of role and relations that people enact in certain sanctioned and unified ways for the purpose of satisfying basic social needs.\(^5\)

The rise of internal markets assisted by the extension of railways and roads, and expansion of foreign trade transformed the old self-sufficient economy of the village based on barter into a market economy based on cash. Economic growth affected joint family system.\(^6\) With the gradual urbanization of the village, the rigidity of the division of labour among the community became softened. The expansion of towns, the diversification of employment opportunities in trade and services and the glamour and attraction of city life have created a steady drift towards cities and towns. This has been further responsible for loosening the hold of joint family system.\(^7\) Tanjore society is no exception to this common Indian situation. Westernisation, that came as an offshoot of British colonial intervention, did play a crucial role in transforming the traditional character of the family system.
In the joint families, there were fissiparous tendencies influenced by economic freedom and growing importance of materialism. As a sequence of agrarian change land value increased and it created problems when ancestral estates had to be divided among members. Everyone was interested in getting the more valued land for him. It promoted conditions that favoured family feud and litigations. Naturally, the situation affected the relations that existed for centuries among siblings. Family relations became more fictitious than real and growing materialistic consciousness of the society made the members of the joint families to cultivate fissiparous tendency. With it familial obligations and sentiments lost much of their traditional character. Individualism, fostered by independent outlook and economic self-sufficiency among the agrarian families, restrained the cohesiveness of the members and put a stop to familial collectivism on all socio-economic matters. Discard, disunity and feud on flimsy grounds affected the old familial bond. In fighting became more open and common and the whole edifice of joint family system has broken.

The impact of economic change is also felt in the marriage system of Tanjore. When landlordism prevailed upon, the lords maintained more wives and concubines. But, because of the redistribution of holdings, landlordism became weakened and materially it affected the power of local big men. No more they are capable of maintaining many wives. The trend favoured the abandonment of polygamy and concubinage and a shift towards monogamy.

In the institution of marriage, there was a change in the marriageable age. In the Tanjore society of yesteryears child marriages were quite common,
determined fairly by the property situation. Traditionally, women have been considered as a liability to the family and hence birth of a female child was treated as a burden to the family. In the absence of substantial sources of employment outside the farm sector, disguised unemployment had limited the income of family. Then it was inappropriate for the family to maintain girl children after some age. So early marriages were preferred. But gone were those days and the custom of early marriages are rare today. The relatively affluent economic condition, generated by agrarian change, created a trend change against early marriages. Girls are not much treated as a burden and hence marriages are celebrated sometimes after puberty. Government stipulation on marriageable age too has remarkably affected the new trend.

The weakening control of Brahmin landlords and the redistribution of landholdings substantially affected some of the practices associated with marriage celebrations. When the traditional hold of Brahmins became weakened, they had to lose their social power. It had drastically affected the imitation of Brahmin model of ritualized marriages. In its place, self-respect marriages entered. Here it should be remembered that to a certain extent resistance to Brahminism was incited by jealousy over the land power of Brahmins. However, the trend could not sustain for long. The affluent economy of Tanjoreans led them to spend lavishly on ritualized marriages instead of preferring the simple self-respect marriages.

Economic development and the value system attached to it affected the traditional practice of bride selection and groom choice. In the past, bride
selection was determined by kinship ties and obligations. Maternal uncle’s daughter was usually preferred. Dowry was rare and bride’s price in the form of “parisapanam” was prevalent. Economic development, an offshoot of agrarian change, affected the system. Dowry replaced bride’s price and bride choice is more determined by wealth considerations rather than by kinship sentiments. Groom choice is also determined by materialistic considerations and property equations. Urbanisation, which was the product of diversification of agrarian economy, also affected the groom choice pattern. Wealthy landholders prefer grooms employed in towns and cities as professionals, factory workers and the like. It indicates the fact that white collar occupation and city dwelling are more attractive to groom seekers than the simple village living grooms, engaged in farm related employments. It further exhibits the community’s tendency to averse smud smearing farming activities and a leaning towards more lucrative and value yielding non-farm occupations.

As the community is inclined more in favour of selecting grooms outside their kin circle, dowry plays an important role, replacing the values attached to in the selection of marriage partners. Stiff competition for professional, government employed, factory working and urban employed youths prevails and it contributed to ever-increasing amount of dowry. In short, materialism has embraced all aspects of marriage choice. Economic growth has also immensely affected the traditional pattern of marriage celebrations. Simplicity has been replaced by luxury. Arrangements of marriage functions in separate marriage halls located in towns, musical
extravaganza, sumptuous feast and modern means of catering mark the character of marriage celebrations.

Wealth has affected the "moi" system or presenting marriage gift in two different ways. Traditionally the system has been rooted among the kin groups. During occasions of childbirth, ear boring, puberty, marriage, house warming, etc., the kin members have to offer presents, which have high value symbols. During marriages the bride or groom is presented with gifts in the form of cash, golden ornaments, metal utensils, electronic goods and all those, which have status values. But, today the affluent Tanjoreans do not like to collect "moi" and instead they use to print in marriage invitations a message requesting to avoid presenting moi (gift). Those who still stick on to the tradition continue to offer moi, but the quality of 'moi' article and the amount of cash present is expected to be of higher than they were in the past. In most of the agrarian families of southwestern parts of the newly irrigated areas 'moi' is prominent still today. They demonstrate their economic status by offering higher 'moi'. Marriage invitations are printed with 'Virunthundu Moipeidu', which means that the relatives should have the feast for which they have to offer 'moi' that is compulsory. Thus both the avoidance and acceptance of moi (gift) are indicators of their economic status, which depends upon the regional social set up.

The material effect of agrarian change is reflected in many other ways in the marriage practice. They are:
1. Printed invitation cards are distributed for marriage, ear boring and other ceremonies. Wall poster advertisements, thanks giving cards, banners, etc., are the part and parcel of all the functions.

2. Lavish spending on bridal dress, ornaments and feasts and festivities connected with marriage celebration.

3. Music concerts, both carnatic and film music are arranged to entertain participants during marriage celebrations at heavy expenses.

Economic development, break up of joint families and exogamous marriages have induced changes in kinship norms, roles and obligations. Traditionally the maternal uncle (Thaimama) has a prominent role in the life of his nephews and nieces. He has special obligations towards them, which exceed those of the father. He has a prior right over their loyalties. He comes first among all male relatives. Nowadays the situation has changed. It is conspicuous that most of the marriages are arranged without the lead role of maternal uncle. Economic growth-sponsored individualistic and acquisitive spirit, reflected in the selection of bride or groom without the consent of maternal uncle, property disputes between brothers and sisters, an offshoot of dowry, self-interest of uncles and concern for wealth are the chief attributes of this trend.

A special role is given to the father’s sister during puberty rituals, childbirth and marriage celebrations. In the past, when kinship norms were strictly followed bride selection from paternal aunt’s daughter was a common feature. But due to material consideration, this age-old custom has lost its
validity and as in the case of maternal uncles position, paternal aunt’s position on all auspicious occasions is weakening.

Traditional kinship ties were inimical to wealth accumulation. But under the pressure of new economic forces those ties are gradually becoming weaker. Gough states that in Tanjore, there was a close relationship between kinship and mode of production. Kinship even played instrumental role in economic activities. But, with the decline of joint families and fragmentation of ancestral properties the mode of collectivism in agriculture lost its significance. Dispute over sharing family land is conspicuous in Tanjore as elsewhere in village India affected kinship relations. Growing materialism sponsored individualism and existentialism and as a sequence, kinship norms are less honoured, obligations are neglected and lapses in kinship role performance are becoming common. The earlier emphasis on service as a manifestation of asymmetrical relations is declining. The notion that obligation of personal service maintain and sustain the joint household is being diluted. Kin participation in the life cycle rituals is not so deep as it were in the past. Services relating to puberty, marriage and other celebrations are today freer from involvement of kins and kinship obligation has been substantially eroded.

Usage of kinship terms appears to be more in a random and arbitrary way than as it was in the past. The sentimental basis of kinship is near absent today and kinship practices are more fictitious than real. Since agrarian change has promoted economic growth, materialistic conception of life encroached
into every aspect of kinship relations. Now, it is wealth that determines social status, kinship relations, norms, values, roles and mores.

As far as parental care over the children is concerned, material growth induced them to take much care towards their wards. They spend more money for their education, healthcare, dress, etc. But the children's obligation towards parents are not as it was in the past. After getting married they give much priority to affinal kins than maintaining aged parents and supporting sibling fraternity. Parents are being treated as a liability and hence their wants are not satiated. The thirst for luxury, an aspect of materialism, made children either to desert their parents or indifferent to provide them basic requirements and old age care.

The economic consequences of agrarian change and the social freedom that it offered to the tenant and labour classes have affected the institution of education. In the closed social order that prevailed in the Tanjore region, education was a scarce resource, rights over which was reserved only to the upper traits. Education and related merits were polarised with the Brahmins and Vellala segments and from them to other landowning class. It has been argued that the landowning upper class restrict the supply of education because they knew the danger of having surplus of educated persons. The marginalized communities were usually deprived of their right to have education in the name of age old custom, pollution and brahmanical tradition. The feudal character of the society did not permit the lower orders to have the freedom to educate their wards. Resource constraints, apathy of higher-ups and
trust in fate by the lower clusters determined the situation further. Since socio-economic freedom remained as a pre-requisite for educational attainments the subordinate classes were shut out of schooling perpetually. Non-formal education too was not within their reaches, since caste segregation and pollution norms were strictly enforced by the rulers and social laws. Aspirants of education were punished so severely and it made them to content with what had been ascribed to them as per caste dharma.

But, with the change in the caste-class nexus and power distribution pattern, the inhibition on education has to disappear in a slow process. The marginalized communities are benefited more due to the trend change in the educational institution. The decline of feudal set up and redistribution of land and wealth relieved them from socio-economic bondage. Agricultural servitude was slowly waning and now they wanted to assert their rights over scarce resources like education. Government sponsored protective discrimination in the matter of education, missionary interest and legal protection of rights through constitution and legislations have supplemented the process and played the supportive role in having education permeating among the hitherto denied sections of the society.

It has been generally agreed that economic freedom is the prime requisite for social freedom. When the labouring class became independent, due to the weakening of feudal set up, they could act on their own. The traditional owner-class lost its resisting capacity because of their weakening position over land. Weakening social sanction and the emerging power
distribution pattern completely altered the existing restrictions on education of the lower rungs of the society. This trend change is visibly felt among the Dalits and other subalterns. They could educate their wards without the interference of their erstwhile masters; exploit the various incentive packages offered by government agencies and rise in the social ladder without much resistance. The economic gains of education in the form of salaried employment improved their status considerably and favoured reinvestment on education.

In the case of tenant class, traditional education was related to their occupational specificity. It was mostly on informal means and only a few among them due to their nearness to royal houses and placement in the administrative hierarchy could have education, which was traditional in feature. Since formal education remained a luxury in those days, ordinary tenant communities could not have the wherewithal to invest in education. Few converts among them were acquainted with Western education and Christian knowledge. On the whole, to the tenant farming social categories, education remained as an inaccessible scarce resource. British introduced English education was prohibitively costly for the tenant class, which was suffering from the vagaries of nature and poor return even during ordinary season. The existence of feudal hierarchy and power concentration also had, their own demoralising effect on the educational aspirations of tenant farmers.

But agrarian change and its economic consequences placed the tenants in an advantageous situation. They became landowners and it accorded them
social status, economic freedom and enhanced financial position. The situation broke the barriers of their educational attainment and encouraged their aspirations for learning. They could realise the importance of education, which would provide employment, power, and prestige. The gains of agriculture and the economic value of education induced them to invest on the education of their wards. The supportive role of government policies initiated by the colonial government also played a determinant role in the dissemination of education among them. According to the 1901 census report, literacy rate among the S.Cs. in Tanjore was only one per cent and women were found to be totally illiterate. Indian Government after independence was very keen to improve the condition of lower castes through education. The Tamilnadu Government with the support of Indian Government started 149 Harijan Welfare Schools throughout Tanjore district in 1951 and spent Rs. 646012 towards scholarship by which 10,000 students were benefited. The number of the Welfare Schools in 1966 was 153. Though there was no striking improvement in the establishment of welfare school, there was a great improvement in the number of enrollment of students from the lower castes.

Educational growth in the Tanjore regional setting has affected the traditional social setup. Especially, education among the lower groups upset the traditional social balance and created conditions suitable for social liberation. A.R. Kamat has succinctly explained the trend in the following few sentences:

"Dissemination of modern learning although a modest scale in the beginning, initiated two processes of change for traditionally deprived and oppressed sections of society. It created an enabling situation for participation in the new pattern of
economy. Education enabled them to join the new occupations. It also provided the necessary ideology that of liberalism, for visualizing an economic and social transformation of society. Thus a basis was laid for the transition from the ascriptive, caste bound, pre-capitalist social structure to a more egalitarian and free society. To fight for equal educational, occupational and economical opportunity and for equal status is therefore a part of the long and unequal struggle for a more just and equal society.”

In Tanjore, the class matrix has played a dominant role in the promotion of education. It has fostered a competitive tendency among different class categories to acquire education. When the erstwhile servile class and tenant class representing the lowest and lower hierarchy in the caste structure could realise the merits of education and concentrate on it, the traditional mirasi families cannot sit idle. Education still remain as a scarce resource and acquisition of which would fetch status and social prestige. If the old mirasi families fail to earn the advantage of education then it would be a great humiliation for them. So they showed exemplary interest in the education of their wards. At the same time their farmer clients encouraged by the changing socio-economic and political trend have made desperate struggle to educate their children so that they can escape from the ordeals of farming. For them, white-collar jobs are attractive, which could earn them a decent living and accord economic status and social prestige. This competitive spirit in education activates and reactivates interest in learning and contributed to the growth of education at the regional level which is indicated in the following table:
Table - 22

Table showing the growth of education between 1901 and 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of Literates in Tanjore District</th>
<th>Percentage of Literates in Tamil Nadu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>10.11</td>
<td>07.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>11.19</td>
<td>09.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>13.13</td>
<td>10.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>13.90</td>
<td>11.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>18.40</td>
<td>16.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>23.18</td>
<td>20.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>33.55</td>
<td>31.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>39.56</td>
<td>39.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>50.36</td>
<td>46.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>66.02</td>
<td>62.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Agrarian change and the consequent economic development have influenced the regional political matrix. This goes in agreement with Hagen’s contention that economic growth has far reaching influence on political organisation. Traditionally, the landed elite in the valley occupied prime position in the socio-economic structure and engrossed political influence and power. The dependent communities were deprived of political rights and this deprivation was customised with the approval of royal edicts and ritual sanction. War and conquests, matrimonial ties, rise and fall of dynasties, etc., did affect the bases of political power. Yet, on the whole land remained as the
source of power and political influence. When feudalism had taken deep roots, the political divide between the owner class and the working class became wide, the later being shut out of all areas of political power. The colonial government stabilised the existing political structure to suit its own advantage. Land reforms initiated by the British administration have only marginal affect on the political pattern of Tanjore region.

But, the redistribution of assets and wealth, attributed to agrarian change, altered the existing trend in the political structure. When the caste, class and power nexus failed to sustain due to the changing situation, political rights came out of the pyramidal structure and became open. The traditional land holding class could not resist its erstwhile clients exercising their lawful rights in politics since they have become free from servitude. Education and awareness kindled their rights consciousness, which contributed to their increasing role in politics. Irschik claims that educational advance and consciousness of this advance would lead to political awakening. Leadership emerged from among them in the local and regional level. Incentive packages offered by the governments in the form of reservation, extension of democracy by introduction of adult suffrage, constitutional guarantee on political equality and opportunities created by the grassroots democratic institutions all have activated the political interest of the former deprived sections of the society. However, it should be remembered that the new trend did not upset the traditional bases of power completely. There are still dominant landed estates owned by Vandayars, Moopanars and others. They do enjoy substantial
influence in the electoral process. But it is not that of the kind as it was in the past. Political rights and freedom have embraced all social categories without inhibition on the basis of birth. The kind of economic freedom offered by agrarian change and supplemented by socio-economic support systems have contributed to heightening political activities in the regional political matrix.

The class divide has created a situation of competitive politics in Tanjore. The big farm owning mirasidar families determined to resist further dilution of land rights. So they enrolled in the Congress Party, which was in power during the post-independence period. Land reforms initiated by the state Congress ministry were resisted by them. Similarly Land Ceiling Act could not be implemented due to the lacunae in the Act and failure in the execution system. All these indicate that the class animosity of yester years continued to prevail upon the agricultural communities of Tanjore. However, the former tenant and client castes were not willing to accept the sustenance of sectional dominancy and they reacted by joining in the political parties opposed to the Congress. Already the Communist Party had established a strong support base among the agrestic workers. Thus competitive politics had ushered in, which promoted conditions suitable for the rise of leadership among the various agrarian sections. The search for identity among the new landowning class kindled the political consciousness, which made them to exploit every opportunity so as to rise in the political arena.

The emergence of political awareness among the agricultural class was reflected in the 1967 general election in Tamilnadu. The Communist Party
(Marxist) gained a position of strength in Tanjore. The key constituencies of Nagappattinam, Thiruvarur and Kuttalam were all won by the Communists. Till today the Communists have strongholds in these areas. The DMK (Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam) secured 9 seats in the district and captured the legislature by securing 138 seats in the state. The following fable shows the political developments of Tanjore district from 1952 to 2006:

Table - 23

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Communist Party of India CPI (T)</th>
<th>Communist Party of India Marxist CPI(M)</th>
<th>DMK</th>
<th>ADMK</th>
<th>Indian National Congress INC</th>
<th>Indian National Congress I INC (Indra)</th>
<th>Indian National Congress I INC (O)</th>
<th>Janata Party</th>
<th>Bharathiya Janata Party BJP</th>
<th>Praja Socialist Party PSP</th>
<th>Pattali Makkal Katchi PMK</th>
<th>Tamil Manila Congress TMC</th>
<th>Marumalararchi DMK MDMK</th>
<th>Independent and others</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>9</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1967</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
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<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
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<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table indicates that the Congress Party, which had enrolled majority of the traditional landowning families and championed the cause of their interest lost its influence in Tanjore. From 1971 to 1984 not even a single Congress MLA was elected from Tanjore. The neo rich, mostly from the former tenant classes, attached either to the DMK or its splinter rival organisation, the AIADMK are dominating the political scenario of Tanjore. Both parties have ups and downs and yet they are the determining parties. The Communists prevail by means of forging alliance with either of the above two.

Emergence of new political parties ushered in a spirit of competition in politics. Party politics contributed to the rise of leadership in all levels - local, regional and national. Govindasamy Moopanar, Parisutha Nadar and Veeraiya Vandayar were the leading landlords who led the Congress Party in yester years. G.Karupaiah Moopanar succeeded Govindasamy Moopanar and became the national leader. He was called “King Maker of Indian Politics” during the 90s of the twentieth century. His son, G.K.Vasan, retains his family’s power in national as well as regional politics. Since the redistribution of economy, the tenant class secured political gains and became popular in the party. Singaravadivel, Nanjil Varadarajan, Kanagaraj, Andavar etc; are the leading Congressmen of today from the tenant class.

When the Congress followed the policy of pro-landlordism the tenant and labourers were attracted towards DMK and Communists. Natarajan, Ko.C Mani, L. Ganesan, Elangovan, Murugaiyan, S.S. Palanimanickam, Ramachandran, Kalyanasundaram, Budalur Murugesan, Pon. Kaliamoorthy,
Chandrasekaran are very prominent leaders of DMK, representing the old tenant class.

The Communists have been getting support from the labouring class. When the landlords suppressed the labour movement in the eastern region, where landlordism was at its height, Murugaiyan, who was a labour leader and belonged to Scheduled Caste, was elected as the Chairman from Kottur Panchayat Union, a general constituency in Mannargudi taluk. During his period this Union received All India Best Panchayat Union award. The other leaders from labouring class were Amirthalingam, Ramanujam, Kalappal Kuppu, A.K Suppiah, K.Murugaiyan (Ex. M.P) and S.Vadivel (Ex. MLA) played a dominant role in the party. Veeraiyan, Kathamuthu, Vengatesan and Vengatachalam were the prominent Communist leaders from the tenant class, who supplemented their energy for the uplift of labouring classes. Maniyarasan from artisan class is a popular Communist thinker. The Communists have been strengthening their position among the labouring class in the east.

When the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) was formed in 1972 by M.G.Ramachandran (MGR), a section of non-Brahmin tenant classes shifted loyalty to the party. S.D.Somasundaram, Durai. Govindarajan, Thirugnanam, Thangamuthu, Vaithialingam, Balasubramanian, Rethinasamy, etc. became notable leaders of AIADMK in the district. Ramamuthy is a famous advocate and notable Janata Party leader from the tenant class. Most of the presidents and secretaries of the different political
parties at the district level are members of the former tenant communities, opposed to Brahmin mirasidars.

iii. Cultural Change

Culture is defined as learned, socially sanctioned behaviour of a community. It consists of both material and non-material aspects of society. Culture and social system coincide and naturally when a society is prone to changes it has telling impact on the cultural matrix. Cultural change “consists of the modification of society and culture through time-modification.” It embraces all that changes, effected in the cultural system and sub-systems, norms, values, symbols, languages, religion and the whole complex of related aspects. Cultural change is both evolutionary and induced, activated by external agencies. Evolution of culture is articulated with the evolution of society through time bound process. Invention, discovery and diffusion are the major processes that contribute to the development of culture. Since there is an enduring overlap between society and culture, things that affect the social systems are bound to effect changes in the cultural fabric of a given society. Changes in culture are generated by internal stress and strain within the culture; some originated and protected by innovators from within the culture and some are influenced either directly or indirectly by external agencies.

It has been well said that culture is the byproduct of agriculture. Tanjore, due to its geographic advantage, developed a rich culture that is closely articulated with growth in cultivation. Naturally, when the mode of production
changes, it has positively affected the regional cultural pattern. Ralph Pieris finds a strong correlation between cultural development and development of material culture. To him, it is the changes in the material culture that give the impetus to changes in other aspects of culture. Increase in agricultural productivity, changes in the mode of production, diversification of economy and institutional support system have interacted to deliver a relatively affluent life to the Tanjoreans. This change in the economic fabric has influenced the socio-cultural matrix. Investment in education became possible with increasing income from farm source. Education is considered as an important attribute for social change and an instrument of occupational mobility. Education opened the gates of communication and induced desirable shift in life style, cultural practices and attitudes. Democratisation of politics, an intangible aspect of culture, became a reality, when the productive process underwent change from the feudalistic mode. The effect of these changes are manifested in language, customs, values, norms, attitudes, life style habits, recreations, religious culture and thought pattern and all that having cultural specificity.

Language is considered to be the most important set of cultural symbols. In language, speech form is the easiest prone to changes induced by changes in the material culture. The social system and class interest did play a vital role in the development of speech form, which has local variation. Fishman considers languages as a boundary maintaining device between groups. In Tanjore bonded labourers had a low profile in society and Washbrook claims that they were marketed along with the lands even in the 20th century. Derogatory
terms were used while referring to the pannayals and padiyals, indicating their wretched position. But the recent changes effected in the mode of production created a radical shift that affected the speech form relating to reference of the erstwhile serf and slave castes. Abusive words and low value terms are replaced with terms of reference, which have high value specificity. To cite a few:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Derogatory Terms</th>
<th>Honorific Terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vāda (come)</td>
<td>Vanga (come sir)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pōda (go)</td>
<td>Ponga (go sir)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nee (you)</td>
<td>Neengal (you sir)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Here it should be noted that the Untouchability (Prevention) Act of 1955 played a supportive role in the alteration of speech form referring to the former servile castes. The Act made it clear that use of derogatory terms or caste name in an offending style is liable to punishment. In the early years of implementation of the Act, many cases were registered against the mirasidars for violation of the Act. Though the situation did not perpetuate, the other effects of agrarian change, educational growth and general enlightenment, economic freedom and emerging social democracy have made the trend regular, affecting the speech form. The general speech form also went through rapid change due to the change in material life. Colloquial terms of reference to material and non-material aspects are being substituted with more refined and status value terms. The permeation of Western education in the society
contributed to the use of increasing English terms in the vocal vocabulary. The following colloquial words are being substituted with equal English words:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colloquial words</th>
<th>Equal English words with intermixing of Tamil</th>
<th>Proper English meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pallikudam poren</td>
<td>School poren</td>
<td>Going to school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santhaikku poren</td>
<td>Market poren</td>
<td>Going to market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mejai eduthuva</td>
<td>Table eduthuva</td>
<td>Bring the table</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visi eduthuva</td>
<td>Pench eduthuva</td>
<td>Bring the bench</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kari Edukaporen</td>
<td>Mutton eduka poren</td>
<td>Going to purchase mutton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kaduthasi kodu</td>
<td>Paper kodu</td>
<td>Give me paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All middle and lower sections are adapting Brahmins, higher caste and Western speech forms in day-to-day life, which have more status value than inherited colloquial terms. Such imitations were by tradition denied to the lower social orders, deviation of which entailed severe and oppressive sanction. Since agrarian change has broken the tradition and weakened the sanction system, upward mobility interest activated the former depressed communities to adopt the Brahmin and other high caste terms in their speech form without resistance. Of course, the status value attached to Brahmanic speech form attracts imitation by those desirous of enhanced social prestige. Speech form adaptation is more apparent among the younger groups of tenants and labouring classes than the old generation. However, local differences in speech form are a common phenomenon in Tanjore. Decent or civilised words
have been quickly picked up by people in the old and new delta region, where irrigation activities are highly intensified than the dry belts of upland region.

There is a close articulation between economic development and lifestyle change. Beteille endorses the view and claims that changes in material conditions are usually accompanied by changes in life style. Life style changes are visible in the areas of customs, manners, practices, habits, attitudes, ideas, values and the like. In old Tanjore, feudal customs were very predominant, which by its very nature were differentiated. In other words, custom was an important maker of social differentiation. It varied according to one's position in the social hierarchy and imitation was controlled with severe sanctions. Baker opines that cultural variation is specific among class categories. He claims that landowners were culturally separated from servant class by adopting Aryan notions, which flattered their pretensions and buttressed their authority. Beteille goes further, stating that the common life style of landowners, among other things, was behind their power.

The relationship between class structure and cultural standard is well attested by Thorner. To him, the primary aim of all classes in the agrarian structure is to rise in social prestige by abstaining from physical labour. This is particularly true in the middle order peasantry of Tanjore. When agricultural prosperity embraced a section of the former tenant class, they refrained from engaging in mud smearing agricultural works. This attitudinal change has cultural connotation, for, it reflects the change in the life style of a group. When a working group becomes a leisure group, its life culture is bound to
change. Strasser and Randall agree that socio-cultural institutions change as a result of alterations in the mode of production. In the case of the erstwhile servile communities their positional change in the class order means a lot for them. Improvement in their economic life enhanced their cultural standard and weakening feudal laws and the sanction system helped them to imitate high status values, customs and practices. Their choice of reference group is either the Vysia or the Western model. This is because restriction on the mobility interest of lower trait is always based on models, the Brahmin model entail more resistance, while the Vysia model is less resistance prone. Damle considers the Western model easier because it do not recognise the caste-class nexus. Education and occupational mobility too supplemented alteration in their cultural standards.

Economic development has affected the food habits and dietary behaviour of the people of Tanjore at large. In the past food habits were determined by caste and class dichotomy. The higher in the caste-class hierarchy had food habits different from the lower social groups. Beteille remarks that there is some association between the social prestige of food and its scarcity. In short food was an important marker of social differentiation. Rich aristocratic section subsisted on rice, which had star value in the diet culture of the past. Epstein finds correlation between social prestige and the eating of rice and its cultivation. The Brahmin mirasidars restricted themselves with vegetarian diets for fear of loosing caste rank. The Vellala landed gentry was accustomed to eat both vegetarian and non-vegetarian items,
which have higher prestige values. Though both the Brahmin and Vellala
owner class ate rice, the former ate raw rice while the later used to have boiled
rice.

For the tenant class, rice seems to be a luxury in the past. It was because
of the feudalistic mode of production, which left little to the tenants for their
subsistence. Dry cereal crops supported their food requirements and this was
the case with most of the dry land farmers. The servile class was left almost
nothing to eat and most of them subsisted on gruel of ragi and other cereals
raised under rain-fed condition. Dieting habits also varied according to the
social position of the different clusters. The owner class, with the exception of
Brahmins usually had a morning breakfast, a lunch in the noon and a dinner at
night. There was not much variation between the lunch items and dinner dishes.
Differences among dietary practices among the owner class was common,
determined by location, season and inherited tradition. The working class had
its usual food early in the morning, which consisted of rice gruel and cold rice
and simple side dishes. In the noon, again they used to take the same food.
Only in the night they cooked food and ate with meat or curry.93 But in today’s
Tanjore, there is marked change in the food habits and dietary behaviour. There
is not much differentiation in the food habits of various groups and if there is
little, it is not determined by the social position, but by individual taste and
economic position.

Social distance was marked not only by food and food habits but also by
the utensils used for serving food. From the royal families down to the slave
castes food serving and the materials used for that and the etiquettes of food serving varied. The working classes usually ate or drink in mud pots and tumblers, while the tenant chiefs and other higher-ups used to have metal vessels. Pretension in the matter of utensils was checked with force. But today with the break up of feudalism and the redistribution of wealth and resources as a result of economic development caused by agrarian change, food and its serving method and the material objects used for serving food and drinks, all indicate change. Earthen pots are rare, if not absent, aluminum substituting mud pots and stainless steel made vessels replace aluminum ware. Silver ware use indicates both progress and decline of hierarchy, for; it has come out of the caste-class alignment and privileged position. Two-tumbler system in the tea shops, relic of the differentiated social system, is today waning, because of declining importance of social stigma, pollution norms and other related aspects and the economic freedom offered by change in the mode of production. Legislative coverage and organizational support supplemented the process of change.

Traditionally, there were many social dissimilarities in the dress pattern of the people. Lower class men wore a small under-cloth called *Komanam*, which is scanty. The tenant class also was accustomed to this dress style. The rich tenants and owner class have a waist-cloth of four to seven feet in length in addition to the under cloth. The Brahmins had a peculiar dress style, which differentiated them from the rest. Imitation of their style was disallowed. The lower class women also dress scantily. High caste women dressed in
Kusavam, which passed once round the waist and a knot tied it in place and then a fold (Kusavam) was made for ornament sake over one of the hips or in front. The garment was then again passed lightly round the waist and the end of it was brought in front of the breast, thrown over the left shoulder and tucked into waist behind. Pallan and paraiyan women wear their cloth rather high above the knee and bare their breast while at work. Kalian and Valaiyan women in some places would not wear dark blue clothes for fear of offending the god Karuppan, to whom the colour was considered sacred.⁹⁴

A peep into the dress style of the past indicates the fact that dress was an important marker of social divide. The aristocratic class consisting of landed gentry and merchants dress in style, which indicated their social and economic position. The middle peasants, the lower peasantry and servile and service communities have prescribed dress patterns, variations of which was disagreed by social laws and traditional customs. Imitation on dress was resisted with force. Here, it is interesting to note that the status attached to dress style varied in the past. Pillay tells us that in the ancient past full dress indicated less status and only the women of lower social groups covered the body.⁹⁵ In Tanjore, with the change in the socio-economic fabric, dress culture has gone through a process of change. With the decline of feudal system and redistribution of wealth, social freedom has emerged, which went against all types of prescriptions on dress. Dress choice was now dictated by individual liking, affordability, occupational requirements and accessibility to modern means of communication and fashion. Modern dress style, imported from the West -
pants, shirts, sabari suits - and full suits-attracts youths and professionals more
than the traditional dresses. Adaptation in dress style is rampant today in the
case of women; traditional sari replacing chuditars, frocks, pyjamas, mini
skirts, nighties, etc., which have both Western and North Indian specificity. No
more dress is a social differentiator and all have the freedom of choice in the
matter of dress.

Social position dictated the wearing of ornaments in the past. While the
higher social groups wear ornaments made of gold and silver, lower classes
were by custom denied the right to wear gold or silver ornaments, even if they
had the wherewithal to posses them. This inhibition in the matter of
ornamentation differed from one social category to another one. In the case of
the higher - ups, eventhough they exercised their rights to wear golden
ornaments, there were prescribed differentiation between groups. But this
aspect of old material culture has little validity today. Ornament wearing rights
have freed from the ascriptive mode and become widely dispersed among all
sections. Hairstyle too was indicative of caste or class rank, but it has become
an old dichotomy. Wearing sandal also has come out of the traditional mode
and all similar aspects of life style have gone through a process of change
demonstrating the role of economic development in cultural progress.
Mandelbaum observes that the low ranking groups acquiring wealth change
defiling practices, influenced by mobility interest. This is true in the case of
some of the middle peasants and labouring masses.
Economic development and social modernization did affect the recreational habits of the regional communities. Traditionally male members of the society spent their rest times in many recreational games like Kabadi, Kittipillu, dice, hunting, etc. Tanjore Thayam was very famous, played by both men and women. Pallanguzhi was yet another popular game played both indoors and outdoors. Chatting, gossiping and puppet shows were much enjoyed by women in those days. Today economic affluence, impact of communication and entry of new entertainment media have made an impact on the inherited entertainment practices. Due to this, traditional pastimes lost their value and new star value games such as cricket, chess, foot-ball, etc., have been more attractive for the younger generation. Moreover with the emergence of electronic media new entertainments have arrived in the form of watching T.V. programmes, playing video games and the like. Hartmann, et al. argue that there is correlation between economic development and media provision. In support of their argument they claim that the richest countries have more newspapers, TVs, radios and so on and the poorest have the least of them. Their observation is true in the case of Tanjore, for, economic development has influenced their entertainment behaviour drastically. Readers of newspapers, weeklies, bi-monthlies, journals, etc., are on the increase, eventhough there is no documented data to substantiate.

The folk dances and folk songs of Tanjore have their own uniqueness. Dummy horse, a folkdance, is locally known as ‘Poykkal kudhirai’ (or) ‘Puraviyattam’. Magudattam refers to all the masked dances such as
karadiattam and Anumanattam. Puppet show flourished from the days of Maratha period. The agricultural labour communities specialised in all these folkdances and exhibited their talents during village festivals. But the folk dances fail to flourish today. Though they still survive and have attraction, it is not practiced by many. Alternative income from agricultural and non-agricultural sources has made many to shed low profile folk dance items. Bharatanatyam still continues to be a favourite dance among the top layers of Tanjore society as it was in the past. It has widened its patronage base from among the neo-rich.

Folk songs have become symbol of low identity today. In the old agricultural settings of Tanjore folksongs did play a vital role in relieving the labour class from the drudgeries of hard labour. Erpattu (ploughmen Song) Nadavupattu (transplantation song), Etrapattu (song of the balemen), etc were intimately related to the farming activities. Kuravaipattu was sung during specific occasions relating to seedings, harvesting and winnowing. Kamapattu, kummipattu, villupattu, thanane pattu, kavadipattu, poosaripattu, are some of the popular folksongs of yesteryears. Oppari was a kind of folksong, sung by women during occasion of death. Oppari with beating the chest was a feudal custom, expressive of the low social position of the dependent and servile classes. But, with the waning of feudal customs and old social practices oppari is becoming unpopular. Vanamamalai opines that within 50 years oppari would disappear. Thalattu or lullabies had specific role in child - rearing and it was intimately connected with Tamil cultural
matrix. But such practices have disappeared today, especially among the younger generation. Folk songs relating to agriculture have become irrelevant today with the change in the mode of production and change in agricultural practices. Similar is the case with others.

Folk music, folk arts and folk plays, all expressions of rural culture are becoming irrelevant today. Value change and entry of modern music system and art forms are the chief attributes of this trend. At the same time increasing sophistication in life style caused by economic development should be taken into account for the decline of folk art and folk music. Martial arts, an aspect of folk culture and an indicator of valour, played a crucial role in the old feudal set up. Martial arts feature both defensive and offensive characters. Silampam, Wrestling, Kallu-Chandai, etc., were patronised by mirasi families and feudal barons to demonstrate their power and for defense. With a change in the agrarian class structure and weakening landlordism and life style change, martial arts loose their once prime importance. However, to safeguard the traditional folk culture from its decay, Government of India has established the South Zone Cultural Centre at Tanjore.  

Economic development induced by agrarian change, has affected the professional life of some of the thief castes. In the past, natural selection enforced among the Kallars and other similar tribes, the profession of decoity and waylaiding and thus earned the ill reputation of criminal tribes. In Tanjore, most of the Kallars of upland region were notorious cattle lifters. To check their activities, the other communities of low region invited few Kallar families
from upland areas and made them to settle in the region. They were paid Kaval fee for each year. The construction of New Kattalai High Level Channel (NKHLC), a supplementary scheme of Cauvery-Mettur Irrigation Project, made most of the upland region irrigated wet. Rice culture refined their social culture, which made them to shed their traditional profession of cattle lifting, decoity and waylaidng. Economic affluence due to wet cultivation reformed their crude savage life and made them cultured, which is indicated in their lifestyle, customs, attitudes and behaviour in specific situations.

Economic affluence induced educational improvement, which has affected the cultural traits too. Traditionally, education and its communication were limited to the upper classes. The roles, both of the teacher and the taught, were quantitative - ascriptive. Modern education has a fundamentally different orientation and organization. Introduction of English education to all sections has made a sizable change in cultural life of the people. Karve asserts that changes in India began with the arrival of Western education, which has embraced the cultural field too. Education has made imitation and adaptation possible, which improved the cultural standard of the inferior social clusters. Imitation in dress, speech, habit, food, etc., have caused a cultural transformation in society.

Traditional India on the whole was bound by its religious culture. Temples became the centers of cultural activities. Tanjore due to changing political vicissitudes became a multi-religious centre. Hindus, Muslims and Christians live in relative harmony. There are more than thousand Hindu
temples in Tanjore, including the great Pragadeeswara Temple, popularly called Big Temple. Nagoor Darga, a famous religious centre for Muslims and Velanganni and Poondi Matha Basilica are the great worship places for the Catholic Christians.

Religious culture of Tanjore underwent a process of change with the advent of Islam and Christianity. Both the religions identified with the lower classes and in the process of expansion they lost some of their distinct characteristics and had become diffused with native traits. Susan Bayly rightly observes that in South Asia Christianity and Islam became adjusted to the cultural traditions and social organizations of the people. Due to the low class affiliation of Christianity; the caste Hindu sections usually have poor opinion about churches and their cultural activities. But with the break up of old social order and emerging freedom of the lower traits, the identification of Christianity as a low class religion has been lost and it got status approval. This status change of Christianity in the Tanjore region is indicated in the increasing participation of Hindus in church festivals and feasts.

Agrarian change and economic development has altered the traditional bases of Hindu religion. Religion and the Hindu caste system had close articulation in the past and the pollution norms denied the lower social orders from entering temples and temple streets. So many inhibitions sustained against the inferior castes in the matter of religion and religious ethos. But, when the erstwhile labouring class acquired wealth from farming source, they determined to translate the new riches into ritual status. Baker reports that the
Nadars, considered one among the polluted castes, attempted to gain spiritual recognition by entering in the temple committee with the newly acquired wealth. Though their pretension had created a stir in the 1890s, within the next 30 years, it had become customary that a Nadar should sit on the temple committee as a mark of local status.

In the case of Dalit subalterns, agrarian change has meant a lot for them. Age long deprivations restrained cultural development among them. They were distanced from Hindu religion and spiritual activities. But all menial works relating to temple feasts and festivals were prescribed to them. Lifting the Theevetis (torched sticks) and carrying palanquin were their obligation during festivals. So many inhibitive customs were imposed on them, which denigrated their identity. But now the newly acquired freedom from feudalistic mode of production induced their identity consciousness. They are seeking parity of status in the matter of religion and thereby correcting the legitimacy of illegitimate order. The supportive role of temple entry legislations and guarantee of social equality as enshrined in the constitution, have activated their consciousness for religious equality further.

Materialism has affected spiritualism in many different ways. The correlation between material growth and ritual position is endorsed by Seal. To begin with, some sections of the middle order peasantry, less sanskritised due to their low social ranking and low value professions, now adopt Aryanised customs, practices, rituals and ethos. Srinivas claims that sanskritisation enabled low castes, which had acquired wealth to shed their low ritual status
and be included among the high castes. This is particularly true in the case of Ahamudayyas, believed to be a branch of Kallar tribes. Economic development altered their life style, social customs and ritual practices. They adopted Brahminical model and now claims higher rank equal to that of the Vellalas. There is a popular Tamil saying, which goes;

"Kallar, Maravar, Kanathathor Ahamudaiyar Mella, Mella Vellalar Ahirar". It means that Kallars after acquiring wealth and influence move to the rank of Maravars, who is turn move to the position of Ahamudaiaar. From Ahamudaiyar to Vellala and to Mudaliyar was the usual pattern of upward mobility. In all these stages wealth and Sanskritised customs and practices were the prime requisites.

In the past Sankritisation of customs, manners and rituals by the lower peasantry was resisted by their social superiors. But changes in the class structure and casteism affected the situation. Today, without any resistance the lower castes could adopt brahminical religious culture with its value system, ethos and symbols.

Spiritualism today is deeply influenced by material growth. As stated earlier, it has made Sanskritisation easier. Sanskritisation provided a solid base for ritualized form of Hinduism and naturally, Tanjoreans are included more towards ritualism. Life cycle rituals, which are expensive, gained increasing popularity because of the community’s advancement in economy. At the same time spiritualism has lost its real spirit because of the domination of material forces. For the rich, influential persons, religion and spiritualism are gateways
to political power. Their involvement in local spiritual services is mere pretensions to reinforce their social power and ritual position. It often invited conflict, more specific during occasions of festival celebrations. Apter considers that when conditions improve, expectations rise and incongruities appear among status hierarchies. The situation may very well lead to conflict interest between traditional dominant houses and the neo rich in the matter of temple administration and honours - sharing. Apter has succinctly explained the situation as follows “As opportunity grows so does the potentiality of conflict between those who gain in status versus those who decline”. The crisis between traditional versus modern leadership drags spiritual centres into a web of controversy, which often leads to stoppage of pujas and either postponement or abandonment of temple festivals.

Earlier we have seen that economic development fomented materialistic interest, which affected kinship relations. This has its echo in festival participation. Formerly festivals served the purpose of cementing kinship ties, since members of the family used to visit their kins in the neighbouring villages during festival times and stay along with them, participating in festival programmes. But kinship divide has created a setback to this kin participation in festivals and naturally festivals have lost much of the glamour that it once had. Thus, today temples have become one of the areas of conflict between erstwhile masters and clients and between traditional versus modern leadership. On the question of temple patronage, competition has become regular since the
old dominant houses face challenge from the neo rich. It has contributed to increasing temple sponsored charitable activities.

Gay and gaiety marked the character of festivals like Pongal, Deepavali, etc. However, to the economically poorer sections, festivals had very little meaning, since they could not afford to spend lavishly. But, today the situation has changed a lot, since economic development has embraced all sections of the society, the fruit of which is realised well by the former labour class. They celebrate festivals with gaiety and luxuries. Not only that, the festival days are expanding, covering New Year days and all auspicious occasions.

Economic development and the accompanied educational growth have affected the traditional cultural pattern and the value system attached to it. Welcoming changes are manifested in the thought-action mode. Yet traditions of superstition hardly die. The superstition of the people is very numerous. They believe that the appearance of a tortoise in a house or in their field, a dream of a temple car in motion, seneez hearing, seeing of one Brahmin, two Sudras, a widow, oil, a snake, a huntsman, a sanyasi, etc., are bad omens. There are also good omens like hearing of a ringing bell, a canon sound, the braying of an ass, the cry of a Brahmani kite, a corpse, etc. All classes believe that evil spirits can be warded off by talismans (raksha bandhanam). It is generally believed that if a goat climbs on the roof of the house, a disaster is foretold, which can only be averted by cutting off the animals ears and throwing cooked rice mixed with its blood on the roof.¹¹¹ Such superstitions and its rigidity have become minimised due to educational growth, rational thinking, Western
impact and son on. However, the weakening of rational movements, revival of Sanskritised cultural traits, which are believed to be of more value, contribute to superstitious re-activism.

END NOTES:


8. Government of Tamilnadu, Thanjavur – Pathandu Sathanaigal, p.34.


21. It is an accepted fact that the production and marketed surplus of any crop is dependent on the size of the operational holdings. It is mainly on this parameter, the cultivators are stratified as marginal cultivators (0-1 hectare), small cultivators (1-2 hectares), medium cultivators (2-4 hectares) and Big Cultivators having four hectares and above.


28. Ibid., p.323.


31. Ibid., p.5.


43. Andre Beteille, Inequality Among Men, p.92.

44. B.D. Sharda, Status Attainment in Rural India, (Delhi: Ajanta Publications, 1977), p.29.

46. They collected data from 15 villagers in Tanjore district. In 1967-68, a sample of 150 farms distributed over 15 villages was surveyed to study farm management aspects. Again after 17 years, the same sample was approached for a restudy on change in paddy yields.


50. Daniel Thorner, op.cit., p.75.


52. Daniel Thorner, op.cit., p.77.


58. ‘Parisapanam’ is the modified form of brides price. Only after payment of parisapanam brides' parents would accept the marriage proposal. It was customary in those days; but today the situation changes completely.


60. Ibid.

61. ‘Moi’ popular in all family functions and marriage celebrations of Tamil Nadu means offer of gift. During life cycle celebrations it is customary to pay gifts are presents by those who present in the functions. For kinsmen it is one of the obligations prevalent among all societies.


63. Ibid.

64. Gough quoted by R.A.P.Singh, op.cit., p.166.

66. Ibid.


77. At present, the Presidents and Secretaries of all the political parties, including the Congress Party belongs to non-Brahmin castes.


85. Andre Beteille, Inequality Among Men, p.142.


88. Daniel Thorner, op.cit., p.16.


97. ‘Kittipillu’ An Indian game equivalent to the game of cricket.

98. ‘Thayam’ It is very famous in Tanjore, which refers to a game of dice.

Two or more men play the game.


110. Ibid., p289.

111. F.R. Hemingway, op.cit., p.66.