SOCIAL LIFE

CASTE SYSTEM

Indian society is distinctly marked by its elaborate caste system which represents a unique type of social organization. The Mahratha society consisted of many vertical and horizontal groups (endogamous and exogamous). The inhabitants of Thanjavur region belonged to several communities with differences in customs, manners, religions and languages. This complex and pervasive social institution can be studied in its various aspects.

A person’s caste and ritual status was determined by birth, which was the basis of caste system. It was not possible to change from the caste of one’s birth to a caste of one’s choice, even as a result of change of religion. A person could not escape the rules and regulations of the caste in which he was born. The caste rules were binding which set the pattern, for the way of life and behaviour. Contemporary Jesuit sources also endorse such a view which remarks, “One can, by exploits acquire honour and wealth, but that nobility cannot be acquired in that way, it is a pure gift of birth, neither the king can give it, nor an individual buy it. The Jesuit sources which portray things as they are point out, that the people were divided into four castes with the Brahmans at the apex, the kings, traders and cultivators and artisans in the descending order.

Da Costa, another Jesuit father divided them into three groups as higher, middle and lower (Brahmans, kings, Vaisyas and Sudras and last the Pariahs and untouchables).
Caste was related to occupation, which was an important contributing factor to the emergence of the caste system. There was close association between caste and occupation, which was hereditary. It received its ritual rank, chiefly on the basis of traditional occupations. (priests, kings, soldiers, traders, tenants and serfs etc). Some occupations (most polluting) appear to have been segregated from others, directly as a result of high-caste philosophy. Some polluting occupations like Barbers, launderers had economic justification. Other occupations were branded as impure. Ritual rank in the traditional system, gave sanction to social gradations with the proviso that Brahmans as codifiers ranked above all other groups. The religious rationale for these gradations was derived from the purusha suktha the Rigvedic hymn which says about Varanashrama dharma.

The caste system also established a system of hierarchy based on ceremonial purity; the hierarchy thus resting upon ritual, rather than upon an economic basis. The Brahmans claimed the highest ritual purity, whereas some of the castes which were believed to have no ritual purity were regarded as untouchables and were placed at the bottom. Between these two extremes, there prevailed many castes and sub-castes low or high. The Mahratha society leaned between orthodoxy and rigidity. The society under the Thanjavur Mahratha rule did not conform to this theoretical division of society into four varnas, but with five fixed categories.

The five categories were, 1. The Brahmans.

2. The non-Brahmans aristocratic castes of rulers, army officials and village administrators (Vellalas, Kallans, Naidus etc.)
3. The non-Brahman castes of villagers who had no land, tenants artisans etc.

4. Castes of non-Brahman villagers with polluting occupations (toddy-tappers, washermen, barbers etc.)

5. The castes of serfs (Pallans and Parayans.)

There was also a sixth category whose rank varied with circumstances. They were traders and urban craftsmen comprising of all castes which appeared to have ranked high or low. The mutual ranking of these urban castes undoubtedly varied with their economic strength and power.

Every caste had its own vocation and trespassing it due to necessity, was common during the Mahratha period. Yet no caste would allow its members to follow any calling which was degrading or impure. This acted as a restraint on choice of One's occupation. Occupations like trading and agriculture were common to all. But, profession of priesthood was the monopoly of the Brahmans according to their jathi dharma, though they took up other occupations which were not polluting due to necessity. This kind of elasticity had been the hallmark of the Hindu society all along.

Another peculiar feature of caste is its concept of purity and pollution which formed the basis of Hindu society. This Hindu law givers justified it as principles of defilement and purification of the society. The system of pollution and achara were more intense in such a conservative rigid society under the Thanjavur Mahratha rule.
There were gradations in regard to pollution in the social hierarchy. A washerman or a Barber, though he himself was very low in the social scale would not touch an untouchable who was lower than him in the social ladder. They were prohibited from drawing water from the village wells, for their presence was deemed to pollute the premises.

It may be mentioned that, pollution always overcame purity; a high caste person was polluted by his contacts with a low-caste person in any way, but the low-caste person was not purified by his contacts with the high-caste one.

In order to maintain its purity or ritual status, each caste ordained its members to follow a code of behaviour and it prescribed a certain form of commensal taboos. The commensal taboos were of three kinds:

1. One kind of commensal taboo strictly prohibited accepting food (cooked) at the hands of a person belonging to a lower caste. It was known as *anna-vyavahara*.

2. Another type of commensal taboo prohibited acceptance of water at the hands of lower-caste person. - *udaka-vyavahara*.

3. The third kind of commensal taboo prescribed that one should not sit to dine with a person of lower ritual status in the same row. It was known as *ekapanthi, vyavahara*.

This sort of social and religious privileges, superior or inferior status of certain castes was found in Thanjavur region under Mahratha rule. Thus caste system divided the society into a number of inaccessible and distinct cells which prevented any free social
mobility among them. In matters of social administration, each caste was an autonomous unit headed by a head man who was entitled to certain rights.

CASTE ORGANIZATION - (CASTE COUNCILS)

Caste as a corporate group primarily aimed at maintaining its ritual status and safeguarding the interest of its members. Therefore, it sought to control and regulate the behaviour of its members through its council or sabha. Castes had jurisdiction mainly over matters involving violation of caste rules regarding inter-dining, matrimonial alliances etc. There were jathi sabha or caste council. These caste disputes were referred to caste panchayat. The caste heads looked after this council. The post of the headman appears to be hereditary or confined to one family who often had certain privileges. Each caste had its head man who was variously known as Peria thanakkaran nattammaikkaran, kariasthan etc, who had judicial powers in certain cases. The Brahmans did not possess this type of caste organisation. The issues concerning their caste were generally referred to Brahma sabhas (assemblies of Brahmans).

The Brahmans from holy places who were authorised by tradition decided the suits concerning achara. (religious conduct) Hindu law and prayaschitta (religious penance) under the leadership of the dharmadhikari. The Brahmans therefore, might not have felt the necessity of establishing their own independent organization for disciplining the members of their caste. For the ordinary purposes of caste disciplines, fines were imposed which was known as gotadanda. For serious breaches of caste law, and in certain
offences a peculiar kind of punishment was imposed -i.e. punishment of excummunication or bahishkara\textsuperscript{19}. The chief purpose behind it was that of avoiding all such social contacts with the offender which might endanger the purity of the rest of the people. Persons of other castes would not go to his house and would stop their services and so on. The community also imposed certain disabilities on the person ex-communicated. Administering justice in caste disputes was not the only function of it, but it strove to safeguard the social and economic interests of its members. The caste councils did more than just punish the offenders but tried to find some agreeable solution in embarassing situations and handled the case, tactfully to make settlement in inter-caste disputes.

However, the caste disputes brought before the government were generally referred to the religious authorities like the dharmasabhas i.e., conventions of the learned Brahmans for decision\textsuperscript{20}. An out caste could be admitted back to the caste, only if approved by the caste sabha.

The caste was able to exercise a strong hold on the society as it rendered certain valuable services to the society\textsuperscript{21}. The greatest advantage of the caste system was that, it provided society with economic and social stability. Caste had also its drawbacks. It fostered a spirit of division, disunion and fissiparous tendencies among its members. The Mahratha society in Thanjavur, dominated by caste, naturally tended to be unprogressive. Caste came in the way of inter-mingling of people, social change and intergration. Even within the villages, the life was organised on caste. Thus the caste councils were able to preserve the traditional set up intact during the Mahratha period.
At the end of 19th century, the traditional set up was in peril due to British rule. The introduction of western education, new legal codes, growth of big cities and towns affected the traditional Hindu set up. The introduction of uniform criminal laws and establishment of the British courts removed the caste councils, as a result, they lost their prominence.

The Charter Act of 1833 and enactment of many social acts set aside the authority of caste. The *Castes Disabilities Removal Act* of 1850 facilitated conversion from one religion to another which disturbed the integrity of caste system which became a potential threat to the Hindu society.

**SOCIAL DIVISIONs**

The bulk of population in Mahratha society as elsewhere in the south India consisted of Hindus. The Hindus were distributed according to caste and other social distinctions. The Muhannmadan population by race as distinguished from descendants of converts consists of Shaiks, Pathans, Sayyids, Arabs, Labbays, Mughals and others. According to sect, the Muhammadans were classified as Sunnis, Shiahs wahabs and others. The Christians according to sect consisted of Roman Catholics, Protestants, Lutharans and others. The native converts were mainly Roman catholics.

The census report of those days, divided the male population into six main groups as regards occupation 1) professional class including state officials 2) domestic servants 3) commercial class 4) agricultural class 5) industrial class
6) non-productive class, comprising all male children, general labourers and other unspecified occupation.

The Hindus divided themselves into three broad categories of castes. The Brahmans, Non-Brahmans and Sudras. The Thanjavur administrative economic and ritual hierarchies produced five categories of castes as said earlier. Hierarchy forked with the Brahmans holding supreme ritual rank and the king and non-Brahman aristocracy holding authority in administrative affairs. In the Hindu social set up, a Brahman is a *dvija* (twice born) and the Sudra is without any status.

In social matters as has been mentioned earlier, the Brahmans took the lead and had imposed many of their domestic customs and ceremonies upon other communities. They commanded the most respected influence in the society. There were many subdivisions in the Brahman Caste. Most numerous were the Tamil Brahmans who received grants of land from the Chola kings and as a result, they had settled in separate Brahman villages of Thanjavur, Tiruvadi, Kumbakonam, Mayavaram and Pattukkottai.

The Brahmans in general, according to the Jesuit sources were proud and arrogant due to the fact that God who controls the world is under the control of prayers or mantras. The Brahmans control these prayers. Therefore the Brahmans are Gods.

The majority of the Tamil Brahmans were of *saivite* or *smartha* sect who worshipped Lord Siva. They were sub-divided into smaller sub-divisions of endogamous sub-castes based upon sectarian, occupational, ritualistic differences. Each group seldom inter-marry.
In regard to Srivaishnavas, they were supposed to be the converts from smarthas. There were two distinct groups of Sri Vaishnavas, the vadagalais (northerners) and the Tengalais (southerners) who were easily distinguished by the marks on their foreheads. All Vaishnavas were expected to undergo a ceremony of initiation into Vaishnavism after the upanayanam ceremony. At times, they quarrelled in connection with temple worship.

Brahmans used to wear the sacred thread. A number of funeral and marriage ceremonies of the Tamil Brahmans differ from those of other linguistic divisions among the Brahman caste. A number of special customs characterised the Brahmans, mostly connected with their belief in pollution, widow celibacy, prohibition of divorce, and vegetarianism. All the Brahmans were expected to perform the daily observances like sandhya, devapooja, tarpana and annual sradha.

There were also Brahmans other than the Tamil Brahmans in Thanjavur region during Mahratha rule. Of these, mention may be made of the Telugu, the Mahratha and the Kannada Brahmans. The Telugu Brahmans were divided into the nriyogis and vaidiks. The Konkanese and Gujarathi Brahmans who followed the Mahrathi conquerors lived as traders in larger towns.

The Mahratha Brahmans holding higher ranks in the society maintained a high position and status. They were settled near the fort area in Thanjavur. They were granted endowments of lands by the kings.

Coming to the Non-Brahman castes, they formed three major categories. The first of these was the aristocratic castes of
traditional land managers and village administrators in the non-Brahman villages. They occupied a position of authority. They were the *Vellalas*. The Telugu *Naidus* - former soldiers and government servants of the Nayaks, the Tamil *kallans* from the south-west uplands, some of whose ancestors in the Nayak and Mahratha periods received estates in return for military service.

The second category of non-Brahmans comprised tenant farmers and specialised labourers, who served the dominant Brahman and non-Brahman aristocratic castes. Chief among them were *Agamudaiyans* (believed once to have been house-servants of the Chola Kings). *Padaiyachis* (once soldiers in the early invasions of the Pallavas), *Muppanar* and *Konars* who were higher caste landlords.

The special groups of village workers include the artisan (*Kammalan*) caste of blacksmiths, carpenters and goldsmiths, *Ambalakkarans*, *Nadans* (toddy - tappers) *Vannans* (washerman) *Vanniyans* (oil-mongers) *Ambattans* (barbers) *Melakkarans* (musicians and dancing - girls) *Kusavans* (potters) and *Pusaris* (low caste temple priests).

The third non-Brahman category comprised craftsmen and traders. They include Tamil, Kannada, Telugu and Gujarathi castes of weavers, *Chettis* or traders in various commodities.

The Mahratha non-Brahmans formed two small castes the higher and the lower. The higher caste comprised the 96 families known as *Channauguylas* and to this caste belonged the descendants of the kings and their relations. To the lower castes
belonged the soldiers and their followers. These castes did not intermarry and maintained their individualities.

The women of the higher castes observed strict *gosha*. The men used to wear sacred thread, but in no respect followed the customs of the Brahmans. The names of Mahratha men usually end with suffix *rao* and the women with *bai*. The division in Mahratha society were: *desastha, citbhavan, kongani, lohar* (ironsmith) *goli* (fisherman) *navi* (barber) *kumbar* (potter) *sali* (dyeing occupation) and *ashbusher* (untouchables). The Marathi speaking nomads were called *mandi* (engaged in puppet shows and dummy horse dance).

The Vellalars constituted the famous cultivating class and formed an important community in Thanjavur. They maintained their purity and integrity. There were about 15 sub-sects among them and of these, the most important were the *Cholia Vellalar, Karaikattu* or *Pandya Vellalan* and the *Mudalis* of Tondamandalam.

All Vellalas have the title of either *Mudali, Pillai* or *Pandaram*. Among the Vellalas there were both Saivites and Vaishnavites. They were generally orthodox in their religious practices. Most of them were vegetarians. They did not have caste *panchayats* and did not normally worship the evil spirits. Although, agriculture was the main occupation of the Vellalars they were found to be very efficient *karnams* or accountants during the Mahratha days. They never allowed their women to go out, to avoid others making eyes at them.

The *Kallars* of Thanjavur who were formerly branded as a class of thieves have taken to agriculture and during the Mahratha rule, many of them were well-to-do agriculturists. They had
acquired a great deal of power and commanded a social status equal to that of the Vellalars. They chiefly inhabited the western sides of Thanjavur and Pattukkottai taluks. They had caste sub-divisions which were purely territorial. Inter-marriage among the sub-divisions were not permitted. They had caste panchayats and the headmen decided the disputes between their members and imposed fines as punishments. They were spirit worshippers. Divorce was permitted among them and Kallar women could contract a second marriage as such women were not looked down upon. The women among them enjoyed a great deal of freedom.

The Kallars were marked for their character of vindictiveness, vengeance and law of retaliation. The other important cultivating caste was Palli (Vanniars). The Vanniars caste denoted Vannikula kshatriyars who regarded themselves as superior to all other non-Brahman communities. They were known by several names such as Nayakar, Padaiyachi etc. They used to follow strict social customs. They had caste panchayats and their occupation was cultivation. The Konars looked after the work such as grazing of cattle. They had their own caste organisation.

The Komattiars whose mother tongue was Telugu, called themselves Vaisyas. Their occupation was trade. They used to wear sacred thread and perform upanayanam ceremony. They were generally called Chettiars which was used as an occupational name and they did not belong to the other castes called Chettiars.

The caste Chettiars were merchants and their occupation was generally trade. They usually abstain from animal food. They belonged to ten groups.
The Kavarars who came from Telugu country spoke Telugu with an admixture of Tamil. They were also called Nayaks and those who were engaged in bangle trade were called Chettiar. Those who were engaged in agriculture were called Reddiars. They were divided into eleven principal sub-castes which do not intermarry with one another.\(^{47}\)

The Kaikolas or weaver classes were another dominant community in Thanjavur. There were six sub-castes among them. They were Pattunullars (Sourashtra), Chaliyars, Kaikolars, Cheriar and Chedars and Kunnadiyars. The Kaikolars were subdivided into many clans. Some of them were Saivites, a few were Vaishnavites and some others were Lingayats. All of them spoke Tamil, except the Kannadiyars who spoke Kannada. They had their own rules and regulations.

The craftsmen were artisans who were divided into five distinct castes—the goldsmiths, the coppersmiths, the blacksmiths, the carpenters and the stone masons. Intermarriage was allowed among them. They spoke Tamil except a few who spoke Telugu. They used to wear sacred thread and had their own priests for performing marriage and funeral ceremonies.\(^{50}\)

The Vanniaras belonged to oil monger class. They bear the title of Chettiar, but were considered to be of a low caste probably, because of the crushing of gingelly seeds and the sale of gingelly oil which were viewed as sinful acts in the sastras.\(^{51}\)

The Melakkaras (musicians) were a caste chiefly found in Thanjavur, Shiyali and Orathanadu. The Tamil Melakkarans spoke Tamil and followed customs similar to those of the Vellalars and other
higher castes, while the latter, spoke Telugu and followed the customs of Telugu Brahmans.

The Telugu people commonly practised what was called the *periamelam*\(^\text{53}\). They do not associate themselves with dancing or dancing girls. The Tamils practised both the *periamelam* and the *chirname lam* or the nautch music. Those who performed *chirname lam* were called *Nattu wans*\(^\text{54}\). The *periamelam* was performed at weddings. The *Melakkaran s* have caste *panchayats* of their own to decide their caste matters. They claimed a superior status. At festivals, the players were traditionally paid in grain from the concerned temple lands, at marriages in grain provided by the host family.

The *Karaiyars* were the fishermen of the coast who were confined to Thanjavur region and they occupied a low social position. Their marriage and funeral ceremonies resembled those of the *Vellalars* and their customs regarding divorce and widow remarriage resembled those of the *Kallars*. They considered themselves superior to the *Pallars*, the *Valaiyars* and the *Nokkars* and called themselves the *Karaithurai Vellalars* (sea-side). They had no exogamous and endogamous subdivision among them. They had caste *panchayats* to decide all sorts of civil, criminal and marital disputes. They were Saivites but worshipped minor deities like *Pavadarayan*. They also worshipped the sea and the nets to favour them.

The *Nokkars* (meaning those who look) were a caste who were formerly rope-dancers. Some of them were jugglers, traders and cultivators but the majority of them subsisted chiefly by officiating at the funerals and marriages of the non-Brahmans. At the funerals, they used to blow conches in front of the mourners, at the marriages,
they blew conches infront of the processions. The Nokkans buried their dead. They were usually looked down upon by the other castes, but they in their turn, looked down upon the Valaiyars, the Paraiyars, the Pallars and the Chakkiliyars.

The Valaiyars were originally hunters found chiefly in Thanjavur, Orathanadu, Vallam and Pattukkottai. They occupied a low position in the society and many of their customs resembled those of the Paraiyars and the Pallars. They had their own priests to perform the rites. They allowed divorce and widow remarriage. They had caste panchayats and they were devoted to spirit worship. Apart from the caste of Sudras, there were certain impure castes of untouchables who were kept outside the Hindu society.

The castes of serfs include Paraiyars, Pallars, Chakkiliyars and others. The Paraiyars were mostly agricultural labourers who were at the bottom of the social scale. They were divided into four sects, the Sambar, Tangalar, Maltar and the Appar. Intermarriage among these sects was prohibited. They worshipped the spirits. The Paraiyans were usually ranked below the Pallars for they had to perform polluting tasks at funerals like burning of dead bodies and beating of drums. Actually, their lowness was mainly due to their habit of beef-eating and drinking which were crimes to a Hindu. They were noted for their uncleanliness and so they were treated as untouchables. As they were not tolerated by other high castes their dwellings were in the outskirts of villages. They were strictly forbidden to cross a street where Brahmans lived. Their habit of drinking, animal sacrifice, unclean habits and customs and menial occupations were responsible for their low position and degradation. The women of this caste were as much prone to vice and drunkenness as the men. Like Pariahs, the Pallans also were most
despised by the natives. Contemporary sources clearly say that, they were addicted to drinks and debauchery.

The Pallans occupied the same low-postition as the Paraiyans though they considered themselves superior to the Paraiyars and the Chakkiliyars on the ground that, they did not eat beef. They were the agricultural labourers and their women were said to be expert at transplanting paddy. They had four sub-divisions. The Panikars, Terkti Pallars, Kurumba pallars and Kalatti Pallars. Intermarriage among these groups was not permitted. They had caste panchayats to decide their disputes. Pallans might enter the streets, but not the houses of non-Brahmans and the non-Brahmans in turn, will not pollute themselves by entering pallan houses.

The Chakhdliars were the shoe-makers. They spoke Tamil and Telugu. They also belonged to the polluting category along with Paraiyars but their service was required for all.

Besides these castes, there were some other castes like the Kusavars (potters) washerman, Shanars (toddy tappers) and Barbers. Apart from these, there existed the feud between two distinct groups known as Valangai (right hand) and Idangai (left-hand) classes. All the non-Brahman castes belonged to either one of the factions or the other. The enmity and differences between these two classes were acute under the Mahratha rule. The members of these two classes frequently clashed with each other to get certain honorary distinction such as beating of big drums on ceremonial occasions. During the Mahratha rule the quarrels between them arose from time to time and were settled by the Mahratha kings. There were instances to show that Mahratha kings took efforts to solve these quarrels. King Serfoji II used to listen attentively to the causes of
feuds between right and left hand classes and immediately settled their problems.

During the reign of King Sivaji II, there was an agreement between the two parties who resided in the Baccanna lane in the west main street. A case between the two factions from Pudukkottai was referred to the Mahratha rulers of Thanjavur and a representative of each group approached the sirkhel Baboji Pandit (sirkhel of Sivaji II the last Mahratha ruler). The case was true and the deposition were recorded in writing. Finally a compromise decree was accepted and signed by both the parties and was passed.

Upto the middle of the 19th century, owing to the policy of non intervention by the company such riots were very common. Some social customs pertaining to certain castes affected the public life during the time of Mahratha rulers. The vast influx of Telugu people into Thanjavur during the Nayak period contributed to the complexity of caste formation. The Mahrathas and Sowrashta people from Deccan began to migrate to Thanjavur and settle down in this region.

As far as the other communities were concerned, the Muslims were most numerous in the inland taluks like Kumbakonam and Papanasam and in trading coastal taluks of Nagapattinam and Pattukkottai. They were mostly Labbaiss and Marakkayars. The Labbaiss were of shafi sect. Though they were orthodox Muslims, in their way of dress and manners, they followed rather Hindus than Muslims. Their marriage ceremonies closely resembled those of lower caste Hindus, the only difference being that, they cite passage from the kuran and the women do not appear in public even during their
marriages. *Labbais* were mostly traders. Some of them cultivated betel and were called *Kodikalkarar Labbaïs* (betel growers)

The *Marakkayars* like the *Labbaïs* (a mixed race of the Arabs and the Hindus) were mostly traders. They belonged to *shafi* sect. They did not intermarry with *Labbaïs*. The *Marakkayars* considered themselves superior to the *Labbaïs* and did not generally interdine or intermarry with them. The Muslims of pure descent, on the other hand regarded both the *Marakkayars* and *Labbaïs* inferior to them. This led to the *Marakkayars* and the *Labbaïs* adopting some of the customs of pure Muslims in dressing themselves in strict Muslim fashion and by speaking Hindustani at home.

The Christians were found all over Thanjavur district, but in large numbers in Thanjavur due to the work of missionaries in the capital. All the Christians owe their origin as a separate community, to the proselytizing activities of the Christian missions that came from Europe.

The Christians of Thanjavur, unlike those of other districts were generally converts from the higher castes and therefore, they were held in greater respect by the Hindus. Fr.Schwartz took a lenient view of caste and permitted the converts to retain most of their caste customs. Even at present, these caste distinctions among the Christians remain.

The Jains formed a minor community and the majority of them was to be found in Thanjavur and Kumbakonam. Their chief temples existed in Mannargudi and Devangudi. They generally styled themselves as *Chettiar* and *Mudaliar* and were engaged in trade and agriculture. The men kept on their foreheads, a sect mark which is
like a Vaishnava mark with slight changes. They were usually clean shaved. The women dressed up like the Vellalars and used to wear the same kind of tali and other jewellery. The Jain mode of worship in the temples and their houses were more or less similar to those of the Brahmans, but they worshiped the images of some of the Tirthankaras and not of any Hindu deities. They believed in the doctrine of re-birth. They also believed in ahimsa and practised it as far as possible.

The Jains of those days were divided into two divisions: the ordinary laymen and three priestly classes namely:

Archakas or Vadyars

Annam or Annuvritis

Nirvanis or Munis

An Archaka can rise to the position of an Annam and an Annam can rise to the position of a Nirvani. There were among Jains a sisterhood of nuns. The monks dressed in red and nuns dressed in white. The Jains did not intermarry among different divisions and generally resembled the Brahmins in their domestic ceremonies. They observed Sivarathri, Deepavali, Pongal and Ayudha pooja like the Hindus.

The social and religious customs of the people of Thanjavur remained more or less same, as it is at present, though people living in towns were influenced by European manners and customs in dress and behaviour. It can be said that no marked changes have taken place in matters like food, marriages, funerals, festivals and other observances. The description of the social and
religious life of the Hindus given below may be said to be generally applicable to all the Hindus, whether living in towns or villages. Of course, some difference did exist in matters like rituals in marriage and funeral ceremonies among the various castes and sub-castes which had already been indicated. Indeed in towns, their castes can hardly be distinguished by their professions and behaviour, but not so in the villages. There, the caste distinctions were made more clearly in villages than in the towns. To maintain the caste system intact in villages, each caste had its own quarters. Each caste had its own streets the Brahmans, Sudras and panchama quarters were separate. The untouchables lived in separate streets. The out castes had their own wells.

Tamil Muslims and Christians too were not free from such restrictions which they had inherited from the Hindus. The Tamil Christians also retained several traditions like the Hindus. The higher caste Christians had their own churches where the lower castes were not permitted. Certain restrictions were made on their dress and mode of life.

Thus caste system divided the Mahratha society into a number of distinct cells, which practically prevented any free social mobility among them.

The caste system was rigid when the British took up the administration of Thanjavur kingdom. They too had to rely on the educated few, mostly the Brahmans at the beginning, which gave them ascendancy in the society. After a stage, their predominance was challenged by the non-Brahman elite. With the rapid spread of Western education, their unchallenged supremacy evoked resentment especially in the urban areas, where the impact of the West was more
conspicuous. But the Dravidian association and non-Brahman movement of the 20th century was, unthinkable a hundred years ago.

VILLAGE AND URBAN COMMUNITIES

Tamil country is well known for its corporate village life from ancient times. Social life under Thanjavur Mahrathas also centred round the village communities. In estimating the exact population of Mahratha kingdom, we have some difficulty for there are no records to indicate and the government did not maintain a census department. Hence, it is not possible to estimate the proportion of urban population to the rural population in the Mahratha kingdom. Due to lack of modern means of transport and communication and non existence of large scale industries, urbanisation was not that much easy. Hence, we can assume that the proportion of the rural to urban population was greater. The towns had to depend on the villages, for the supply of thier daily wants. Thus the unit of social and economic life was the village.\textsuperscript{79}

Every village was a corporate unit comprising within itself the entire machinery of local administration\textsuperscript{80} in an establishment of hereditary servants or \textit{gramatolilikal}\textsuperscript{81} who served the village at large namely barber, carpenter, potter, cobbler, blacksmith, goldsmith washer-women and Temple priests. The village divides itself into three or more well defined physical segments the \textit{agraharam}, \textit{kudiana} streets and the \textit{cheri} or untouchable residential area.

The barbers shaved the villagers. Women of the barber caste were mid-wives. The carpenters made wooden ploughs, bullockcarts etc. for farmers. The potters supplied the villagers and
travellers with earthen vessels. The shoe-maker mended the shoes of the whole community. The village blacksmith was the supplier of the ploughshares. The goldsmith made articles of jewellery for the people. The weavers supplied the necessary clothing to the people.

The village artisans were not paid for their job. They were entitled to receive, in return for their services, remuneration in kind from villagers, consisting of the fixed proportion of the produce of the soil on the occasions of ceremonial rites and festivals. Most of their day-to-day activities and requirements fell within their village, which enabled them to attain a good deal of self-sufficiency in matters of village administration. During the Mahratha period, the government's presence in individual's life was limited as the function of the state was to collect revenue and maintain order. Therefore, the village communities had to solve their problems internally, whether economic, administrative or social the village headman managed the matters concerning the village. The most important function of the village communities was that of administering justice and maintaining civil order in the village.

The village communities were given considerable freedom in matters of general administration of their village and allowed to exercise certain executive power also. The village communities of this period administratively autonomous and economically self reliant presented a remarkable degree of unity. Economic inter-dependence between different sections of the community served as a major binding force, which added a sense of unity. Their social status in this set-up was not related to caste-status hierarchy and devoid of caste prejudices. Though the village community existed as an independent social unit, there prevailed another parallel social organisation of caste which was organised under their caste heads.
The people who belonged to different villages, were thus bound together by ties of caste.

When the British assumed the administration of Thanjavur kingdom, they continued the same system. Till the end of the 18th century, the headman was the intermediary between the village and the state. With his wealth and influence, the village headman wielded considerable power. The British after establishing their power, introduced many reforms and curtailed his powers. He became powerless. As a result, the village headman could not function effectively and administration at the bottom went out of gear#.3.

The village community which was once popular and powerful, lost its importance with the advent of the British. The villages were no longer self-sufficient units and they lost their solidarity. The worse fate befell the Thanjavur Mahratha kingdom in 1781-85, as Haider Ali assisted by French made a thrust to oust the British, devastated northern Thanjavur and thousands of Tanjoreans were massacred, Children were deported to Mysore. Most of the remainder fled into jungles in near by places#.4. At the end of 18th century, a few villages were decayed, deserted and ruined while some villages were created and some were growing into towns owing to commercial causes. There were indeed some large towns in the Mahratha days though, uninterrupted wars have made the country devastated and desolate. Weavers, artisans and other who left the towns during the wars returned to their homes.

In the towns, there were many professional castes such as Kaikolas, Chettis etc., to whom weaving and trading were the sole
means of livelihood. They had their caste and craft guilds to regulate their trade.

Besides these industrial classes in towns, there was a class of wealthy merchants and dubashis, who played a vital role in urban life. The machinery of internal trade was directed under them. Among the mercantile classes, Komutti and Nattukkottai Chetti’s were the wealthiest people. They were the chief traders and they carried on the internal trade. They were extremely wealthy and enjoyed all the amenities of city life.

SOCIAL INSTITUTION

FAMILY

As noticed earlier, caste was a dominant feature of the society of the Mahratha period. Caste system had stratified society into rigid compartments that social inter-relationship between its members, had to be conducted withing certain limits defined by its regulations. In such a caste ridden society, a person was looked upon as a caste unit rather than an individual. Caste identification became a pre-requisite of his socialization. This inexorable hold of caste system over a person’s life, lent importance to the institution of family during the Mahratha period. It was only through his family, that a person could participate in and identify himself with the society. The kind of family organization obtained during the Mahratha period was the joint family which had been prevalent in the Hindu society for ages. The family of the period was formed of patriarchal group recognising patriarchal descent.

The head of the family played a key role in the affairs of the joint family and decided the matters of family, and religion, family
expenses, observation of religious rites, ceremonies and personal matters. The head of the family had to shoulder many responsibilities. The eldest brother enjoyed supreme authority and privileges. The right of primogeniture was one of the greatest privileges he enjoyed. The duties of the head of the family included such matters as worship of family Gods, performance of *shraddha* ceremonies (death anniversaries of ancestors) and so on. The marriages were arranged with the consent of the elder members of the family.

Family property was a common trust, in which each member had an equal share irrespective of his individual contribution. Thus it gave economic stability. The members of the family were answerable to any liability which the family incurred. The son was regarded a natural heir. Marriage was regarded as a sacrament essential for the fulfilment of certain duties and the supreme object of marriage was perpetuation of family.

Family served as an excellent school for training the child in social etiquettes, self-discipline, self-sacrifice, obedience and service to elders. It played a distinct educational role during the Mahratha period. One's family was one's school, as occupations were hereditary. The family had vested interests and trained the sons in the family occupation, for it guaranteed the continuation of their hereditary occupation. The educational role of the family had economic implications by training the new generation in skilled family art, which had been cultivated for generations.

The reasons why the joint family continued could be traced to economic factors. Owing to the lack of employment opportunities and limited mobility, a person was more or less
dependent on his family occupation. This kind of economic structure of the family had important effects on marriage, which is the basis of a family.

Though the joint family provided its individual member with all facilities that were needed for his life, it was not totally devoid of defects. There was always bitterness between its members. Though it gave security, it curtailed individual’s freedom of action as the individual was regarded more as a caste unit, a member of a family, than as an independent being. Yet, it united all its members on occasions, when family rituals and ceremonies were celebrated in common.

At the end of the 19th century, the growth of technology indirectly stimulated migration which caused the break up of the traditional family system. The joint family broke up in urban areas, largely because, of a new way of life and transfer of employees to different places. The influence of English education, urbanisation and other influence caused the joint families to break up and disappear.

MARRIAGE

As indicated earlier, marriage is the basis of family and it was regarded more as a matter between two families, than between two individuals. The method of contracting marriage was, arranged marriages, which were fixed by family. Partners were picked mainly, with an eye to the advantage of and regard for the family. The factors that mattered in the selection of a match were compatibility of horoscopes, family background and caste. Everthing was left to the middlemen or broker who used to be a professional man. These brokers charged some fees for their assistance.
Regarding the marriage alliance of the royal family, the Mahratha kings had the practice of having matrimonial alliance among chanavukuli clans and married the daughters of the chiefs of Satara, Kolhapur and Pune. Almost every Mahratha ruler married a girl from a reputable kshatriya Mahratha family from Maharashtra such as Ingles, Mohites and Ghadges families. This naturally kept their contacts with Maharashtra alive and gave them strength. Mahratha language written and spoken was continuously reaching Thanjavur through matrimonial alliances. Venkoji or Ekoji I, the first Mahratha ruler started this practice in Thanjavur which he adopted from his brother 'Sivaji the Great' of Maharashtra.

Every caste had its own peculiarities according to which marriages were conducted by certain exogamous and endagamous rules. There were basic differences between the marriage of Brahmans and non-Brahmans. Among the Brahmans, marriage could not take place between persons of the same gotra. Caste endogamy prohibited marriage outside one's subcaste group. These regulations of marriage had to be strictly observed. Breach of these rules led to one's excommunication by his caste.

The Brahmans accepted varadaksina as a gift by bride's parents to the bride groom which was sanctioned by religion. The dowry formed an essential part of the marriage rite. This practice was fostered by the fact that a Brahman must marry his daughter before she attained maturity. We come across a few references to dowry transactions during the Mahratha period. A few instances refer to acceptance of dowry which had crept among the Brahman caste in Thanjavur region. There were instances on the demand for dowry and on the contrary we find that some offered bride-price.
Among the Mahrathas, *Kallans* and others the practice of bride price prevailed.

It was customary among Mahratha Brahmans and others to observe a betrothal ceremony known as *nichiyartham*. It was a sort of preliminary marriage contract. The party guilty of breaking off without any justifiable reason could be sued by the other for the offence. After the engagement, marriage took place at the bridegroom's residence with many ceremonies. Of these the *kasiyattrai* the *kanyadana*, *agniparinayana* and *saptapadi* were important ceremonies. After these ceremonies, they were allowed to take up the *grahastadharmah*. Thus, their marriage was an elaborate and expensive ritual. An unmarried man is looked upon as having no social status, as he was being considered an almost useless member of the society. Marriage was regarded as a great event of rejoicing and an occasion for a happy gathering.

The non-Brahman marriage rites were a mixture of both indigenous and *vedic* rites. The Brahmans have imposed many customs and ceremonies upon the communities which followed them. Though some customs often differed, in their ways, a vein of similarity ran through their practices. The selection of match was based on certain rules. A boy should not marry the daughter of his maternal aunt or his paternal uncle but was encouraged to marry the daughter of his sister, his maternal uncle or his paternal aunt. An eldest son should not marry an eldest daughter, but a breach of this rule was neutralised among *Paraiyars* by making the pair swallow a two *anna* coin piece. Similarly, it was widely believed that the boy should be older than the girl. Though marriages were regulated by certain rules of caste endogamy, there were however some exceptions to these rules on the ground of customs and usage. For instance,
cross-cousin marriages were recognized among certain castes as the practice was backed by custom.

Like the marriage of the Brahmans, the non-Brahmans also, commenced with a ceremony called ritchiyartham at the bride’s house. On the eve of the marriage, a ceremony called parisam was performed. Just before marriage, a ceremony called nalangu was done. The couple were brought to the dias with their wedding clothes and karnigathanam (giving away the bride to the bridegroom as a gift) was performed. Then the bridegroom tied the tali round the neck of the bride signifying a tie between them. After that the husband holding his wife’s hand took her three times round the sacred fire (agni) symbolising that he married her in the presence of God of fire. Then they were shown Dhurva and Aruntati reminding the virtuous life led by Aruntati and Dhurva. After the completion of all these ceremonies, the elder sumangali ladies performed arati to take away the bad effects of evil eyes. Wedding feasts and marriage procession were the highlights of the whole ceremony.

Great pomp and show marked the marriage celebrations among the rich and noble families. James Forbes notes “invitation to the wedding of king Sivaji II was written down on silver paper flowered with gold and enclosed under a cover of gold brocade.” The marriage celebrations used to continue generally for three days but among the lower casts like Pallans and Parayans it was celebrated only for a day. One of the conspicuous feature of the marriage custom among the Mahratha women was a new name was given to every girl at her marriage and she was known for the future only by that name. The old name was cast off from the day of marriage.
The lower castes too, had their own peculiar marriage rites which reflected their cultural traditions. Generally, the marriage was performed in the bridegroom's house. But the Pallans celebrated it in the bride's house.

Among the dancing girls, a peculiar form of marriage was in vogue. They were wedded to swords and daggers in temples. The ladies in the seraglio, maintained by Mahratha kings were called sword wives who were of inferior rank. The akkas or the servant maids of the Baisahebs or Mahratha queens in the royal harem used to wear tali only as an ornament. They did not get themselves married.

MARRIAGE RITES AMONG THE CHRISTIANS

The Tamil Christians too contracted arranged marriages like their Hindu counter parts. They too were endogamous and marriage outside one's caste was very rare. They also gave dowry (parisa panam) to the bride. There was no basic change in their way of life even after their conversion to Christianity, as they all belonged to the same ethnic group in Thanjavur.

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES AMONG THE MUSLIMS

The Muslims in Thanjavur kingdom also conducted their marriages more or less in Hindu style. Like the Hindus, they consulted the omens, to make sure that the marriage union would be happy. The Labbai, Ravuthar and Marakkayars used to seek the bride like the Hindus.
The date of the marriage was fixed by astrologers and it lasted for a number of days which was followed by feasts. The marriage rites resembled those of Hindus. The tying of tali (usually black bead) was a great ceremony. The Ravuthan's custom was to take arathi to the couple, and the bride being sent out soon after marriage in procession to bring water from the village well and many other ceremonies resembled the Hindus

RE-MARRIAGE

Inter-caste marriages were not permitted in the Mahratha society. Similarly, re-marriage was prohibited among the Brahmans and other higher castes. Re-marriage was permitted during the period under study, but only among the economically handicapped or humbler castes. A wife by re-marriage did not enjoy the same ritual status as was granted to the wife of first marriage and their children were accorded second preference in the family.

DIVORCE

The practice of divorce like re-marriage was confined only to the lower castes. For the Brahmans and other higher castes it was considered irrevocable as marriage tie prevailed among some castes. The available material reveals that the Kallar caste women enjoyed a great deal of freedom. Among them, divorced women were not outcast. In case of a widow who remarries, the children were left with the ex-husband. The Valaiyans allowed divorce and remarriage. Among humbler castes, not only widows but, also women whose husbands were not heard of for a long time were permitted to re-marry.
POLYGAMY

Another striking feature of marriage system in Mahratha society was the practice of polygamy. Though monogamy was the prevalent mode of life in Hindu society, polygamy prevailed in Thanjavur. The traditional principle 'One husband one wife' was observed more in preaching than in practice. The kings practised polygamy for various reasons\(^{116}\). For example to strengthen their political power, the rich people as a social prestige married many wives. Polygamy was practised by the rich people or those who had no children by the previous marriage and in this case it was justified as a need and desire for a son. Instances are available in the Modi records.

Though the Mahratha kings married many wives, the first was the chief queen and her son was only the rightful heir to the throne. The other wives were called \textit{sword wives}. They were inferior and hence their offsprings were deemed illegitimate. The common men too had the right to marry as many wives as they chose. The kings themselves encouraged this system. It is strengthened by the following statement. One Venkatrajalu of \textit{Naidu} caste who was a stone polisher received Rs.150/- as gift for his third marriage from the king\(^{117}\).

The practice of polygamy, though widely prevalent was never considered as a sin during the Mahratha period. It was not perhaps accorded the highest social sanction unless supported by such religious justification as need and desire for a son.

Though polygamy presented no economic problems, this system of marriage, politically led to troubles and maladministration,
disputed succession, interference of the queens and mistresses in public affairs, court intrigues and poisoning were often reflected on the society which curtailed the progress of the state.

POSITION OF WOMEN

Position of women mainly depended on the level of culture and general outlook of the society of which they are a part. The status of women in Thanjavur Mahratha society in such a joint family system, marriage and the provisions of Hindu law and religion did not seem to indicate a liberal outlook towards women.

Their position was the worst due to the marriage system that prevailed with its predominant features like the practice of child-marriage, polygamy, restrictions on widow-remarriage and divorce. The position of women was hardly better than that of slaves. Marriages as noticed earlier, being contractual and arranged at an early age, chances of incompatibility of marriage partners were relatively high.

In a joint family set-up, the possibility of strengthening the ties of conjugal love between the newly married couple was lessened. Husbands used to be rather under the influence of their mothers and sisters than that of their wives. The young daughters-in-law were thus left to the mercy of their in-laws particularly the mothers-in-law.

In the Hindu social set up, caste and joint family kept women under strict control. She had no religious status to perform religious functions like sharadha, or marriage but she had to depend on men. She could only assist like a good servant her lord in the
performance of the religious duties. Though she had a caste, her 
gotra is that of her father till her marriage and there after her 
husband's. Thus she never acquired an independent status and was 
socially a perpetual minor\textsuperscript{119}.

Owing to the practice of polygamy and marrying even at an advanced age the girls were threatened with early widowhood. The prevalent marriage laws during the period under study seem to have been partial to men. As noticed earlier, men could marry as many wives as they chose which strengthened male domination over women and strained the ties of conjugal love. The women became helpless as the husband after contracting a new marriage turned rather cold and deserted her, on such ridiculous grounds as failure to bear him sons. It also made them more subservient, for divorce was not permitted. The laws thus seem to have been partial to men. Law of fidelity was binding only on women; men were free to indulge in concubinage. A man could very well desert her and contract another marriage, allowing the women to suffer for the whole life. Even the girls who were kidnapped and forcibly married to some undeserving persons, were left with no way out, by the law which forbade divorce.

**CHILD MARRIAGE**

One of the conspicuous features of the marriage system of the period was the prevalence of child marriage or pre-puberty marriage. Girls were married generally before ten. Eleven was the maximum limit and only in rare cases owing to some unavoidable difficulties marriage of girls seem to have been delayed up to eleven\textsuperscript{120}. Though ceiling on marriageable age of girls was thus fixed,
there was no minimum mentioned. Five was perhaps observed as a practicable minimum.

Child marriage was common among the Brahmans and other higher caste Hindus. The plight of the married children were very pathetic. Early marriage led to early maternity which was a great evil. It contributes largely to meternal infanticide mortality, which affect the whole frame work of society\textsuperscript{121}.

In some cases it brought even mental disorders\textsuperscript{122}. Though many an attempt was made to ameliorate, their condition, their status could not be changed substantially\textsuperscript{123}.

Another evil connected with Hindu marriages was ill-sorted marriages. Due to economic reasons, young girls were married to bed-ridden old men which was ignominious and absurd\textsuperscript{124}.

**WIDOWHOOD**

The unhealthy result of early marriages and ill-sorted marriage was child widowhood. They were the victims of perpetual misery and humiliation and were not allowed to re-marry however young they might be. Widows in Hindu society were unwanted however when they happen to have no children, they were generally looked down upon. The society tried to further their miseries and unhappiness by subjecting them to various restrictions regarding the mode of living and to such practices as tonsure and sati.

In the Mahratha society, it was considered blessed, if the wife died as sumangali who were mentioned as soubhagyavathi. The sumangali royal ladies were mentioned in Modi records as Bai sahebs and the royal widow ladies were called Avusahebs\textsuperscript{125} or Amangali.
Widows were held in much less respect than other women. The very fact of meeting a widow is calculated to bring ill-luck. They were called *munda* a reproachable term which means shaven head, because every widow was supposed to have her hair cut off. She is no longer permitted to wear jewels.... She must not put saffron on her face. Further more, she is forbidden to take part in any amusement or to attend family festivities and ceremonies for her presence would be considered an evil omen\textsuperscript{126}. According to Jesuit letters, the widows had to follow such practices so strict by that they would rather be allowed to become prostitutes than to marry again\textsuperscript{127}.

Society did not advance the slightest objection to remarriage of men, but it did not accord the same freedom to women. Remarriage of widows was permitted only among the economically handicapped or humbler castes. Although it was freely sanctioned among the non-Brahman castes, some of them seem to have attempted to prohibit widow re-marriage, prompted by a desire to imitate Brahmans mainly with a view to elevate their own ritual status. Again widow remarriage being prohibited, the condition of the child widows became all the more deplorable. The society instead of being sympathetic towards the widows, especially the child widows, tried to further their miseries and unhappiness by subjecting them to various restrictions regarding the mode of living and to such practices as *tonsure* amd *sati*\textsuperscript{128}. The only alternative to avoid miserable widowhood, degradation, dependence and humiliation was self immolation.
SATI

Another equally important social practice and of the worst ordeals that prevailed in the Mahratha days was sati or sahagamana that is burning of the widows alive on the funeral pyre of their deceased husbands. The origin of sati is said to be very remote. This practice had a religious basis. A belief prevailed that women by their self-immolation with the corpse of their husband attained such high merit and they were raised to heaven to live in eternal union with the wife.

This custom prevailed mainly among the Brahmans and Mahrathas and it was confined mostly to Thanjavur and Trichy districts alone in Tamilnadu, though a few cases occurred in other districts too. There are a number of tombs or sati koil in Thanjavur district where are found sculptured representation of women committing sati. Under some of them are inscribed satimatha koil with the name of the queen who had performed sati. The class of people who performed sati were generally the royal women. sati was practised in the Mahratha kingdom mainly for the following reasons:

1. Some died for the sake of love and affection they cherished for their husbands.
2. Some immolate themselves not because of sacrifice, but due to lack of leading a happy life there after.
3. Some performed it to obtain great fame.
4. Due to threat of their nearest relatives.
5. The widows who performed sati had taken oath and this vow should not be broken at any cost.
From the Modi Records, we come across several incidents of sati from 1728-1829. When king Sarbhoji I died in the year 1728, his wives Sulakshna Bai and Raja bai performed sati\(^{133}\). Likewise the queens of king Pratapsing-Yamunabai and Sakwarbai performed sati in 1763\(^{134}\). In 1802 two queens of king Amarshing committed sati inspite of the resident’s agents and the relatives of the queen preventing them\(^{135}\). At times the widows were administered intoxicating drugs to get their consent against their wishes\(^{136}\).

Other than royal women, there were instances of high caste women performing sati. The Mahratha rulers used to give gifts of cash to those who performed sati. This proves that the royal court also encouraged the sati system. Seven such instances were observed out of which three were Bramans\(^{137}\). The people of backward class did not involve themselves much in sati practices. In 1794 in a village called Pudupettai, there died a man of Chettiar caste and his wife aged thirty immolated herself with the corpse\(^{138}\). It became a dormant social problem. The British government which took up the administration of Thanjavur Mahratha kingdom decided to abolish it. In Madras, the proposal to abolish it was first brought forward by C.M.Lushington who was the Magistrate of Thanjavur in 1813. When Bentinck became the Governor General, he issued his famous minute on sati in 1829 by which sati was made illegal. After 1830, the cases of sati were very rare and a thing of the past.

**DEVADASI SYSTEM**

Another aspect of women to be discussed here is the devadasi system. They seem to have held a considerable position in the society. We find frequent references to them in inscriptions and
Modi records and literature during the period under study. Like the other people, the Mahrathas also had given much importance to temples and dance.

The ancient inscriptions and medieval records reveal that this profession was supported by the kings and they were attached to the Brahadeeswara temple of Thanjavur and other temples. They lived in free quarters and were allowed tax free lands. They enjoyed a considerable social status and position and led a life of cultural ease and pleasure and gave intellectual companionship. Later, due to lack of patronage and support, they became victims of pleasure and continued their profession due to necessity. In Thanjavur and Pudukkottai they continued to enjoy royal patronage under the Mahratha kings. The dancing girls occupied an important position under the Mahratha rule.

The courtisans who are mentioned in the Modi records and manuscripts were a separate class of persons, whose profession was prostitution. It seems there was neither prohibition, nor licensing of prostitutes during the Mahratha period. They were of two kinds, the professional prostitutes who earned a living by this profession and there were others who lived with one person but were not married at any time. Other than these women there were the sword wives who lived as the concubines of the kings. These ladies lived in the seraglio maintained by the kings and were wedded to the swords of the kings, though they were not legal wives. They were concubines and not public women patronized by kings for their pleasure. There was yet another class of such women called the akkamars who were unmarried spouses found in large numbers in the royal palace.
Some of the courtesans were greatly accomplished ladies in fine arts and a few were favourite women of the kings who received special honours. They were given Rs.150/- each month as allowance. Their children were named with the suffix Vijaya Raja Sri after their names. Though they had enjoyed all privileges like the queens, they were not considered as legal wives.

The akkas in the palace were considered to be the children of the Mahratha government. Though they were not married, yet, they begot children. They received a salary of Rs. 5 to Rs. 8 per month. Though they lived a luxurious life, their children were illegitimate. Inspite of being courtesans they had even endowed money to temples.

Thus the courtesans and devadasis performed many duties other than entertaining the kings and were mainly responsible for the promotion of pure Bharathanatiyam in Thanjavur during the Mahratha rule. Yet this practice was a blot on the culture of the Mahratha society. The very existence of this system was a stumbling block on the road to civilisation and progress. It continued until its abolition in 1947. By the ceaseless efforts and persuasion of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi, the bill was passed into law in 1929. It was abolished by the Madras Act XXXI of 1947. In course of time, it has become a great piece of injustice and violation of human rights. Under this system the young girls who were dedicated to the temples were nurtured under unhealthy notions of religion and taught to look upon prostitution as their profession, kuladuty and dharma. It became an evil profession and it grew to the extent of purchasing and adopting young, innocent children and training them to an immoral life.
THE COURT DANCERS

The were two types of dancing girls. They were court dancers and Temple dancers (devadasis). The main duty of the court dancers was to entertain the king and royal family and guests by their dance. The kings gave them gifts. These dancing girls performed *pancharatna prabantham* during Shahji II, with their beauty and talents, some dancers attracted the kings and became their favourites.

Apart from the dancers who were attached to the palace, the *devadasis* or the dancing girls attached to the temples of Thanjavur region, were the other group. They used to dance and sing in the temples. They were not harlots or prostitutes. This ignoble practice was widely practised in Thanjavur Mahratha kingdom and during the time of the Marathas it found full expression. These girls were paid a considerable amount on monthly basis of 5 panam and 1 kalam of paddy from temple funds. Though the girls were attached to a particular temple, they seem to have been mutually interchangeable from temple to court.

In 1847 the king of Thanjavur (Shivaji II) sent a number of *devadasis* along with his daughter to Maharastra as a marriage gift. These *devadasis* were selected from various temples of Thanjavur and Kumbakonam to perform dances in the court. At times the *devadasis* were allowed to welcome the English officials by way of performing dances to songs like “God save the king”. So it is evident that the *devadasis* of temples, performed dances in the king's court also.
During the Mahratha rule, this system was organised on certain rules. At the death of one *devadasi*, another would at once be appointed in her place. Immediately her name would be entered in temple records. Those who were attached to the temple received a fixed salary from the temple which was too meagre for their maintenance. They were obliged to sell their favours out of necessity and force of circumstances to persons who could afford the luxury. Good looking *dasis* from various casts were introduced to this profession.

These *dasis* performed many dance dramas and dances in temples on festival days. For example, the *pallakiseva prabandam* one of the dance-dramas written by king Shaji II was regularly enacted in Tiruvarur temple by the *devadasis*. Another popular dance-drama called *Thyagesa kuravanji* was enacted by them in Tiruvarur temple and *Sarabenadra Bupalakuravaji* was dramatised in the Big temple in Thanjavur. They had also taken a leading part in the daily rituals (*nityarchana*) and festivals.

A fixed hierarchy of *devadasis* seems to have lived in Tyagarajaswami temple at Tiruvarur. There were six groups of *devadasis* who followed the *devadasi murai*.

*Pathiliyar* - Though they were not married and had not lived with any particular man, they begot children.
*Isanapathiniyar* - Wives of *Isana* (God Siva)
*Devaradiyal* - Slaves of God (*devadasi*)
*Tattai* - The Given one.
*Alankara Dasi* - (ornamental *dasi*)
*RudraGanika* - Courtesan of Rudra Siva.
These dasis enjoyed special privileges from the kings. Some were favourite dasis of the kings who received special honours. A dasi, Sundari by name, was the favourite of king Serfoji II who enjoyed special privileges like performing the first dance on festival days\(^\text{162}\).

Even though, some special privileges were given to these devadasis, some restrictions were imposed on them with regard to their dress, jewels etc. The dasis were punished and penalised if they violated the rules and regulations\(^\text{163}\). The Modi records say about the peculiar regulations on the dancing girls. They were forbidden to wear sarees with flower designs, nor were they allowed to put on rakhdies (a head ornament). They should wear only coloured shawls and not white. They were forbidden to wear pig tails and the kum on their fore heads should not be kept crosswise. They should not use dholi in case of illness without previous permission from the durbar. The modi dance with bagpipers must not be performed in the royal court\(^\text{164}\).

The devadasis and other court dancers, took keen interest in the promotion of their society. This is evident from the copper - plate found in the Nagasamy temple at Kumbakonam\(^\text{165}\). The dancers paid varthanai or periodical fee contribution. The money collected from this varthanai was utilised for giving alms, lighting lamps, conducting poojas and for some other services on festival days\(^\text{166}\).

**SALE OF WOMEN**

Women were also purchased for various reasons. In case of non-availability of girls to be initiated to devadasi system, young
girls at the age of 10-12 years were bought. Some had to spend their life time as maid servants. There are several instances of purchasing of girls being used as maid servants in Modi Records during the period of King Serfoji II and Shivaji II. Some girls were at first mortgaged and then sold off.

They were purchased for the purpose of being employed as maid servants in the palace. One mirasdar requested the government to receive his two girls who were taken by the palace soldiers, illegally for palace service. Girls were kidnapped and sold to the palace who later became maid servants to the queens. Even married girls were also sold to the palace which is stated by the Modi-records. The British who were engaged in slave trade purchased many girls. Muslims and Christians also purchased Children and converted them to their religion. The sale of woman might have been legalised. It is illustrated in the Modi records, that a man named Usman paid money to the father and took the child having written this in a company bond stamped paper. Muslims and christians also purchased girls for religious conversion.

Another factor that may help to ascertain the position of woman was their proprietary rights. With regard to property rights, they were relegated to a secondary position, as they had no rights of inheritance to the property of their father. A daughter was entitled to enjoy whatever was conferred on her by her father, in his life time in the form of gift. Wives enjoyed only a right to maintenance in their husband's property. A widow could inherit her husband's property only in case, her husband had been separated from the joint family and died without an heir. In the joint family, a widow could claim only maintenance for her life time. The property that the wife could hold independently of her husband and have a full fledged right over
it was the *sridhana* property or property acquired by her in marriage\(^{173}\).

Thus it appears that women's right of inheritance either to the property of her father or of her husband in a joint family was not recognised by the society and she was totally dependent on her family for her maintenance. Thus she was given a secondary position.

Girls were not considered good enough to receive instruction in the art of reading and writing and education was monopolised by the favoured few during the Mahratha rule. Taking into consideration the general neglected state of education of this period, reports mention that women from aristocratic families however seem to have been taught reading and writing during the period under study. Women belonging to noble families were taught various arts and they took active interest in the affairs of the state. Records of the period mention that some royal women like queen Deepambal, Sujanbai and Kamatchibai played an important role in public life. Though women in the Mahratha period were bold, they observed *purdha* or *gosha* system. There were social inhibitions as to their appearance in public and participation in public life. The society being conservative and religious minded, socio-economic customs and practices continued to be in force. It prevented them from taking active participation in public life.

Taking a broad view of the foregoing discussion with regard to the position of women, which were applicable to all, all the classes were not equally affected by them. It was the middle class which suffered the most. As noticed earlier, upper class women enjoyed many privileges. Their economic position was satisfactory.
and they were well cared for even in widowhood. They enjoyed some status in the society.

The women of the lower classes seem to have been little affected by customs. The scales of morality and religion were different so far as the lower caste women were concerned. Divorce and re-marriage of widows were permissible among the lower castes. The marriage laws were not so strict among them. May be for economic reasons, polygamy and concubinage were practically restrained among the lower classes. Women of lower classes were little affected by the law regarding property rights of women as they were independent earners themselves. The working class women had to work for a living. Women of agrarian classes had certainly raised their status in relation to men, as they also performed an important economic role. Such economic contribution by the women of lower classes was significant. Therefore, the position of lower class women was relatively not so bad. The position of the middle class women, however, was probably worse than that of all others. The middle classes usually came from high castes. Their class deprived the women of the privileges of the rich, their caste disqualified them for the benefits which the lower castes enjoyed. The social customs that prevailed during the Mahratha period fettered their personality and reduced them to a subservient position. They were left in a rather precarious state.

A house wife was a chaste and dutiful woman who was an ideal hostess to the guests. She seldom came out to take active part in social get ups and festivals unlike that of the courtesans.

Taking into consideration the general status of women during the Mahratha period women had no personality of their own.
Their position as in most other societies, was not equal to that of men either in theory or in practice.

The social change in the position of women emerged later on from the end of 19th century. The awareness and change in position of women can be attributed to various factors. Chief among them being social legislations, female education, missionary works, medical aids and political movements which gave them a good scope for development and change. The social legislations relieved women from sati, infanticide, child marriage, constant widowhood and many other evils. The social reformers brought new concepts slowly, like self-confidence to secure a rightful place in the society. Women evolved themselves as human beings in a new social order.

DAILY LIFE

The characteristic features of the mode of living of the Mahratha society can broadly be grouped into two, the traditional and the adopted. Though the Mahratha kings came from Maharastra, they had adopted the natural environment of the Tamil society. The people of Thanjavur region led tradition bound mode of life. There emerged during the Mahratha period a new class of people who enjoyed distinctive political and social status. This was due to the migration of people, nobles, army officers and artists from Maharastra. This new class picked up a manner of living of Thanjavur society as the Mahratha kings had served under Deccani Muslim sultan, they also adopted the style of the Mughals who set the example of lavish and pompous way of living. The Mughal stamp was particularly noticeable and occasionally reflected in the general modes of living especially of the upper and princely classes. The
Mughal style was noticeable in their costumes, architecture and court manners. New costumes of Muslim style became popular along with the traditional dress of dhotee and sari.

**DRESS**

The kings usually spent large sums of money on dress. They used to appear in the court in the royal attire of silk and satin clothes of vary fine materials worked with gold embroidery. The formal costumes of the *darbar* were different from their informal costumes. The rich were elegant in their appearance and wore costly attire.

There were many types and designs of dress worn by the various classes of people. The dresses of the people were colourful. The rich used fine muslin and silk generally embroidered in gold or silver. The officials in the government service used to dress in their fine *darbar* robes with turban on the head and red caste mark the *tilak* on their forehead.

The *dhoti* was the traditional garment worn by men in towns and villages but the style of wearing it differed according to high and lower castes. An orthodox married Brahman used to wear a *dhoti* called *panchakacham* (five folds) which carried a religious sanction. Most Brahmans and other higher non-Brahman castes tie a cloth nine or ten feet in length in the manner called *mulakacham* or *kilpacchi*. The former name is generally used for a Brahmans dress and the latter for sudras. Lower castes tie a rather shorter cloth around their waist and they do not wear any upper cloth.
The more respectable people only, wear upper clothes. There was a variety of upper garments in use. The varieties of lower garments in fashion were *pyjama*¹⁸⁰, *tumana*¹⁸¹ and *dhotar*. After the coming of the British, costumes of English style also became popular along with traditional south Indian dress. The rich people and nobles adopted the European coat, trousers and boots. The lower caste people wore a small undercloth called *komanam*. The common people went quite naked with the exception of a piece of cloth round their waist. There was perhaps no specially formed dress for children. Boys wore small under cloth round the loins which was the minimum of clothing essential for decency, shepherds, slaves and fishermen preferred to wear loin clothes only.

A variety of head gears or turbans were in fashion¹⁸². Though the kings wore the crown, they also wore special headgear, a turban adorned with jewels. In those days, men generally used to crop the hair of their head with small tuft at the centre called *kudumi*. The Brahmans tied the turbans high above the head which were pleated in a particular fashion whereas the people of humbler castes bound their turbans flat on the head. The length of the turban varied. The *mundasu* perhaps was an ordinary headgear worn alike by rich and poor¹⁸³.

**DRESS OF WOMEN**

The women in the Thanjavur Mahratha society used to dress in the traditional attire of sari. The mode of female costumes continued to remain unaffected by Mahratha culture and Muslim influence. The courtesans and the wives of the nobles wore very rich dress¹⁸⁴. The saris of the rich were made of fine cloth with gold
border. *Pidambara* sari is of pure silk used at the time of performing religious rites.

The Mahratha women used to wear nine yard sarees in a peculiar style. Married Mahratha women used to wear their saree in a different way called *kasota drapings* especially during ceremonial occasions. According to Broughton’s description, the dress of the Mahratha women consisted of sari, one half of which was wound round the body and tucked up between the legs, while the other half was thrown loosely over the head and shoulders. Beneath the sari, the upper caste women wore a blouse to cover their breasts. Generally, the women tied the sarees with the *kusavam* or fold for ornament’s sake infront. There were several kinds of tying the sarees peculiar to different classes of Brahmns and it can be seen at once, from her dress, to which class a Brahman woman belonged to. The dress of a married Brahman, the traditional mode was *madisaru* (pure garment) But the style of wearing the dress differed from Smartha Brahman women and Vaishnava Brahman. The younger Brahman women (except widows) and *Vellala* women who had not borne a child wore bodice (except the dancing girls). *Pallan* and *Paraiyan* caste women wore their clothes rather high above the knee. *Kallan* and *Valaiyar* caste women did not wear dark blue clothes for fear of offending the God *Karuppan* to whom that colour was considered sacred. Little girls wore long skirts and blouses. The materials from which dresses were made represented a wide variety of silk and fine muslin generally worked in silk, gold or silver of the cotton fabrics. The finest type of cotton fabrics were used by aristocrats.

In the later half of the 19th century, changes were visible in the mode of the dress, due to European impact especially among
the educated classes. The rich and the educated class of people at the Mahratha period were adopting the European trousers, boots, but never relinquished the turban in favour of hat\textsuperscript{189}.

The christians practically followed the Hindus, regarding their dress. Muslims also used dhoti and white cap. The muslim women dressed like Hindu women with slight changes\textsuperscript{190}. In short there was no change in the traditional dress excepting a few educated elite who followed the western style.

**ORNAMENTS**

The people of the period under review showed fondness for jewellery, as is evident from the vast and varied array of ornaments worn both by men and women. The Hindu women always had a great liking for costly ornaments which they generally wore on important occasions. The kings wore costly jewels. The queens wore varieties of jewels studded with a variety of precious stones like diamonds emaraldis and pearls\textsuperscript{191} around their necks arms and fingers. The higher caste women were fond of wearing a distinct kind of ornaments. The important head ornament was *tura* which is referred in Sanskrit works. Another head ornament was *sansphul* a beautiful golden piece worn at the back of the head which resembled a flower. *Besari* was one of the nose ornaments which was a floral shaped nose stud which is still in vogue in Thanjavur Area. The common nose ornament was *bulak* and *nath*\textsuperscript{192} which were studded with garnets, pearls and diamonds. *Tali* was common to all women, though it differed in size and shape from caste to caste. The Mahratha married women wore a kind of black bead called *Kalipottu* in their *tali* or *mangalyam*. 
Kadagam, chutti, aram, valai, tandai and silambu were other jewels used by women of Thanjavur under Mahratha rule. People had such a fancy for ornaments that they even caparisoned their animals with jewellery. We come across instances of jewel-set trappings of horses. This kind of fondness for ornaments particularly shown by men, must have been initiated, perhaps by a desire to exhibit one's riches and thereby, to establish one's distinct status or vanity.

Both men and women of the upper classes, enjoyed the luxury of perfumes and aromatic pastes. Little is known about the toilette and make up. Men used to shave off the beards keeping the moustache. They used to apply sandal wood paste on their forehead which was scented with saffron and musk.

Women used to part their hair in the middle and let it gather behind to twine into a plait which they might either leave on the shoulders or roll up into a bun and pin up high above the neck, called kondai. They decorated their hair styles by interlacing gold or silver ornamental pieces.

TATTOOING

Tattooing was a common feature of the Tamils. Kallan caste women were said to tattoo their bodies and upper arms. In those days, the Smartha Brahman women considered it obligatory to have a line tattooed from the nose to the head. They executed it with floral designs on their fore arms. Most of the Sudra women tattooed their cheeks, forehead, upper arms and forearm. All Hindu women of whatever caste or sect except widows wore a pottu or tilakam of Kumkum or Chandu. All Hindu women adorned their hair with
flowers except widows. The Christian and Muslims women did not put on the tilakam.

Some men also tattooed on the forehead. All Hindu orthodox men applied the caste mark or Vibuthi on the forehead which was regarded as an emblem of Shiva. The Vaishnavites applied namam which consisted of a red vertical stripe at the centre of the forehead bounded by a curved ‘U’ shaped white line among Vadagalai and ‘Y’ shaped among Thengalai.

**FOOD**

The staple food of the people in Thanjavur region as is still the case, was rice. In the upland tracts, rice, ragi, cholam and varagu were eaten. The Brahmans and some higher castes of non-Brahmans abstained from meat and occasionally from onions and garlic which were regarded by them as impure, whereas people of humbler castes consumed meat. The Paraiyans and Chakkiliyans ate beef and the valiyans, kuravans, paliuns ate pork also. The ordinary animal food of the non-Brahman was mutton, fish and edible birds. The Christians and Muslims were fond of mutton.

The Brahmans had only two meals viz at mid-day and at night. The diet of the Brahmans consisted generally of rice, ghee, dhall, curry, or blackgram, pepper water (rasam) and curd or butter milk. The Brahmans whether rich or poor ate their food only on plantain leaves. A person was not permitted to use a metal other than silver for the purpose of eating his food. They were so scrupulous about food that they never touched intoxicating drinks. A low wooden seat called manai was used to sit on. Dishes and leaves were placed in straight lines which were known as panthi. This kind
of sitting arrangement carried a particular significance and even prestige based on the consideration of caste. For, a person could not sit to dine with others in the same row, unless he possessed equal caste status. The table of the rich was generally laid with a number of dishes and the table was laid with silver plates. The royal kitchen consisted of 3 types (1) Vegetarian (2) Non-Vegetarian (3) English. Each kitchen had its own dimmath or head who supervised it.

The chief cook was called khansamas. He was responsible for the health of the king against food-poisoning. The Brahman kitchen was controlled by Brahman cooks. The head cook of the Marathi kitchen was varist Mudubohi. The Butler was in charge of the English kitchen. There was a food taster in the palace, whose duty was to taste the food of the king for protection against poison. He was called Ahaar ruchirao (Food taster).

The non-Brahmans and lower classes generally had three meals. The widows were strictly forbidden the night meal. Though coffee was the favourite beverage of the people among the Brahmans especially, drinking of tea was certainly known to the people of this period, though it was not very popular. The common people drank cold rice water called niragaram.

Both men and women were fond of chewing pan or betel leaves and nuts with lime paste, cardamom, almond nutmeg and other scented items. Betel leaves were used on all ceremonial functions and it was the first thing offered to visitors.
The Christian missionaries who were not used to the food habits of this region, often felt like a fish out of water without the dishes which they preferred or favoured.

**Dwellings - House**

The king lived in the royal palace or the 'Raj Mahal' a or *Huzur mahal*. Various halls or *mahals* of the palace served the specific purpose for which they were built. Every part of the palace was built with grandeur. The observation of foreign visitors regarding the Thanjavur palace of the Mahrathas might help to give some idea of such luxurious abodes which were decorated with greater attention with pillars beautifully carved out and shaped like arches with designs of lotus peacocks etc in wood.

There were about thirty buildings within the palace complex intended for various purposes. The *Kuda Gopuram* or 'Lakshmi vilas' with 8 storeys functioned as the armoury of the kings till 1855 A.D.

The well to do people and nobles lived in big mansions. These rich mansions were covered with carpets and adorned with paintings, chandeliers, mirrored lanterns etc. The cushions were covered with silk, velvet and brocade. The rich people had fancy for European curios. These houses just referred to were more or less urban dwellings.

The middle classes appear to have lived in smaller houses. The flooring of many of the houses in the rural area was of mud.
It was kept neat and clean by smearing cowdung and water. The houses of the middle classes were arranged according to occupations in separate streets. This arrangement is evidenced by the names of streets such as *pattunoulkara theru* (Weaver's street) *vandikara theru* (Cartmen street) *pookkara* street (flower seller street) *pambatti* street (snake charmer) etc. The houses were ordinarily built of brick and mud. The roofs were more frequently fitted with the rafters which were commonly made of bamboos for want of timber. Where the houses were not tiled, they were thatched with straw or palm leaf.

The Brahmans lived in *agraharam* which ran in an almost straight line. The Brahman houses were located close to each other. Some houses were connected internally through small openings with grills which facilitate ventilation and easy exchange of sundry items of domestic consumption between womenfolk.

The Brahman, Sudra, *Paraiyan* and other quarters were much more clearly distinguished from each other in the villages. The Pallans, Parayans and other untouchables lived in *Cherris* which were situated in a manner which emphasized their social exclusion as their entry into the *agraharam* caused pollution to the Brahmans. Even among the untouchables, the *Pallars* and *Paraiyars* always lived in separate streets.

The other non-Brahmans unlike the Brahmans did not live in one single street but were distributed in a number of streets as they did not have the same kind of corporate life like the Brahmans. The construction of non-Brahman houses shows a wider range of diversity than the Brahman agraharams. The houses were generally constructed according to *manaïsastram* a branch of science, which
says how a new houses should be built. The Kammalans generally were consulted for house construction\textsuperscript{211}.

The vast majority of the people lived in mud and small huts with thatched roofs, generally made up of palmyra leaves which were cheap and available everywhere in abundance\textsuperscript{212}. The small huts of the outcasts were very low and dark so that they were obliged to creep in on hand and kness\textsuperscript{213}. Straw was also used for roofs where it was readily available\textsuperscript{214}. In most of the houses there was only one room in which both men and their beasts lived together. Most of them usually slept on the floor either on mats or even without them owing to poverty\textsuperscript{215}. But the kingdom was not totally devoid of the rich people. At the end of 19th century conditions had slightly improved due to long period of unprecedented peace and other factors essential for settled life\textsuperscript{216}.

**SOCIAL CEREMONIES**

Every Hindu has to pass through many purificatory rites to purify his body and mind from the moment of birth to death as his religious obligation. The main rites which are known as samskaras a Hindu has to observe according to Hindu law-givers are:

1. Birth
2. *Nama karma* - (name giving ceremony)
3. *Annaprasana* - (feeding with food)
4. *Upanayana* - (wearing sacred-thread)
5. Marriage
6. Funeral ceremonies or death.
The Hindus particularly the Brahmans and a few higher castes who had the necessary means and leisure, celebrated them with great devotions\(^{217}\). The important ceremonies performed by the people under Mahratha rule were as follows:

**BIRTH**

The Hindu deems it obligatory to have a son who along could perform such rites without which *moksha* or heaven was not possible. Hence ceremonies were performed to get a son\(^{218}\).

**NAMA KARMA**

This ceremony was performed by higher castes and Brahmans on the 10th or 16th day after birth with great pomp and grandeur. The names of either ancestors or of local deities were selected by the elders of the family\(^{219}\).

The Christians celebrated this ceremony as Baptism or *ghanasanam* by which the child was introduced into the fold of Christianity. It usually took place either on the 7th day or the 14th day after birth. The Tamil Muslims attached much importance to this ceremony as it reflected their traditions. They celebrated it with tom-tom like the Hindus with great feasts.

**THE ANNAPRASANA**

This was popular among the Hindus who performed it in the sixth month after birth when the child was fed with cooked food for the first time especially in a holy place or a temple. The Christians too celebrated this ceremony with much pomp and
display. On this occasion the maternal grandparents presented the child with gold ornaments. The Muslims celebrated it with great splendour when the child was seven months old.

UPANAYANA

This ceremony was the most important ceremony for the Brahmins as wearing the sacred thread was their privilege. The boy was allowed to enter the Brahmacharyashrama only after this ceremony. The Kaikolas and Sowrashtras too wore the sacred thread. Like upanayana ceremony to a Hindu, sunnat or circumcision was an essential ceremony to the Muslims. Curiously this practice was in vogue among some sects of the Kallars who perhaps had been influenced by their Muslim neighbours.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES

The funeral ceremonies in Thanjavur region under the Mahratha rule were long and elaborate like the marriage ceremonies. To the Hindus, these ceremonies were obligatory as only through strict observance of these ceremonies the departed soul was deemed to reach moksha (heaven) Hence the Hindus, particularly the Brahmins performed these ceremonies with utmost care and attention.

There were some variations among the funeral ceremonies of the Brahmins, non-Brahmins and others. The Brahmins performed them according to their Vedic beliefs.

The dead were usually burnt by the higher castes and buried by the lower. Immediately after the demise, the corpse was
bathed and decked with wreaths of flowers and carried by the nearest relative to the place of cremation. The eldest son was the chief mourner who led the procession lit the pyre. After taking bath the people returned home to continue other ceremonies.

The other ceremonies performed were bone gathering ceremony on the third day of the cremation, and the shradha ceremony on the 10th day. On the sixteenth day the final ceremony or karumantaram took place. The man’s soul was worshipped in the form of two bricks with offerings and the widow’s tali was removed. This ceremony was intended to cause the soul of the dead to enter into the company of other ancestors of the family. Offerings were placed in six plantain leaves intended for Shiva, Vishnu and three forefathers while the family priest chanted prayers. An Anniversary Ceremony was observed by the sons of the deceased by all the castes.

When the kings and other royal people died, their corpses were carried through the main gate in an ivory palanquin kept for the purpose. The Mahratha custom was to keep the corpse in sitting posture in the palanquin when it was carried to the cremation ground. The samadhi of the kings were constructed in Kailasamahal. tonks were kept for the queens who died as sunangalis. Small temples called samdhi koil were constructed on which the images of sivalingam would be found in the samadhi of the kings and queens. It was the Mahratha custom to construct such tonks. Poojas were performed by royal ladies, kalasams were kept on the samadhis of the kings if the queens performed sati.

The funeral ceremonies of the sudras were less ceremonial and more noisy than those of the Brahmans. It was
customary among the Hindus to wail on a dead person. When the breath leaves the body a coconut was broken and camphor was lighted. When a wife died, some object was placed in the corpse's hand and given to the husband's hand. This was interpreted as giving him permission to marry again. Among the lower castes, when a husband died, the widow placed her tali in the dead man's hand and thus expressed her freedom to re-marry. Among Tamil Melakkarans, Paraiyans and pallans the widower or widow used to offer betel and nut to the dead. The corpse was shaved and bathed and covered with a new cloth which was mostly red for a woman and white for a man placed on a stretcher decorated like a palanquin and taken in procession to the burning ground. Only men were allowed to accompany it.

On the way fried rice was thrown on the road that ghost would not attempt to follow them to the house on the way. The stretcher was placed on the pyre and rice was placed on the mouth of the dead. A water pot was carried thrice round the corpse and then broken by the heir who set fire to the pyre. The mourners then bathed and returned home. No meal was cooked in the house of the dead that day. Next day the mourners went to the burial ground with a blowing conch to collect the bones. For the next thirteen days the mourners generally abstain from meat. The women of the house wail every morning and evening till the fifteenth day. They performed, during this period a ceremony called ettu seygiadu by offering fruits. On the 10th or 16th day obsequies would be performed to take away pollution by sprinkling holy water in the house. The king observed 10 days pollution on the death of Baishebs.

The Corpse of the Mangala Vilas ladies or the concubines of king Sivaji II were taken out side the palace by a separate way and
not through the usual way through which the corpses of Baisahebs of the king were taken out.

When a devadasi woman died, she was burnt with the fire taken from the kitchen of the concerned temple to which she was attached. It was called Thalaikkol. The fire to burn the corpse was taken from the kitchen of the temple as these courtesans were wedded to the presiding deity and were regarded as nitya sumangalis.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES AMONG THE CHRISTIANS

The Christians (Catholics) too followed the Hindus in funeral ceremonies. The pariahs beat their drums to pay respect to the deceased and they were paid for their service. After a ceremonial bath, the corpse with new clothes wrapped round and it was kept in a coffin and taken to the grave yard for burial. Prayer meetings were conducted to perform the shradha ceremony.

FUNERAL CEREMONIES AMONG THE MUSLIMS

The Muslims too performed ceremonies adopted from the Hindus. Pollution was observed for two days and no food was cooked in the house of mourning. The widow removed her tali and nose-ring like the Hindu as a mark of their widowhood. Passages from koran were recited and gifts were offered to reach the soul of the deceased. Death feasts were held on 9th, 17th 39th day after the funeral as well as on every shrada day. During such occasions, offerings were offered to the departed soul. Thus many ceremonies observed were borrowed from the Hindus.
FESTIVALS

An important feature of the social life was the celebration of festivals. Most of the Hindu festivals were social and religious in nature and significance. We find that most of the festivals observed today, are almost the same as those celebrated during the Mahratha period. Festivals became an important source of joy and merriment and in those days, they used to be more colourful and were observed with greater zeal and enthusiasm than are done today. The festivals celebrated during the Mahratha period were varied. The most notable among these festivals were Dasara, Diwali, Vinayaka Chathurthi, Holi, Vasantha Panchami, Karthigai and Pongal.

The festival of Dasara was observed with magnificence especially by the warrior classes. This festival was also celebrated as Vijaya Dasami which was considered to be auspicious. The Mahrathas used to celebrate this festival with pomp and show.

The important festivals celebrated during the Mahratha period in the palace were Nagapanchami or worship of snakes, Bowbizi, Gouri Pooja, Upanga Lalitha, Harithalika (Pooja to Parvathi,) kuladharma puja performed in Chandra Mouleswara Swami temple within the fort, Sri Rama Navami, Kaman Pandiga Jesta kanishta pooja was made to Gowri Goddess by Sumangalis. Neither the widows nor the unmarried girls could perform this pooja.

Sivarathri, like wise was another festival celebrated with much solemnity and piety. The Saivites celebrated it for three days at the time of the new moon in the month of February.
The festival of *Mahanavami* was also celebrated on a grand scale. *Deepavali* was also one of the most important festivals celebrated on a grand scale for seven days. The Hindus placed lighted lamps at the doors of their houses. The most solemn of all festivals in those days was the *Pongal* which was the occasion of great feasting and rejoicing. The *Pongal* festival lasted for three days. The first day is called *Bhogi Pongal* (Pongal or joy). During that day people used to clean their houses.

The second day is *surya pongal* dedicated to the Sun. When the people offered *Pongal* to the Sun-God. The third day is the *Mattu pongal*. On this day Cattle are worshipped. The horns of the cows are painted in various colours and garlands are hung round their necks and driven together outside the village. The cattle were allowed to graze everywhere without restraint.

There were certain festivals which were important to the Brahmins in particular. *Avani-avitam* was one of such festivals. This was the annual renewal day of the sacred thread, the symbol of the obligations of the Brahman castes.

Some festivals were important for certain religious sects-*Vaikuntha Ekadesi* was important for the *Vaishnavites* and *Karthikai* day and *Mahasivarathri* for the Saivites Besides, there were a number of other minor festivals that were celebrated during the different seasons of the year. There were for example the festivals on the first day of the month, the full moon, the new moon, *krithikai, dasami* and so on.

The temple festivals were connected with Hindu Gods. The most important in Thanjavur region was the *Mahamakan festival*
which takes place every thirteenth year at Kumbakonam even to-day. The Tula festival at Mayavaram was also important. The Saptasnanam festival at Tiruvadi was another festival.

The festivals in the temples were generally concluded by a car festival. The floating festival was another festival celebrated for a number of days in the temples.

FESTIVALS OF THE CHRISTIANS

The most important Christian festival is Christmas which falls on the 25th December every year. It is celebrated as the birth of Christ. Masses were conducted in the mid night of 24th December. The houses of the Christians were decorated with branches of Christmas tree with lights and dolls. The Christmas celebration was purely a ceremony unknown to the Tamil Country till the advent of Christianity.

'Easter' is another important festival representing the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This festival comes after 40 days of fast and penance. The Tamil Christians fasted throughout the forty days and abstained from meat. The Catholics celebrated more festivals than the Protestants. Every festival was accompanied by processions carrying a decorated car with deity Mary in it. These processions were accompanied by music, beating of drums and fire works which often made the European missionaries disgusted. The Tamil Christians celebrated their festivals in Hindu style.
MUSLIM FESTIVALS

In social and religious matters, Muslims too celebrated many festivals in Hindu style. The three Chief Muslim festivals were Ramzan, Bakrid and Muharram which were celebrated with great pomp and pageantry and feasts. Fire walking ceremony was an important feature of these festivals. This ceremony was concluded in an open space in front of ‘Allaswami’ temples (Mosques). The devotees shouted in excitement ‘ali ali’ and walked across the fire.

PASTIMES, AMUSEMENTS

Amusements and festivals were essential part of their daily life of people. A great many games were played by all classes during the Mahratha rule in Thanjavur. The Mahratha kings who were essentially a martial race were fond of athletic sports and games like wrestling, boxing and Gymnastics which were good for toning up and strengthening the muscles, Gymnastic exercises and athletics formed an important part of their daily life. Talim (gymnastics) was a regular habit with most of them. The Mahratha kings maintained ‘Talim khana’ (Wrestling Arena) in the palace.

Wrestling was perhaps the most popular sport. The kings used to patronize wrestlers like other artists and musicians in their courts. Watching the wrestler’s combats like today’s cricket matches was a popular diversion indulged in by the rich and poor alike. Wrestling combats were held on some festival days as an entertainment specially at fairs. The Mahratha kings took pride in having the best wrestlers in their service. Expert vastads were appointed to teach wrestling to the boys in the palace. King Serfoji II
was a good wrestler. His favourite wrestlers were given gold armlet as a mark of honour.

*Vajramjushti* was another popular gymnastic sport. It represented a combination of boxing and wrestling. Horse riding was another favourite sport especially among the soldiers. It was widely indulged in both as a sport and also as an essential part of military training. Men used to take great pride in their skill in horse-riding. It was also a pastime of the people.

Hunting, fishing and watching the animal-fights were some of the favourite diversions of the princely and noble classes. King Serfoji II was fond of such amusements. He used to tour through the country amusing himself on the way in various manners indulging in hunting, fishing, boating etc., at leisure.

Hunting with cheetah was a much admired diversion with the princes. Hounds and hawks were similarly trained and used in hunting. Sometimes animals of different species such as elephants and tigers were made to fight. Such mixed combats proved more exciting and interesting. King Serfoji II himself maintained a *Shikar khana* (where a collection of animals and birds were kept) in his palace. He was fond of hunting and he himself used to shoot deers birds, tigers etc. He purchased muskets and guns from Europe. King Serfoji II patronised fencing or sword fighting and archery. Mohamed Shah was an expert archer who taught archery to the king. The king also encouraged ‘*silambam*’ or fight with sticks.

Bullock Cart race and *rekhlaw* race competition were other pastimes and recreation of the people.
Falconry was a favourite pastime of the Mahratha kings. They reared a number of falcons called ‘Bajpakshi’ which were trained in catching rabbits and birds.

Some of the indoor games played were chess, draughts and playing cards. We come across reference to playing cards, two kinds of sets seem to have been used in the game, one set represented twelve rasis or constellations and the other dashavatars or ten incarnations. All the cards were represented by paintings. Many games were played by children. They played a game called ‘odd and even’ or a guessing game and ‘hide and seek’. In the schools the boys played games like the ‘fifteenth tiger’ ‘tip cat’ (kitti pullu) ‘leap-frog’ (pacchai kudirai) Marbles and kiteflying. The most popular game was called ‘balichatungudu’ or kapadi in which a boy has to catch the other players while holding his breath. The rich and English educated boys played European games and Tennis at school. Girls played kolattam, tossing tamarind seeds, ‘kummi’ and other indoor games. Women played various games with cowries on a board.

The other entertainment of the princely and noble classes was ‘nach entertainment. This amusement was mostly indulged in by the rich as they took pride in organising such party, spending lavishly on them. It was customary for the wealthy to celebrate their festivals and ceremonies with such nach entertainment. This party was also sent to many places.

Listening to musical concerts, both vocal and instrumental was another favourite pastime especially of the aristocracy at the royal courts. We come across references to musicians employed on a regular salary at the court of King Serfoji II.
Two types of music—carnatic and folk music concerts figured prominently among entertainment programmes presented during the ‘Holi’ and Navarathri festivals.

The recreation songs\textsuperscript{250} were sung by the people accompanied by instrumental music like \textit{Uduku}. Listening to the recital of \textit{lavani}\textsuperscript{281} songs was another entertainment of the people. The class of people who composed \textit{lavani} and sang them before the audience were known as \textit{shahir}. Sivaji II was himself a \textit{lavani} singer and he patronised this art.

During the Mahratha period a king of dramatic entertainment called ‘Tamasha’ performance attained popularity. It is clear from certain documents that \textit{lavani} and \textit{tamasha} entertainment was popular even among the aristocracy\textsuperscript{252}.

Other than these recreations, there were religious entertainments too. The popular entertainments like \textit{gondhala}, \textit{harikatha} and \textit{kirtana} can be classified as religious entertainments for although they served the purpose of entertaining the people, they were primarily devised and practised as means of devotional communication.

‘\textit{Harikatha}\textsuperscript{283} and \textit{kirtana} were mainly religious expoundings meant to promote devotion. The impact of Mahratha culture was responsible for the development of \textit{harikaha kalatsepm}. During the reign of Sivaji II it was in full swing in Thanjavur. We find in records that ‘\textit{Gosavis}’ were being invited to perform such performances on the occasion of festivals like \textit{Ganesa Chathurthi}, \textit{Holi} and \textit{Navarathri} at the King’s Palace.
Theatre also provided a great entertainment to the people. There are references available in Thanjavur Saraswathi Mahal library to show that theatrical arts flourished during the period under study. In fact, it was cultivated in a growing state from the time of king Rajaraja Chola in Thanjavur Big Temple. The temples provided the stages for the enactment of dramas besides being places of worship. The Mandapa or the pillared halls of the temples served as theatres. There was a special dance platform facing the Nataraja shrine for the purpose of holding such dramas in the big temple. In the villages the open space in front of the temple was the open theatre. During the Mahratha rule, many dramas were written in various languages. The dramas were generally taken from puranas. The actors who participated in the dramas were called Kuthadis. kuravanji, palli and nundi were three popular types of drama performed in Thanjavur during the Mahratha rule. The kings themselves wrote many dramas and also patronised the actors. The folk drama was called Therukuthu which was presented with music, dance and dialogue. These dramas were performed during village festivals and on important occasions in the royal court.

There were a number of minor amusements and recreations like jugglery, puppet shows (the puppets being moved by a string from above) and mimicry etc.

Fairs also served as an occasion for great enjoyment and entertainment for there used to gather on this occasion, comedians, dancing girls, snake charmers, jugglers etc to amuse the people. It was common to hold on this occasion, wrestling combats and other sports for which people had fascination. Most of the people used to amuse themselves with shopping at such fairs. These fairs were
generally held at places of pilgrimage where people used to flock in large numbers.

SUPERSTITIONS

Many superstitious beliefs were in vogue and wide spread among many classes of people during the Mahratha period. All sections of the society gave importance to superstitions.

The omens ran to large numbers. There were both good and bad omens: Omens, good or bad played a significant role in the social life. The people referred the ‘panchangam’ or almanac in which the astrologer indicated the auspicious time for the performance of ceremonies or of the new enterprises.

GOOD OMENS

The cawing of a crow on a house indicated the arrival of a guest. To hear musical instruments, to meet an elephant, or a horse to meet two Brahmans, braying of an ass from the east, a cry of ‘lizards’ from the right or overhead were considered to be good omens to start a journey. To hear a bell ring, braying of an ass, sight of a sumangali woman, flowers, water pot, a corpse etc., were also taken to be good omens. The following were deemed to be bad omens, when a Hindu wanted to start out for a journey. They avoided bad omens like sneezing by some one, sight of one Brahman, a widow, a snake, a sanyasi etc. The appearance of a star with a tail, the comet, meant bad omen.

The belief of people in omens was not confined to one community or caste. It was general and was common even among
All classes believed that evil spirits were warded off by talismans prepared by the professional men. Many professionals were Muslims and they prepared talismans for Hindus and Muslims alike.

The following omens were believed in by almost all castes:
If the kulavi fly was found in a house, the birth of a child was foretold.

If a light went out, during meals or auspicious time some evil was fore shadowed. While measuring rice, if a measureful slips the arrival of a guest was indicated.

If crows were seen fighting infront of the house, news of death would be heard very soon.

If the sole of the feet itches, a journey will shortly have to be undertaken.

The basis for many of the superstitions was the belief that the heavenly bodies exercised good or bad influence on the lives of the people which determined the course of events in one's life. Horoscopes were cast to help forecast the course of future events and important incidents in one's life. The belief in powers of the stars in moulding the course of events on earth gave rise to superstition and lucky moments. People were very careful to choose an auspicious mukurtha for any important undertaking and even a journey. People believed in the significance of dreams which they thought would always come true.

People believed in the influence of charms, spells, black magic etc. The superstition regarding evil eye was wide spread. The
A peculiar and interesting superstition was prevalent in Thanjavur region. Among some castes, when a man has lost two children prematurely, the 3rd child was smeared with ashes and disfigured and the left nostril was pierced and ornamented with goldring. The child if a boy was named Kuppuswami or Pakkiri (Fakir) and if a girl Kuppammal: when such boys or girls were married, peculiar ceremonies had to be observed among some castes. The false ideas and superstitions and omens paralysed the life of the people.
Footnotes

1. Owing to the expansion of the Vijayanagar Empire in the south, many Telugus and Canarese made the Tamil Country their home. During the Nayak rule, the rulers being Telugus favoured their kith and kin, with tax free lands and settled them. The Gujarathis and Sourashtras had their, settlements here owing to the patronage extended to them by the kings. The establishment of the Mahratha rule in Thanjavur, led to the influx of the Mahrathas, as they migrated from Maharastra. Their language and customs were not familiar to the natives. Due to Hyder's invasion and the Nawabs' rule, large scale conversion to Islam by force or choice posed a threat to the existing order. The establishment of the European settlements in Tamil Country led to missionary activities and paved the way for conversions of Tamils into Christianity. There were a few Jains also. Thus the Thanjavur Mahratha society, was a conglomeration of various religious and racial sects.


3. Ibid., p.52.

4. Ibid., p.54.

5. Fishing was impure as it took the life for a living. The tapping of palm wine was impure, as alcohol excites senses. Oil-mongering was impure as crushing of oil seeds, was interpreted as taking of life. Prostitution was impure, as it requires illicit sensual activity for the purpose of gaining a livelihood.

7. Ibid., p.53.

8. Ibid.


10. Even during the British rule, they were not allowed to enter the court hall, as their very presence was deemed to pollute the whole area. This system persisted, despite the far-reaching changes brought up due to British rule.


18. Usually, the punishment was excommunication. Inter-dining, non-observance of **suthaka** days etc., were the more common offences which resulted in excommunication.


22. The religious classification of the people under the Mahratha rule, were as follows: The Hindus 91.03%, Christians 3.66% Jains, Buddhists and others.


23. The Vellala and Kallar and Padayachis may be described as the cultivating and landowning castes.


24. Gazetteer of South India, *op.cit.*, p.53


26. They officiated at worship and temple ceremonies, presided over the marriage functions, blessed the people and indicated the lucky days, wrote the horoscope of the newlyborn....
Ibid. p.1,5 and 36.


28. Being the followers of 'Smrithis' they were called as the 'Smarthas'.

29. F.R. Hemingway, op.cit., p.79.

30. ..... Ibid., p.80.


32. A small group of Telugu Saivite Brahmans who followed the Vijaya Nagar kings, lived here and scattered in Thanjavur and were employed as house hold priests.


34. Kathleen Gough, op.cit., p.17.

35. It refers to 96 inner sects in Mahratha community. Marriage alliances were made with in these sects only.

   Personal Interview with Senior Prince, Thanjavur palace, Thanjavur.

36. T. Venkasamy Row. op.cit p.23.

37. Vellalan - agriculturist dominant peasant community in Thanjavur.

   Lockman - op.cit., p.162.
The other important subdivisions were Tuluva, Kondaikattiar, (so named from their way of tying the hair) the Kodikal, (betel leaf gardener) ’Kilnadu’, ‘Mudali’ and ‘Pandarams’ (Priests). The most of the sub-divisions were named after their original homes.

F.R. Hemingway, *op.cit.*, p.82.


39. ’Pillai’ means ‘sons’ denoting ‘Sons’ of the soil. The Vellala settlement was the earliest and first settlement in Thanjavur delta.

40. The ‘Pandarams’ were the priests of their caste, the celebrated among them were ’Tambirans’ who were the heads of importnat maths.


F.R. Hemingway, *op.cit.*, p.82.


44. *Ibid*.


48. The Pattunulkar's speak dialect of Gujarathi and they were confined mainly to Thanjavur, Ayyampettai and Kumbakonam.


52. 'Melakaras' mean musicians and as for as Thanjavur is concerned it is applied to two absolutely distinct castes of the Tamil and Telugu Melakkarans. These two will not interdine.

53. 'Periamelam' - a band consisting of one or more Nadaswarams a pipe, a drum and a pair of cymbals. 'Chinnamelam' - *Nautch* music in which vocal music is performed at the time of dancing.

54. *Nattuvans* - Those who train the dancing women.


56. Their name being derived from 'valai' - a net. They were divided into endogamous sub-divisions called Vedar (hunters) and Ambalakkaran (torch bearers and cultivators).


58. The Valluvans, a subdivision in Paraya community acted as the priest of the Parayas.
59. The habitation of the Parayas were found in cheris. They were considered as polluting castes and untouchables.


64. In the first hearing, they stated that there were 22 castes in the 'Valangai' and 6 in 'Idangai' group, but in the 2nd deposition, they furnished a list of 24 castes in Vadangai and 9 in Idangai. The difference arose on conduct of marriage. Procession dress etc. *Modi records*, T.M.S.S.M. Library, Thanjavur, No.8 p.29.

65. The word Labbai seems to be of recent origin formerly the Labbais were called Sonagars meaning natives of Sonagam (Arabia). They were descendants of Arab traders or refugees who married the native Hindu women who were forcibly converted to Islam by Tipu sultan and other Muslim invaders.


The ‘Archakas’ performed worship in the temples.

The ‘Annams’ were monks who were allowed to marry.

‘Nirvanis’ lived a separate life apart from the world.


People used coat, trousisers and shoes with turban which were different kinds of European dresses.


The Brahmans by virtue of their long tradition of learning monopolised all key-positions. The kings favoured them with all previlages. The Jesuit Fathers were an eye witness to such a domination. The Brahmans branded all non-Brahmans higher or lowler as *sudras*. The higher castes *sudras* like Vellalas and Mudaliars started to feel agitated by the lower status assigned to them which they cannot imagine....


80. Village organisation and village administration is dealt separately in the chapter ‘local administration’.

81. No doubt, every village had more or less of these officials and artisans according to the population of the village.

*Hodgeson’s Report*, 1808, p. 5

82. Carpentry and pottery making although ritually evaluated as occupations, did not place the artisans in a polluting role in relation to all whom they served.


84. The Marathi speaking people accompanied their rulers, from Maharashtra in 1675 when Thanjavur emerged as an independent Maratha kingdom. Thanjavur city was reported to have 100,000 people in the late 1770’s even after Nawab’s invasion. But the last quarter of the eighteenth century saw a deep decline in Thanjavur’s population. Though some people returned later from exile, the district was reported to have only 83,753 households in 1802 and only 901,333 people at the first census of 1823 and it had 8,000 in 1838.


*Census of India*, (Madras, 1951) pp. 18-44.


88. The members of the family lived together with the father as the head, where all brothers lived under one roof. The family included among its members, all relations, widowed aunts, sisters and their children and others.

89. Since only patriarchal descent was recognised, preference has to be given to *dayada* of the same 'gotra' while adopting a son. The society was averse to the succession to the property of the descendants from female line.


91. The people sought perpetuation of the family mainly with a view to have a son to perform the obsequial and *shrada* rites, so that the way to heaven was freed to their souls. So, people were longing for male children and it encouraged the practice of polygamy.

92. In Hindu Social set up, it is an important social institution and a passport to 'grahastha-asrama'. To a Hindu, *vivaka* is obligatory for the birth of a son alone which would enable him to attain heaven.

93. *Chanavakuli* refers to 96 innersects in Maratha community. Marriage alliances were made within these sects only. It is mentioned in ‘Pakshya Puranam’ ‘Shanavakuli Pradeepa’ - sanskrit MSS - translated from Sanskrit to Marathi by Brahmendra Sridar Swami which gives reference to Royal matrimonial alliances.

94. Shivaji the Great had alliances; with Mahratha General families like ‘Raja Mahadik’, ‘Shikar’, ‘Jadav’ to protect Hindu Raj from on slaught of Muslim Sultans Sivaji selected seven Kshatriya families and named it ‘Sabtakuli’ The Mahratha kings inorder to maintain pure Kshatriya blood had alliances only with five important families, later on called ‘Panch Kuli’ from Satara, Kolhapur, Kongan, Pune and Maharastra.  

95. ‘Gotra’ denotes the name of ‘rishi’ ancestor probably mythical. It is a exogamous division particularly among the Brahmans.

96. Any one attempting to eliminate these rules by setting up new traditions was punished. In one instance a person was tried for the offence of marrying his daughter to a person of the same gotra as his.

P.V. Jagadisha Aiyar, *South Indian Customs*, (Madras, 1906) p.46.

97. **Varadakhina** originally implied a gift given by bride's parents according to convenience. Man's natural greed for money led to the practice of dowry which apparently had its evil roots.

98. **Broughton, Letters written in a Maratha camp in 1809**, (London Archibald constable, 1813), p-140.

Giving dowry or gift to the bride by the bridgegroom was called **parisapanam**. The acceptance of bride price was regarded as a condemnable act for a Brahman.

99. **Kasiyatrai** - Mock pilgrimage to Kasi, by the bridegroom. Father-in-law persuades him on the way, to marry his daughter.

100. **Kanyadana** (gift) giving away the virgin daughter in marriage to the bridegroom, by pouring out water, symbolising ceremony.

101. **Agniparinayana** During the **Vivaha** homa ceremony, **tali** was tied round the neck of the bride. The symbolic ceremony that took place before God-Agni. The bride groom leads the bride three times round the nuptial fire reciting mantras.

102. **Saptapadi** - Taking seven steps by the bridegroom and the bride jootly before sacred fire with prayers.


105. The Marital 'tali' or sacred thread was perhaps tied for protection and its practical significance is that the bearer of 'tali' can be identified at once as a married lady.

106. **Arati**: Whirling round a basin of coloured water thrice round the couple's face.


110. There is difference between 'Lagnam' and Sword Vivaham. The king tied tali in the royal marriages to the queens. But in sword marriages the ladies were wedded to the sword of the king. **Deposition of Ramachandra Rao** - (Witness No. 32 in Subordinate Judges Court Tanjore dt. Sep. 28th 1916. O.S. No. 26 of 1912) P. 226.


113. Although re-marriage of widows was freely sanctioned among some non-Brahman castes, the elders attempted to prohibit widow re-marriage in the respective castes with a view of elevatig their own ritual status prompted by a desire to imitate the Brahmans. V. T. Gune, *Op. cit.*, p 75.


116. Ekoji had two wives and 9 mistresses. Shahji had several mistresses. Sarabhoji I had 3 Queens, Tukkoji had 5 wives and 6 concubines from various castes. Ekoji II had 6 wives and 3
concubines, Pratapsingh had 5 wives and 7 concubines Tulaja had 5 wives, king Serfoji II married 2 wives and maintained a seraglio. King Sivaji II married 17 girls at the same time for want of a legal heir to the throne. He had already 3 wives and also maintained a seraglio called 'Mangala vilas'.


118. Their only duty in life was to satisfy man's physical pleasures and wants. They were considered incapable of developing any of those higher mental qualities which would make them worthy in life. A.Dubois, Op.cit., p.336.

119. Ibid., p 231


121. 'Her life is long lingering misery'.

Report of the Age of Consent Committee, 1929, p.102

It was a more serious crime than 'sati' for it plunged a girl into a life of suffering till the moment of death as a child wife, child mother and very often a child widow.


123. However, the custom of child-marriage was applicable to men, only in a restricted sense. For there was no ceiling as such on the marriageable age of men since they could-re-marry and practise polygamy.

125. Mother of Serfoji II was mentioned as ‘Mathosri’ and Sri ‘Avusaheb’ in Modi records. A Chattram was named after her called ‘Avusaheb’ Chattram near Palliagraharam.


128. Re-marriage of widows was prohibited and their property rights were limited. The only alternative the widows were left with, if they wanted to avoid the miserable widowhood was self immolation. J. Forbes, Oriental Memoirs, Op.cit., p.292.

129. ‘Sati’ is a Sanskrit term literally meaning a virtuous wife, Thomas, Indian women through the Ages, p.231.

130. Various conjectures are given to its origin. In Hindu set up, a woman has no separate entity without her husband. If she stubbornly refused to be burnt alive, she was forced to undergo an intolerable degradation and ill-treatment. Hence J.W. Kaye describes Sati a cruel escape from the miseries of more cruel existence.

131. This was perhaps Thanjavur which was the seat of orthodoxy and the royal Court encouraged it.

Judicial Consultations, dt. April, 8, 1821 Nos 2 and 4.

132. ‘Tonks’ were made to the queens who predeceased the spouses as Sumangalis. Tonks were also erected to the queens who had
committed sati. Yamuna Bai and Chakwar Bai committed sati at the death of king Pratapsingh. Tonks were erected for them. 

*Deposition of Yogambal* [6th witness O.S.No.26 of 1912,]pp. 11, 12 and 13.


135. Dubois who was the eyewitness of this Sati describes this incident thus. ‘When king Amarsingh died, he selected two queens for Sati.... The Widows mounted the pile. The priests recited mantras and set fire to it ....’


143. 'Kalyanamahal' was the residential quarters of the concubines of king Serfoji II which was founded in 1824 and 'Mangalavilasam' in the South main Street was the seraglio of Shivaji II. They were also called 'Mangala vilas ladies'.

144. The Akkamars acted as the confidential messangers between the Baisahebs in the Harem and the King. They also served as maids of the queen.


145. Modi record, No. 56C.


149. Devadasi: The Chola kings paved the way for the emergence of this system in Thanjavur. The practice of dedicating girls to temples by tying 'tali' came into vogue. It was called 'Pottukkattuthal'. The girls initiated into this system were married to the presiding deity of the temple to which the girls were attached. These girls were hence called 'Devadasis' and 'Nitya Sumangalis'. They were mainly responsible for the protection of pure Bharathanatyam in Thanjavur.


152. This exchange between court and temple seems to have been mutual. For example, Ramasamy Diksitar, the father of Muthusamy Diskhitar one of the celebrated musical trinity studied music under the devedasis of Tiruvarur temple.


153. They formed a set of Thanjavur dancing girls called ‘Tanjore natch party’ and were considered part of wedding dowry of the princess. These dasis were called ‘Rajadasis’ or servants of the king....


155. In 1843 dasi Viralakshmi died at Sarabendra Rajan Pattinam. In her place Venkatalakshmi 15 Years of age was appointed immediately.


158. On the annual Brahmotsava festival, the devadasis performed dances regularly before the deity.


160. *Pathiyar*—which meant that they had no husband. They were of a prestigious class of devadasis. P.R. Thilagam who was a famous dasi during Mahratha period belonged to Pathiliyar class of dasi.


During the reign of Tukkoji, a copper plat dt. April 5 1734, records that dancers and other artists agreed to fix a 'varthanai', a periodical fee contribution.


166. The National Museum Copper plate also deals with 'Varthanai' made by dancers and artists.


167. A dasi named Visalakshi purchased a poor girl named Rangayi from Pudukkottai and agreed to give back the girl on condition that the mother should pay back the money with interest. When the mother of the girl approached the dasi for getting back her daughter, the dasi refused to return the girl as she sold off the girl
in the mean time to the government for a hundred rupees. So the mother appealed to the royal Court.


168.Subraya Pillai sold his wife's sister named Karuppayi to the palace receiving 35 chakrams. Ibrahim sold Hameena his adopted child, to the Government.


169.Sabapathi pillai married the daughter of Periyanayakkan in 1842. He went in search of a job leaving his wife aged seven in his father-in-law's house.


171.Lord Pigot purchased 16 girls and sent them to Thanjavur palace


174.The Mughal impact is particularly conspicuous in their costumes and dresses. The Mahratha kings dressed in Mughal grandeur. Their contacts with Muslims brought richness and variety in the mode of traditional dress.
175. The pitambara or pattu was a silken dhoti, usually with zari borders. The pitambara was worn at the time of performing religious rite as people believed that silk cloth was free from pollution.


177. A dhoti is the unstiched lower garment, used to be generally plain white with coloured borders of various designs.

178. 8 Cubit - piece of cloth tied in a peculiar manner with five folds.

179. *Mulakacham* - The cloth is tied round the waist and then the front folds are pulled backwards between legs and tucked into the waist behind.

180. A ‘pyjama’ or trouser drapping straight from the waist to the ankles.

181. A ‘tumana’ was a pair of large pants.

182. A variety of head gears in vogue were ‘pateka’ ‘Mendila’, ‘Pagudi’, ‘rumala’, ‘Mundasu’ and topi or cap. All these headgears were tied in different styles of which we know very little. T. Broughton, *Letters written in a Maratha camp in 1809* (London, 1813), p.77.

183. The long piece of cloth was cut into bits of suitable length and were called tuni, tundu.

The manner of arranging the turbans varied from caste to caste

184. A noticeable difference in the dress of women of upper and lower
castes was visible. The poor people wore cotton sarees.


186. The Smartha women bring the end of the cloth over the right
shoulder while others pass it over the left.

187. The Brahman widows alone wear white sarees and they covered
their heads with the end of the saree to form a hood.

188. James Forbes speaking of king Sarfoji II says that 'he was
splendidly dressed in a muslin ... His dress was made of silk
with several strings of pearls .......


190. All Muslim women used a long piece of cloth (pardha) to cover
their entire body.

191. Thulajendra Raja Bhonsle, *The Tanjore Marathas*, (Thanjavur,

The variety of necklaces were male, Kanathi Gapa, Tanmani,
Chandra Riva and Mohanamela etc.

192. The Maratha women should wear nose ornament as a sign of *Soubhagya* or married bliss.


194. The application of the mask had some religious or caste significance.

195. *Kondai* - a kind of hairdress. Widows and ascetics had completely shaved their hair from the head.


198. J. Forbes *op.cit.*, p.70.


There were differences in food habits between the Brahmans and non-Brahmans. The Vaishnavas do not sit along with smarthas. The Brahmans do not dine at non-Brahman Weddings.


201. When a feast took place in agraharam, only Brahmans were invited.

J. Forbes, *op.cit.*, 347.


203. *Personal Interview*, with Thulajendra Raja Bhonsle prince of Thajavur palace.

204. The food habits differed among various castes. Non-Brahmans had a different taste from that of Brahmans. The Brahmans food was not spiced.


206. Wood was the chief medium used for decoration of buildings.

207. The thirty buildings include 12 *mahals* and 18 *khanas*. Though we get 30 names of the buildings in the palace complex, we could not able to get the exact location of these buildings. Only some of the buildings are easy to locate.
208. The kings received it from Europe. King Serfoji II collected Wrist watches, Cloths, Curios in glass paintings, Mirrors, Pistols and so on.

209. *Agraharam.*- where the Brahmans houses were located. During the Chola period, they were referred to as Mangalam or ‘Chathurvedi Mangalam’. Later the term *agrahram* came into use to refer to the streets in which lived and sometimes to the entire village like Ganapathi Agraharam, Palliagraharam and so on.

210. The two communities were socially separated. It may be said that in the sense that the Paraiyas were converted Christians. F.R. Hemingway. *op.cit.*, p.62.


217. A. Dubois, *op.cit.*

218. A son’s birth was a religious necessity for the Hindus to preserve their traditions, Christians and Muslims also gave importance to birth of a male child.

220. *Quanoon - e. Islam* 1836, p.34.

221. It was performed between the age of seven and fourteen, though occasionally it was done either before or after that period.


222. Machenzie mss No.370, ([*Maravar Jathi Vilakkam and Kallar Jathi vilakkam*](#)).

223. The cremation ground or the burning ghat of the ordinary people was called *'Sudukadu'* and the burial ghat was *'Idukadu'* F.R. Heming way *op.cit.*, p.75.


225. One can know from the number of kalasams on the top of the samathi temple if the king was cremated alone or the queens performed sati. *'Tulasimadam'* or Brindavanam was constructed on the samadhi of the Queens.


227. Wailing has developed into an art and women sit round the corpse and relate in long verses about the greatness of the departed soul. It was sometimes followed by beating of the breasts with both the hands by women.


230. The main gate was called ‘Hazaram’ Gate. The corpse of the concubines were taken out side through a *thittivasal* facing the East main street to the cremation ground. The king went through the ‘Hazaram’ gate to the Cremation ground which was away from Royal cremation ground.


Venkasamy Row *op.cit.*, p.212.

232. Deposition of Jaganatha Goswami, witness.30, O.S.No. 26 of 1912 *op.cit.*

233. *Bow biz* was the feasting of a brother by a sister and vice versa during Diwali time.

Deposition of M.S. Ghantigai, *op.cit.*

234. ‘Kuladarma Pooja’ was performed on specific day from Chitrai to Panguni. The Sumangali ladies performed this special Pooja.


235. Holi Pandigai is the same as what Tamils call Kaman Pandigai.


237. Broughton says, ‘their children were given systematic training and practise athletic exercises and sports... which were essential for a warrior....’


239. Wrestling was held on Navarathri festival at Sadar Mahdi in Thanjavur palace.


241. The vastads were the wrestlers, who belonged to a caste called ‘Jatti’ or Malluga jetty. King Serfoji II had given a place called vastad chavadi (on the way to vallam).

242. This game was played in a circular pit covered with sand.


243. Ibid., p.349.

244. “Generally, the largest elephants were selected for this purpose and were pampered with hot spices and other stimulants to make them vicious”...

Broughton, op.cit. p.34.

245. King Serfoji II had his own private reserve forest for Shikar.

Modi records, T.M.S.S.M. Lib, Thanjavur Vol.42, Bundle 126.
246. King Serfoji II wrote a treatise on the art of *rekhlaw* competition called ‘Chatula Tumani’ in Mahratha.

*Modi records*, T.M.S.S.M. Lib, Thanjavur, Vol.118/C.

247. King Serfoji II’s favourite falcon was brought from Nawab of Devagiri. The king invited his European friends to witness his falcon’s hunt and competition.

*Modi records* Bundle 116/C of 1813. T.M.S.S.M. Lib, Thanjavur.

248. *Kolattam* - stick play, performed by girls in circle.

249. This art of dancing appears to have been cultivated and practised on a restricted scale, perhaps for the reason that it was associated with a class of prostitutes.

250. They are a form of folk songs. Some of them were *Villuppattu* or bow song and *Kappalpattu*.

251. *Lavani* - Folk form of Maharastra Origin, sung during festivals like ‘Vasantha Panchami’. This art slowly dwindled into insignificance with the extinction of Mahratha rule.

252. “The *tamasha* entertainment of the Mahratha period had not attained the vulgarity which it seems to have acquired later…”


253. The class of people who performed *Katha* were known as *Hardasa* and *Gosavi*. The Harikatha in its present form may be said to have emerged during Mahratha rule in Thanjavur.
Modi records, T.M.S.S.M. Lib, Thanjavur, No.120C.

254. 'Rajarajeswara Natakam' was staged in the month of Vaikasi in the Big temple in the Kuravanji media....

A.R.E. No. 55 of 1895.

255. The important dramas written in Tamil were Chandrika"sa 'Vilasam Natakam', 'Buloha Devendra Vilasa Natakam', 'Kaveri Kalyanam' and 'Vishnu Saharja Vilasam'. They were enacted during the time of Shahji II.


256. Kuravanji is a type of dance, drama which was popular at the time of the Mahrathas. It became popular at the time of Shahji II.


257. Pallu - another folk entertainment sung by agricultural women in praise of the kings. The pallan and pallis sang and acted in this kind of dramas.

258. Nondi Natakam - It was a folk drama which was enacted by a single man who posed himself a lame man.

259. Puppet show - A miniature immitation of the drama. It was also called bommalattam.

261. **Omens**: The people of Thanjavur during the Mahratha rule, were no exception to this belief in *sakunam* or omen which was one of the most interesting features in the social life of the days of the Mahrathas.


264. The belief in omens was in vogue among the people of Thanjavur. This can be seen from the fact that the Mahratha rulers of Thanjavur saw to it. Whenever they went out for hunting, a man came with milk from the opposite direction as a sign of good Omen.


265. **Talisman**s - small hollow metal cylinders worn by people.


269. Mr. Pacfield a missionary had stayed in Tamil Country. During his stay, he had studied the superstitious belief of the people.


270. They have to cut down a plantation tree and then the nose ring is removed.