CHAPTER III

NAIDU COMMUNITY-ORIGIN AND SPREAD

Walajapet Taluk, the study area, is inhabited by Naidu caste which comprises of Kammars and Balijas. The above said Naidus are classified as "Forward Caste", as they are socially and economically advanced.¹

3.1. The Name "Naidu"

The name "Naidu" is the short form of Nayakadu, meaning a ruler or a king. In Tamil Nadu, the Naidu kings were called Nayakars. Naidus form one of the major communities in South India.

3.2. Homeland

The original home of the Naidus is considered to be coastal Andhra of South India. The Naidus were concentrated especially in coastal Andhra Regions – Guntur, Godavari Districts and Rayalaseema Regions - Kurnool, Cuddapppa, Anantapur and Chittoor.

3.3. Caste Profession

Naidus were basically a trading community. The Naidu caste comprises of many sub-divisions like Balija, Kamma and Velama and sub-sects like Rowth, Kavara, Musiten Balija, Gajulu Balija etc. The Balija name was said to be derived from the Sanskrit words, "Bali" meaning sacrifice and "ja" meaning 'born out of' signifying that the Balijas owe their origin to the performance of a
yagam. The traditional profession of the Gajulu Balija was making bangles, pearls or coral ornaments and other sorts of female adornments. But now a greater part of the community is engaged in agriculture. The Naidu caste subdivisions are usually known after their common occupations. The Rella or Ratnala Balijas sell precious stones. Mytyala Balijas sell pearls and Pagadela Balijas sell coral. The Linga Balijas, an important sub-sect of Balijas, have many similar groups, each with a separate profession, like Jangan (Priests), Reddi (cultivators), Gsnfis (Oil mongers), traders and agriculturists.

3.4. Major sub-divisions of Naidu community

3.4.1. Balija Naidu

They form the first and foremost division of Naidu community. Balija owed their origin to the performance of a "Yagam". They are divided into number of Gotrams like Appala, Avula, Bharadhwaja, Gandnam and Saliya Ungarala.

Balija is the Chief Telugu trading caste and it is scattered throughout the districts of Tamil Nadu. It has two main sub-divisions - Desa (or Kote) and peta. The first of these includes in those whose ancestors were supposed to have been the Balija (Nayak) kings of Madurai, Tanjore and Vijayanagaram, or provincial Governors in those kingdoms. To the second belong the Gazulu (bangle sellers) and Perikas (salt sellers), who live by trade. In Tamil Districts Balijas are known as vadukans (Telugu people) and Kavarais. The descendants of the Nayak or Balija kings of Madurai and Tanjore claim to be Kshatriyas.
and of the lineal descendants of the sage Bharadwaja. Others trace their ancestry to the Kauravas of the Mahabharata. This Kshatriyas descent has not, however, been admitted by other castes, because Balijas were considered to be an offshoot of the kammars or kapus, or that they were a mixed community recruited from various Telugu castes. None of the members of the caste now wear the sacred thread or follow the vedic ritual.  

The Balija caste people were Kshatriyas of the Lunar race as can be proved by reference to the Bahagavatham, Vishnupuranam and Brahmmapuranam.  

3.4.2. Linga Balija

It is the name of the religious group of Naidus who worship Lingam. The Linga Balija are usually cultivators, priests and traders. These Balijas were pure vegetarians, basically. During their stay in Mysore, they were said to have adopted the culture of Siva devotees. People who had Lingam were called Jangamavaru, agriculturists were called paddy, businessmen were called Kandazavaru and employed persons were called Naidus. They did not grow lengthy hair, mustache, beard or take drinks, meat etc.
3.4.3. Kamma Naidu

Kamma Naidu migrated from coastal Andhra districts of Krishna and Nellore and they were mainly agriculturists. The sub-division of Kamma Naidus were Pagada, Mukara and Bangaru Mukam. Kammas are found mostly in Coimbatore district. They migrated to Tamil Nadu during KrishnadеваRaya period (16th Century).

Writing collectively about the Kammas, Kapus or Reddis, Velamas and Telegas, Mr. W. Franchis states that "all four of these large castes closely resemble one another in appearance and customs, and seem to have branched off from one and the same Dravidian stock."

The word "kamma" in Telugu means 'ear ornament', such as is worn by women. According to one legend "the Rishis, being troubled by Rakshasas, applied to Vishnu for protection, and he referred them to Lakshmi. The Goddess gave them a casket containing one of her ear ornaments (kamma), and enjoined them to worship it for a hundred years. At the expiry of that period, a band of five hundred armed warriors sprang up from the casket, who at the request of the Rishis, attacked and destroyed the giants. After this, they were directed to engage in agriculture, being promised extensive estates, and the consideration paid to Kshatriyas. They, accordingly, possessed large territories, such as Amaravathi and others in the Krishna, Nellore and other districts. They have always been very successful agriculturists.
According to the Census Report 1891, the main sub-divisions of Kammas are Gampa, Illuvellani Goda Chatu, Kavali, Vaduga, Pedda and Bangaru. It would seem that there are two main endogamous sections, Gampa (basket) Chatu and Goda (wall) Chatu.

3.4.3(a) Gampa (basket) and Goda (wall) Chatu

Chatu is said to mean a screen of hiding place. Concerning the origin of these sections, the following story is told that two sisters were bathing in a tank, when a king happened to pass by. One of the girls hid behind a basket, and the other behind a wall. The descendents of the two sisters became the Gampa and Goda Chatu Kammas. They may not intermarry by reason of their original close relationship.

According to another legend, after a desperate battle, some members of the caste escaped by hiding behind a basket and the other behind a wall.

3.4.3(b) Illuvellani, Vaduga, Pedda and Bangaru

The terms Illuvellani and Pedda seem to be synonymous with Goda Chatu. The women of this section were gosha, and not allowed to appear in public and even in the present day do not go out and work freely in the fields. The name Illuvellani indicates those who do not go (Vellani) out of the house (Illu).
The name Pedda (great) refers to the superiority of the section. Vaduga simply means Telugu, and is probably a name given by Tamilians to the Kammars who live among them. The name Bangaru is said to refer to the custom of the women of this sub-division wearing only gold nose ornaments (bangaramu).

The Goda Chatu sub-division is found to be most numerous represented in North Arcot (Vellore) and Chinglepet, and the Illuvellani in Krishna, Nellore and Ananthapur. The Kavali sub-division is practically confined to the Godavari, and the Pedda to the Krishna district. The Vaduga Kammars are found chiefly in Coimbatore district.

3.4.4. Kavarai Naidu

Kavarai is simply the Tamil name of Tamilized Baliya being a corrupt form of Gauri, the patron deity of the caste. They maintain the manners of customs of the Baliya, but often speak Tamil rather than Telugu.

3.4.5. Gajula Balijavaru or Ratuelavaru

They concentrated in the trade of Diamonds, Pearls, Topaz, Cat’s eye stone and such other precious stones. They are able to make out the difference between original and duplicate precious stones. They employ themselves in preparing precious ornaments for kings and other important persons.
Some of them are called Gajula Balijavaru. They are employed in selling bangles, black beds, Eyetex, Kasthuri, Kumkum, turmeric etc. They are well-educated, truthful, quiet and polite. So they were employed in the outhouse of kings to decorate their wives with bangles, kumkum and turmeric etc. They were treated with the respect given to brothers and sisters. Some of them were also named as "Desai".

3.4.6. Koppu and Reddivaru

They were basically agriculturists. Koppu means watchman. "Reddy" means "dark". They became Zamindars during the period of Ghiyas-ud-din-Thuluk in 1323. Those Velamavaru who were employed by the military, belong to these Koppu Balija.

3.5. Gotras

Their forefathers were of "Kalibe and Bharadwaja" Gotras. Now-a-days, Balijas of the South East belong to "Athiri, Aangeerasa and Mareese" Gotras. Balija Naidu in Tamil Nadu belong to Kashiba, Salama, Janakola, Dhawawida, Pushpola, Kotham, Yorasagala, Jadabala. Paala, Maiha, Varaha, Narasimha and Mahipathadi Gotras.

The Kammases also have gotras such as Chittipoola, Kurunollu, Kulukale, Uppala, Cheruka (sugarcane), Vallotla and Yenamalla.
3.6. Devotion

Naidus were supposed to be devotional. This is evident from their contributions, such as, construction of temples, mutt, park etc. In the ancient days they belonged to Chandravamsam. They were devoted to Lord Vishnu and considered Lord Krishna as their leader. Even then they respected Lord Siva.

When they were called as "Andhra" some praised Lord Buddha. These Andhra people constructed many temples in Vijayanagar, Anaikunji, Puri Jaganathan, Tirupathi, Kanchi, Vellore and Srirangam and did many devotional services.

The Balijas spent lot of money in constructing temples in Madurai, Mannargudi, Tirunelveli and Srirangam.

The Balijas, devoted, poor, illiterate, find no difference between Saiva and Vainava. They worshipped the goddesses Katteri and Sattan and the gods Madurai Veeran, Mollai Andi and Munian.

The uneducated Balijas, dwelling in remote villages are very poor and devotional. They draw Vadakalai Namam on their forehead, perform poojas chanting, "Rengappa, Yelukundalawada" during the month of Purattasi and Margazhi and on Saturdays. Some people have converted the above poor, rural Balija to Thenkalai.
3.7. Religion

In the field of Religion, the Naidus did all that was needed to place Hinduism on a firm footing. Tirumalai Nayakar and other Generals took a great deal of interest in renovating buildings and temples, in granting endowments to them and giving agraharams. They professed Vaishnavism and encouraged Vaishnavites to come and settle down in their dominions. They showered their beneficence equally on the Saivita and Vaishnavita temples. Tirumalai Nayakar was a great patron of literature during his period.⁹

3.8. Marriage Ceremony among Naidus

Among Kammas of the Tamil country, the bridegroom was said to be sometimes much younger than the bride.¹⁰

A near relative of the future bridegroom proceeds, with a party to the house of the future bride. On their way thither, they look for omens such as birds crossing in as auspicious direction. Immediately they burn camphor and break a coconut, which must split in two with clean edges. One half is sent to the would-be bridegroom and the other half is taken to the bride's house. The wedding day is then fixed. The marriage is celebrated in the house of the bridegroom. If it is a case of Kannikadhanam, marriage is celebrated at the house of bride. The bride price is highest in the Gampa section. Box-lid ceremony is performed on the first day of the marriage. Things like new clothes, the bride's price in money or jewels are placed. The box is examined
by the Sammandhis. Both the Sammandhis exchange betel leaves and arecanuts and say "the girl is yours and the money is mine". The Purohit (priest) also announces the same. If the bridegroom dies at this stage, the bride becomes a widow.

Kankanam are tied on the bride and groom. The Purohit lights the sacred fire and the couple stand with a screen between them. The bridegroom places his right toe on that of the brides' and ties the "bootu" round her neck. They go three times round the dias. On the third day, Pongal is offered and wrist threads are removed. Mutton and Greens should not be cooked during marriage celebrations.

3.9. Consummation

Among the Kammas, consummation does not take place till three months after a marriage ceremony as it is considered unlucky to have the heads of a family in a household during the first year of marriage.¹¹

3.10. Burial

The dead are usually cremated. As the moment of death approaches, a coconut is broken and camphor burnt, the thumbs and great toes of the corpse are tied together. A woman, who is left a widow, exchanges betel with her dead husband, and the women put rice into his mouth. The corpse is carried to the burning-ground on a bier, with the head towards the house. When it approaches a spot called Arichandra's temple, the bier is placed on the ground and food is
placed at the four corners. Then a drummer or Mela repeats the formula, "I am the first born (i.e. the representative of the oldest caste). I wear the sacred thread at the outset. I am Sangu Blower (or Reddi Mela). I am the Patron of Arichandra. Lift the corpse, and turn it round with its head towards the Smasanam (graveyard), and feet towards the house.

When the corpse is laid on the pyre, the relations throw rice over it, and the chief mourner goes three times round the pyre, carrying on his shoulder a pot of water in which a barber makes holes. During the third turn he lits the pyre, and throwing down the pot goes off to bathe. On the following days, a stone is placed on the spot where the deceased breathed his last, and his clothes are kept close to the spot. The women pour milk over the stone and offer milk, coconut cooked rice, betel etc., to it. These are taken by the male members to the graveyard. When Arichandra's temple is reached they place a small quantity of food on a leaf. At the graveyard, the fire is extinguished, and the charred bones are collected, and placed on a plantain leaf. Out of the ashes they make an effigy on the ground to which food is offered on four leaves one of which is placed on the abdomen of the figure, and other three are set by the side of it. The first of these is taken by the Drummer, and the others are given to a barber, washerman and Panisevan (a medicant caste).
3.11. Karmandhiram

The final death ceremonies (karmandhiram) are performed on the sixteenth day. They commence with the Punyathanam, or purification ceremony and the giving of presents to Brahmins. Inside the house, the dead person's clothes are worshipped by the women. The widow is taken to a tank or well, where her Nagavali Bottu is removed. A new one is worn for the purpose of the death ceremony. The male members proceed to a tank and make an effigy on the ground, near which three small stones are set up. On these a libation of water is poured, and cooked rice, vegetables, etc. are offered. The chief mourner then goes into the water, carrying the effigy which is thrown in, and dives as many times as there have been days between the funeral and the karmandhiram. The ceremony closes with a making of presents to the Brahmins and agents. Towards evening, the widow sits on a small quantity of rice on the ground, and her marriage bottu is removed. The kammias perform the first annual ceremony, but not a regular sradh afterwards.\(^\text{13}\)

3.12. Migration to Tamil Nadu

The first and foremost king of the Naidu community was "Sultapagu". His son Bali Naidu was very famous. He was born due to Balyaga. Bali had six sons namely Anga, Vanga, Kaliya, Kashmeera, Pundra and Andhra. These six brothers went in different directions and founded their kingdoms there. The greatest among the Narapathies was Sri Krishna Deva Raya Nayakar of Vijayanagar (1509-1529). During his time he conquered the whole of South
India, defeating the powerful kings of those days, the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya Kings. He established the Nayaka kingdoms at Madurai and Tanjore. Sri Tirumalai Nayakar was the ruler of Madurai (1623 - 59) and Sevappa Naidu was the ruler of Tanjore (1623 - 59).

The migration of Naidus to Tamil Nadu started in the beginning of the 16th century, continued throughout 17th century and early part of the 18th century.14

3.13. Spread in Tamil Nadu

Naidus have spread allover Tamil Nadu. In the year 1518, Krishnadeva Raya Naidu occupied Madurai and Tanjore. Krishnappa Naidu (1504 - 72) ruled the districts of Tirunelveli, Ramanathapuram, Trichy, Coimbatore and Pudukkottai. Thirumala Nayakar ruled Madurai during (1623 - 59). Meenakshi was the last Nayak queen (1732-1736). Thus the Nayaka kingdom of Madurai ended in 1736.15 In olden days, Naidus were found in large numbers in Tanjore, Madurai, Dindugal, Dharapuram, Coimbatore, Erode, Sathiyamangalam, Karur, Namakkal and Salem. But to-day Naidus have spread to the entire state from Ponneri and Tirutani in the North to Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli in the South, and from Vellore, Trichy and Pondicherry in the East and Nilgiris and Coimbatore in the West.
3.14. Conclusion

The wide spectrum of the origin, growth, migration and spread of Balijas and Kammas in Tamil Nadu has been presented in great detail. Generally, all Naidus irrespective of their caste-divisions or location treated their widows alike. Through some of them do business particularly in precious stones, Naidus, in general, are agriculturalists. Their religion, its ceremonies and practices accorded a sub-human status to their widows. This attitudes towards widows is clarified further in the analysis presented in Chapter VI.
REFERENCES

1. Annexure, list of Backward Class, MBC, Denotified communities throughout The State of Tamil Nadu unless otherwise specified.

   a) G.O. Ms. No. 28, B.C. and MBCW. Department, dated 19.7.94.

   b) G.O. Ms. No.100, B.C. and MBCW (BCC) Department, dated 24.11.97, p.3, S.No.30.


11. Ibid. p.103.


