CHAPTER – I

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF PERAIVOURANI TALUK

Thanjavur district is situated in the middle of Tamil Nadu near by the east coast at the longitude between 9.50°,11.25°, the latitude being in between 78.45° and 70.25°. The total area covers about 360286 square kilo meters. The river Kollidam forms the northern limit. Perambalur and Trichy districts form the western limit whereas Palkstrait and Pudukkoattai district form the southern limit. To the east of Thanjavur are Tiruvarur and Nagapattinam district.

Geographical Setup

The formally undivided Thanjavur district consisted of Thanjavur, Nagapattinam, Tiruvarur regions. Later for the development purpose government bifurcated the district into west Thanjavur and east Thanjavur, Papanasam, Kumbakonam and Thiruvidaimaruthur Taluks. There are 14 Panchayat unions, 22 town Panchayats. 906 revenue villages, 589 Panchayat villages and 3 municipalities in the Thanjavur district.

According to 2001 census, the total population of the district constituted 2205375. Out of these 1091557 were males and 1113816
were females. The rural population consisted of 1457204 out of which 721677 were males and 735527 were females. Urban population numbered about 748177 constituting 369880 males and 378291 females.

AdiDravida comprised of 3.01 lakh and tribals in an equal number. In the district, marginal farmers number about 41886. Major agriculture is farm 21531 in addition to 468906 agricultural labourers.

**Landscape:**

Thanjavur constitutes cultivable, lands. Under Tamil Ainthinai classifications, it comes under the marutham tract. Scarcely the district contains hills and deserts. At the far east of the district we come across neither tracts meaning marine borders. The district is the gift of river Kaveri. We have the reputed epithet that the land of Cholas is rife with rice. (Chola Nadu So:ru:daithu).

**Rivers:**

- Kol nilai thirinthu
- Ko:dai needinum
- Than nilai thiriyaa
- thandamizh pavai

These are the verses from the epic Manimekalai glorifying river Kaveri, which takes its origin at the coorg in the Western Ghats and passes through Mettur and Trichy to Thanjavur wherein
it gets divided into Kolliadam, Vettaru, Vennaru, Kudamurutti and confluences at the Bay of Bengal. The grand Anaikattu raised by Karikal Chola across the river stands as the monumental testimony to the Chola hegemony. The tributaries of Kaveri such as Kudamurutti, Vennaru, Vettaru, Arasalaru(paamani Aru), Korai Aaru and Veeracholan Aru, contribute to the cultivational ensemble of Thanjavur district.

**Rainfall**

Thanjavur district is deltaic in geo physical condition. It is fed by Kaveri and by the north east monsoon, the annual average rainfall is 1200 mm.

**Various Nomenclatures**

Thanjavur is noted for diverse names such as Alagai, Alakapuri. Myth goes on like this. In the past Guperan wished to worship god. He stayed at Thanjavur and built the setting hence the name Alagai. Thanjan disturbed the penance of Parasara Rishi. When he was retaliated by Lord Vishnu, Thanjan submitted himself to Vishnu and pleaded for refuge. As he was offered the required thanjam by Vishnu the town came to be called Thanjavur. The city offered safety and hence came to be called as Thanjaran (aran-safety wall). It also was associated with Kuberan the Lord of wealth and hence acquired the name Alagapuri. A
bird’s eye view of Thanjavur will give us the shape of eagle (Karuda). Hence the name Karudankottai.

**Historical delineations**

History deals with the development, rise and fall of an individual, society and a nation. Thanjavur is credited with glorious historical background right from the dynasty of Vijayalaya. It acquired the acme of achievements during the reigns of Rajaraja I, Rajendra I (C.E.1012-1044), Rajathiraja I (C.E.1018-1054), Kulothunga I (C.E.1070-1120), Vikramachola I (C.E.1120-1135), Kulothunga II (C.E.1135-1150), Rajathiraja II (C.E.1163-1179), Rajaraja II (C.E.1146-1173), Rajendra III (C.E.1246-1279), Kulothunga III (C.E.1178-1216), Rajaraja III (C.E.1216-1246).

It is remarked that the Pragadheeswara temple built by Rajaraja I is called the Dhakshana Meru (Southern Meru Mount). The Gangaikonda Choalpuram temple built by his son Rajendra I is equally monumental. The Chola empire after some such glorious kings had to meet with its downfall later. And it is personified by historians as the downfall of Tamil country itself.

After the rule of the Imperial choals, Thanjavur came under the reign of the Pandyas, Marathas and Nayaks. Though the rule was remarkable it cannot be equalled with that of the Cholas.
Social conditions:

Society has wider semantic connotations. In the elementary level it includes the mass of people due to its linkages with the economical and political considerations. It is construed as an organization within a specific cultural setup.  

Thanjavur district consists of various communal groups whose main occupation is cultivation. Those whose primary concern is agriculture are called Vellalars. The Mukkulathor that is Kallar, Maravar, Ahamudaiyar have had agriculture as their basic sustaining occupation. They live largely in the above district. There are various subsects such as Thevar, Pillai, Vandaiyar, Kandiayar, Oanthiriyar, Gopalar, Irunkulavar, Cholakar, Mazhavarayar, Kodumburayar, Thenkondar, Mankondar, Thodampiriyar and Servai, etc., under the Mukkulathor community.

Thanjavur happens to be the largest agricultural district in the state. As per 1961 census, the population of Thanjavur was around 10 lakhs. Akamudaiyar, Kallar, Ambalakarar, Valayar and Vanniyars, found around 50 percent of the total population and Dalits (then called AdiDravidars) were living in equal number. Apart from the above communities Brahmins have a considerable living footage in the district, particularly at areas like Mannarkudi, Mayavaram and Kumbakonam. Muslims are settled at places like
Ayyampettai, Papanasam, Muthupettai, Adirampattinam and Mallipattinam.

Cultural Footing

The cultural aspects of Indian states depend upon the specific geo-physical conditions of the states themselves. Though a common cultural setup is found at large in the whole of Tamil Nadu, it has diverse manifestations depending upon the region, living conditions and style of the peoples as evident in food ceremonies, customs and manners of the people living therein.

Art heritages:

Thanjavur district is highly noted for the enrichment of classical and folk arts. Classical music has its anchorage in the soil of Thanjavur. One of the musical trinity that is Thiyagaraja had his abode at Thiruvaiyuru which has become the place of musical pilgrimage for thousands of musicians living allover Tamil Nadu. The district is remarkable for having fostered Folk arts as is the case with Classical Arts, as evident in the performing arts like Karaga aattam(pot dance), Poykkaal Kudhirai aattam (psuedo horse dance), Mayil aattam (Peacock dance) and Oyil aattam(a stylistic dance). Melattur Bhagavadha Mela a renowned musical performing art form, has had its birth and flourishment at Melattur near Thanjavur.
The ‘Big Temple’ built by Rajaraja contains mural paintings belonging to the Choala, Nayak and Maratha periods. Thanjavur veena has become an icon in the world of musical instruments. Mention must be made of the Thanjavur Art Plates- a renowned handicrafts stuffed with extensive artistic features. Further, glass paintings, netti works and garlands made up of paddy and cardamom have drawn the attention of the world towards this erstwhile capital of the Imperial Cholas.

Vocation

The foremost occupation of the district happens to be agriculture. Hence it is called the ‘Granary of the South’. Two thirds of the region constitutes agricultural lands. More than 70% of the people resort to cultivation. It is estimated that only 5% of the people indulge in industrial works and around 8% prefer commercial options. That the Government of Tamil Nadu has listed certain industrially backward Taluks in Tamil Nadu, and around five out Thirty one Taluks of Thanjavur District find place in the above list. The District is considerably lagging behind in the matter of industrialization for the obvious reasons that it is potentially suited to agrarian pursuits. It is observed by G. Chidambaram the former Planning Commission member of Tamil Nadu that even the small scale industries have resulted in their closure.
Attractive and artistic handicrafts preferably silk weaving and the netti works have added to the traditional glory of Thanjavur. At the same time prominent industries like Thiru Aruraam Sugar Mills (Thirumandankudi); Aruraan Distillery; Aringar Anna Sugar Mills at Kurungulam; Thanjavur Textiles (presently not working) and Tantex Banian factory have contributed their might to the industrial growth of the area concerned.

Coconut Plantations

The fascinating sight of Thanjavur District owes much to the coconut trees. Particularly the Peravourani Taluk is lapped in luxury of coconut groves—a veritable feast to the eyes. People take much care in the above Taluk to rear coconut trees enormously as they serve as a promising and perennial source of income to them with less strain. The Coconut Research Farm, a state Government concern at Veppangulam is doing yeomen service in this regard. New, verified coconut seedlings are introduced by the farm which the public utilise eagerly and with involvement.

Mukkulam

Under the above background it becomes appropriate to delve deep into the very fabrication of the Mukkulam one of the largest communal sections of tamil Nadu.
Mukkulam consists of the subsects of Kallar, Maravar and Ahamudaiyar. The above community people identify themselves with Indira kulam. Some Historians go to the extent of adducing that the Cheras, Cholas, and Pandyas and the later Feudatories were none but the Mukkulatho:rs. As they belonged to the land(Naadu) they even called themselves as Naattaars\textsuperscript{12}.

It is obvious that the triumvirats namely the Cholas, Cheras, and the Pandyas had their origin from innumerable communities. Literary references though stray, conduce towards this presumption with regard to the origin of Kallar, Maravar and Ahamudaiyar. As the kings had put in charges of them for artillery and the forces of elephants and horses respectively they came to be called as Kallars, Maravars and Ahamudaiyars. These three communal sects also call themselves as Devar, Servai and the like\textsuperscript{13}.

It was customary in those days for emperors, kings and the chieftains to assume the titles of Devar(n) transcribed as thevar in the following names:

- Thirubhuvana thevan
- Rajaraja Chola Devar
- Rajendra Chola Devar
- Arunmozhith Thevar
- Vandhigath Thevar
- Parakkirama Pandiya Devar
- Sundarapandya Devar.
The Sethupathis of Ramnad also had this title of Devar along with their names as in Rajagurudevar. Instances are many concerned with the chieftains who had assumed the Devar title. For example, Pulith Thevar, Sasi Varnap Periya Udaiyanath Thevar, Vadakarai Sembuli Sinnakkat Thevar, and Kandru Mekki Udaiyath Thevan. The inscription of Rajaraja I speaks as ‘Rajaraja Devarukku Yaandu’…

As time passed on, the people belonging to the Thevar community got themselves spread into various areas assuming different titles like ‘Pillai’ ‘Mudaliyar’ and ‘Udaiyar’. It can be stated in brief that the term Mukkulatho:r refers to Kallar, Maravar and Ahamudaiyar, who had served under the Tamil rulers in the past as army chiefs, spies and subordinates.

**Mythological matters**

Puranas and legends and myths are not wanting in details about the Mukkulaththo:rs. Poovendra Puranam, Kalla Kesari Puranam, Piramanda Puranam are some among them. They are in the nature of discourse, namely the address of Shiva to the Goddess Uma, Agasthiya to Pulathiya, Su:thapuranis to the Saints in the Naimsavana and so on. We come to know about a different myth from one of the above puranas. Sensing Indra’s lust towards Ahalya, Indrani, the wife of Indra created Mohanangi resembling
Indrani and Indira quenched his sexual thirst with her. Resultantly she gave birth to Kallar, Maravar and Ahamudaiyar. What is to be inferred from this kind of mythological expressions is the idea that, whatever it be, the Mukkulathors had a common title and common origin namely Indirani.

Yet another myth has the following message to convey. Indira had sexual intercourse with Ahalya and she gave birth to three sons. When Gouthama Rishi returned home from the river, one among the three disappeared stealthily; the other one climbed upon a tree and the third stood at the house egotistically. Hence they were called as Kallar, Maravar and Ahamudaiyar respectively.

Generally myths are not historical documents so as to be relied upon. At the same time they are not found to be negated altogether. A grain of truth would be always present in a myth being the product of people’s imagination and that of ‘collective unconscious’ of society. This being the case we have to arrive at the underlying idea that the Kallars, Maravars and Ahamudaiyars belong to a common origin.

F.S.Mulle observes that the above communal sects claim to have descended from Devas and hence have annexed the Devan title with their names.
The Historical sketch regarding Mukkulathors

Thanjavur District: Thanjavur is credited with ancient historical perspectives. The Chola hegemony starts from the period of Karikal Chola who ruled from Kaverippoompattinam. His unique contribution to the Tamil people happens to be the Grand Anaicut built across river Kaveri near Tiruchirapalli. The Kallanai is a testimony to the Chola grandeur and their arch constructional achievements.

After the early Cholas, Thanjavur was ruled by the Mutharaiyas who were vassals to the Pallavas during 6th and 7th centuries. It was Vijayalaya the Later Chola King who turned a new leaf in the Chola Dynasty. King Raja Raja I is the Chola king par excellence, whose capital was Thanjavur. After him his son Rajendra I, ruled the Chola empire for a considerable time with still more excellence. He transferred the capital from Thanjavur to Ganagai Konda Cholapuram and Thanjavur resultantly did lose its significance. From 12th century and after the Chola kings, Pandiyas conquered many parts of Chola empire which came under their rule. From then onwards Nayaks and Marathas and after them the British did rule Thanjavur until Indian independence. Mention must be made of Serfoji II, the Marattha king who had established the Saraswathi Mahal Library a renowned library at Thanjavur. After him Thanjavur passed on to the hands of the British in 1789 because of the ‘Doctrine of lapse’, then in vogue. after India got
independence, a district under the name of ‘Composite Thanjavur’ was formed.

Robert Caldwell in his work ‘The History of Tirunelveli’ written in 1881 has given the following account:- The ancestors of the Cheras, Cholas and Pandiyas were all living unitedly at Korkai a place near Srivaikuntam four kilometers away from the confluence of river Tambraparni into the Bay of Bengal. A rift arose among them. Consequently except the Pandya, the Chola and Chera left the area in search of suitable habitations for them. The Chera moved towards west and settled in the Coimbatore, Malabar and Trivancore areas which came under his reign where as, the Chola went towards northern direction and established his regime which comprised of the Thanjavur and Trichy areas. Pandya had his territory in his own area. Kanagasabai Pillai in his book “Tamils Eighteen hundred years ago” has remarked that the Pandya territory in the ancient time was under the rule of Nagas, an uncouth tribe and they might have been construed as the ancestors of the present Kallar, Maravar, and Paravar. His view is based on the inference of the British rulers. Vincent Smith has to offer a different remark. About 120 chieftains were reigning the country during the Pandya regime. They happened to be warmonging people interested in looting. Their ancestors could have been the Kallars, Maravars, and Ahamudaiyars belonging to the Pallava dynasty.
Dr. Burnell and Venkasamy Rao ascribe the Cholas to the Kallar tribe. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar holds the view that one and the same people were called differently as the Kallars in the Chola regime and Maravars in the Pandya regime. We come to understand that the Mukkulattho:rs are one of the ancient and war faring sects of the Tamil Country.

**KALLAR**

References to the Mukkulattho:rs are variously available in Tamil classical literature. Pulli the ruler of Thiruvenkata is called as Kalvar Koman. He is noted for his bravery and philanthropy and has been sung in verses by the notable Tamil poets Kalladanar and Mamullanar.

Kazhal punai,
Thirunthadik kalvar koman,
Mazha pulam vanakkiya
Ma:van Pulli,
Vizhavudai vazhuchir:
Ve:nkatam-(Ma:mu:lan)

Kalladanar and Ma:mu:lanar has sung about him as follows:
Pulli-viyanmalai manna:ttu ve:nkatam,
AHAMUDAIYAR

According to Tamil Lexicon the word Ahamudaiyar means one who has a house; one who does internal jobs; a particular caste etc., Ahamudaiyars are said to have been the people performing sundry jobs under the erstwhile Jamindars, at Ramanathapuram and Madurai in addition to looking after temple works. In course of time these Ahamudaiyars called themselves as vella:lars with some prestige of their own.

On par with the servicing people at the Temples, those who were doing service in the courts of kings came to be called as Ahamudaiyars\(^{15}\), and this name later could have got itself distorted as Ahamudaiyar. Royal regiments consisted of divisions such as Ahamudaiyars, Mudaliyars and Kaikolas (one who will catch hold of success). Whatever it be, the Ahamudaiyars seem to have been associated with the royal favours.

Some scholars are of the view that the Mukkulattho:rs have had the origin from ancient Pandya country consisting of the
districts of Tirunelveli, Madurai and Ramnad from where they could have spread to Thanjavur and Trichy Districts.\textsuperscript{16}

Barring Kanniyakumari and Chengalpattu, Ahamudaiyar community people are found settled all over Tamil Nadu and especially in Thanjavur and Ramnad Districts. Ahamudaiyars living in North Arcot, South Arcot and Salem Districts do not belong to the Mukkulatttho:r community.

Na.Mu.Ve. Nattaar points out that the Udayars hailing from Ahamudaiyar community served as chieftains under the Malayamans and they are referred to as Ahambadan in the inscriptions. It is also remarked by P. Muthu Thevar that Cheraman Nayanar one of the 63 Nayanmars, served as Ahamudaiyar and hence his offsprings were called as Ahamudaiyath thondargal.

Cheras may be deemed as none other than the Ahamudaiyars as evident in their titles such as Cheran, U:zhiyan, Kutakan, Bhoomiyay, Porunarth Thuraivan, Poraiyan, Varman, Chervai, Thalaivan, Kuttuvan, Malayaman, Va:navan, Villavan, Thevar, Vanniyan, Ahamudaiyan, Thondaiman, and Pandian.\textsuperscript{17}

Some others point out that the Cheras lived in and around Ramnad. Evidently one Chenapathi Vellaiyan Chervai, who served under the Sethupathis belonged to the Chera dynasty. The
offsprings of Chinna Marudhu and Periya Maruthu living at Kalaiyar koil and Nanguneri call themselves as Chervaikkarars and Ahamudaiyars\(^\text{18}\). Vellaiyan Chervai distinguished himself as a diplomat and field marshal. He was serving under the Sethupathi for the period from 1746-62. He has exemplary skill in warfare and inspired awe in the minds of the Tirunelveli Polygars, Maravas and Nayaks.

During the rule of the Cholas, the Ahamudaiyars were called as Ahamudaiyars and Ahammadaiyars at Thanjavur region; Ahambadi mudali at the Districts of Trichy, Chengalpattu, Thiruvannamalai and Chennai as per the epigraphic sources.

In fact the philanthropist Pachaiyappa Mudaliyar hailed from Ahamudaiyar community. His mother Pechiyammal happened to be the wife of a royal soldier serving in the Chera army. We come to understand that the Ahamudaiyars of Chera country migrated and took refuge at the fertile deltaic region of Thanjavur during 9\(^\text{th}\) century. Of course the present Malayalis of Chera country are not related to the Ahamudaiyars. The Ahamudaiyars or Pandiya country are divided into Keela mandu and Me:la mandu. The former comprises of 48 villages and the latter 40 villages under their domains respectively. Rasakula Ahamudaiyars was their title.
Ahamudaiyar community tops the Mukkulattho:rs. The others ie, Kallar and Maravars come next after them. The customs and manners among the above three communal sects are found to be more or less homogenous. Agriculture has been their prominent vocation. It has been said that the “Kallar, Maravar, Kanatthatho: Ahamudaiyar; Mella mella vanthu ve:lalar a:yinar”- meaning, they have gradually metamorphosed themselves into riparian sects. Of late there are many prominent land lords among them.

**The Ahamudaiyar of Thanjavur:**

It has become a common sight that the cultural traits of the other communities have diffused into that of the Ahamudaiyar in course of time. An Ahamudaiyar is used to have the title of Thevar, Chervai, Pillai suffixed to their original names. This is due to their economic condition and that of the social milieu prevailing in the village. There are other titles attached to the Ahamudaiyar names such as Thalaivan, Maniyakkaarar, Mudali, Pillai and so on.

In Tamil Nadu at present Ahamudaiyars are enlisted under Backward class and their vocation is stated as farming in Government documents. In the districts of Madurai and Ramnad,
Ahamudaiyars are identified as the vassals to the then Jamindars, belonging to Maravar community. It is said that the affluent among the people follow their life circle ceremonies such as birth, age attainment, marriage, death, on the model of the vellalas. Those who are not wealthy follow that of the Maravars.\(^\text{19}\)

In the census reports, Ahamudaiyars are noted as the variant sect of Kallar and Maravar. They are called as Kottai Pillaiyar in Tirunelveli district. Those who served under the Jamindars of Sivaganga and Ramnad were called as Servaikkarars who are settled largely in Thanjavur and Ramnad districts.

The Ahamudaiyars of Thanjavur are of five divisions namely Kottaip Pattru Ahamudaiyar, Irumputthalai Ahamudaiyar, Aynthu Naattu Ahamudaiyar, Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyar and Punniyarasu Naattu Ahamudaiyar.\(^\text{20}\)
Hereafter the traditional customs of the people of Peravourani Taluk are elaborated.

**Society-origin and development**

According to Hobbs, the anthropologist “Society had its origin from the sense of security which the barbaric men began to have”\(^{21}\). The state of human beings living gregariously came to be called as society. The shared values, beliefs and the co-operative affairs that a group of people resorts to, and lives by them come to take the shape of a society. Society, apart from having common cultural behaviours, includes the age groups and genders and thereby sustains itself\(^{23}\).

Sociologists attribute the term ‘society’ not only to refer to the mass of people, but also the customs, manners and the socio-political relationship existing in a social group\(^{24}\). According to Saumner, society aims at acquiring the means of subsistence and the perpetuation of the progeny\(^{25}\). It comes to be known that society or community has customs, traditions, life styles and cultural traits which are more or less common in nature.
Thanjavur Ahamudaiyar community

As a community The Thanjavur Ahamudaiyars share common values, traditions and life styles and cultural traits. They have permanent habitations and a contended life besides preserving their individualities.

Ainthu Naattu Ahamudaiyar:

Ahamudaiyars living at Atthani, Perambur, Vilankulam, Surangudi, Sangamangalam, Ammaiyandi, Thiruthevan and Kumbathevan are called as Ainthu Naattu Ahamudaiyars. Their customs and manners are akin to the Ahamudaiyars of Thanjavur. Yet they don’t have marital relationship with them. Ainthu Nattu Ahamudaiyars are a permanently settled, prosperous and educated community.

Punniyarasu Naattu Ahamudaiyars

Those communal sect living in and around Athambai, Patharasankottai, Kayavur are called by the aforesaid name. Their customary practices are similar to those of the Ainthu Naattu Ahamudaiyars. They are endogamous, and are noted for economic and educational pursuits.

Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyars

Those living in eleven villages around Avanam are identified as Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyars. They don’t have marital
relationship with those of the Thanjavur sect. Their dwellings are of a different sort encircled by groves devoid of street like structure. This community people are literate and well off\textsuperscript{29}.

**Kottaipparru Ahamudaiyars**

These people had their origin from Kanchipuram, from where they spread and presently settled at the areas of Periya Kottai, Munnaval Kottai, Karuppu Mudali kottai and Chickappattu. The Kottaip parru Ahamudaiyars are extrogamus. These people have the customs which are not different from other Ahamudaiyars\textsuperscript{30}.

**Irumputh Thalai Ahamudaiyars**

Necessitated by the Marattha, Mohemedan and Nayaks invasions a group of Ahamudaiyars left Kanchipuram and settled at Irumputh Thalai a village near Kovilvenni of Thanjavur District and hence they are named as Irumbuth thalai Ahamudaiyars. They have similar customs and manners as that of other Ahamudaiyars and are extrogamus.

**Naattar**

The Kallars living at Thanjavur District are having the other title such as Naattar, meaning those who ruled the land (Nadu). Somale remarks that the diction Naattar refers to the Mukkulattho:r tribes of Kallar, Maravar and Ahamudaiyars\textsuperscript{31}.
Nagaratthar

The sect of people living in the Peravourani region is named as Nagaraththars. They are commercial people.

Desatthars

The Ahamudaiyars call the Sowrashtras living in Thanjavur district as Desatthars.

Other communities

Thanjavur District is also the region of conglomeration of diverse communities such as Moopanar, Padayatchi, Vellalar, Nayakar, Palli, Parayar, Melakkarar (Isai Vellalar), Meenavar and Brahmins. Only some of the communities found in the Districts of Coimbatore and Salem are exceptions.

Religious Communities:

There are religious sects such as the Gurukkal and Archagar serving in the Saivite Temples and Vaishnavait Temples respectively. Uvachchars are those who perform Poojas in the Amman Temples. Kuyavas worship the Ayyanar and Karuppus while Pandarams engage themselves with the task of serving at the Pillaiyar, Murugan and certain folk deities.
Gramaththars

All the people living outside the suburban areas of Thanjavur are all called Gramaththars irrespective of communal nuances.

Vasal vazhi

A peculiar custom prevailing among the Ahamudaiyars is the dividing of the Pathinonru Nadu into four major categories having Kuruvikkarambai as the central region. Accordingly we come to have four vasals namely vadakku vasal, therku vasal, Kizhakku vasal, and Merku vasal meaning respectively the north, south, east and west entrances33.

Se:ththis pand karais

A peculiar Geophysical division prevailing among the Ahamudaiyars of Thanjavur District are the Setthis and Karais. Karais are internally determined divisions. Instantly all the servais fall under a single Karai. Thevars have around five karais. Pillaimars fall under three or four karais and Vellalas two. All the relatives form a single karai. As such marital relationship within
the Karai is averted. People of one Karai will opt for such relationship from other Karai only. Each Karai will have its own leader which is hereditary. Non availability of leader will be made good by choosing a particular person unanimously by the Karai members$^{34}$.

The Seththi division includes all the communal groups such as Ambalars, Kallars, Maravars, and Moopanars. Dalits are not included. Member of the Seththi division will get the traditional honour during temple rituals. He has to give an amount for it. Irrigation of water to the lands during days of scarcity will be in tune with the Seththi system$^{35}$.

**Naattuk koottam**

The management affairs of the Pathinonru Naadu, Ainthu Naadu, and Punniyarasu Naadu are looked after by the Ahamudaiyars. Ahamudaiyars and Kallars jointly manage that of the Kottaipparru Irumbuth Thalai Ahamudaiyars. The management is called Naattu Aatchi and Grama Aatchi.
Ahamudaiyars manage the Naattu Aatchi in the Pathinonru, Ainthu, Punniyarasu Nadus, where as, Ahamudaiyars and Kallars jointly manage the Naattu Aatchi in the areas where Irumbuth Thalai and Kottaip Pparru Ahamudaiyars live dominantly. The executive council is called Naattuk Koottam.

**Naattuk Koottam**

In order to administer the Nattuk Koottam, a member would be unanimously appointed from each Setthi. Only the Ahamudaiyars of Pathinonru, Ainthu and Punniyarasu nadus are eligible to administer the Naattuk Koottam. They maintain the accounts of the villages relating to the receipts and expenditures. No honorarium is paid for the above work.

The system of Naattu Koottam is still followed by the Ahamudaiyars of Thanjavur District. Through the Naattuk Koottam other works such as conducting of festivals, Temple maintenance, streamlining of watery sources for agriculture, are effectively implemented with the co-operation of other
communities. Though communal minded, these people are not lagging behind in doing social service\textsuperscript{37}.

**Ahamudaiyars and other communities**

Each and every society is liable to have change in its customs and manners with the passage of time. Give and take policy is strewn into the very social life of people. As such as traditional customs are prone to be alike with regard to certain communities.

**Social cohesion:**

An instance in this regard is the ‘Moy Virundhu’ which was once the exclusive custom of Ahamudaiyars of Pathinonru Nadu, but now observed by other communities such as Kallar, Maravar, Chettiyar, Naidu, Ambalar, Vellalar, Velar, Muslim, Dalit, and so on, though in a minor level. Muslims practice it under the name Hattha Moy Virundhu where as others directly as Moy Virundhu\textsuperscript{38}. 
Whenever an occasion related to marriage, ear boring, or Moy Virundhu, is celebrated by the Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyars, other community people also participate in it and dine and contribute Moy. Dalits are not discriminated in the Virundhu. They get seated on par with other community people. Similarly non-Dalits used to attend the functions held by Dalits without any prejudice.

The general populace in Peravourani region imitates the rites and rituals and customs of the Kallars and Maravars. An amicable social mobilization is prevalent herein. Ahamudaiyars have imbibed the habit of calling the Kallars, Maravars and Vellalas by using kinship terms. Whatever it be, they are noted for giving due respect to other community people. That the custom of Moy Virundhu prevalent in the larger level in the Ahamudaiyar community people belonging to Peravourani region calls forth special attention as it implies multifarious social, economical, political, psychological and cultural semantics pertaining to the said community. Though a specific social group ie., the
Ahamudaiyars are the underlying force behind the origin and development of this custom, it has been emulated by other communities willy or nilly with the passing of time. It has even metamorphosed into a social movement⁴⁰.