CHAPTER - 4

THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FEATURES OF MOY-VIRUN DHU

Economic Status

It is obvious that the economic footing of Tamil Nadu has largely been left at the mercy of cultivation, right from the past. Thanjavur delta, being riparian in nature is therefore noted for small and large scale land owners and riots and tillers. The Agrarian sects of people largely are comprised of either the Vanniyar / Vanniya Kula Kshatriyas and the Mukkulatthor trio constituting the Kallar, Maravar and Ahamudaiyar.¹

Around a nominal percent of people (5%) are prosperous. The study area contains middle class people depending upon cultivation and coconut plantations for their livelihood. The economic conditions of the folks are better revealed in their customary rituals and life circle ceremonies.² Among the above, Moy Virundhu occupies a distinctive and prominent place as it
is performed on the basis of economic and social factors. The information collected from the study area ensures this.

**Life Circle Ceremonies**

Life circles Ceremonies form the pith of day to day affairs in Tamil Nadu. Birth day celebration, ear boring, puberty, marriage, naming of children, house warming, death ceremony, 16th day ritual, all these come under the women culture of life circle ceremonies. In one way or other, the above said functions attract Moy inevitably from this traditional practice, functions are arranged for the collection of Moy alone and resultantly Moy Virundhu has come into vogue and has attained demoniac dimensions. It is therefore pertinent to point out that Moy Virundhu has attracted the attention of social activists, cultural researchers and economic investigators. The very diction of ‘Moy’ itself has undergone multifarious verbal nuances such as Potta Moy, Ratthu Moy, Meelach cheyyum Moy, Mun Thevai, Pudhu Natai, Maarram Perraa Moy, Kumpidu Panam etc.,
An analysis of the total number of Moy Virundhu occasions which were held between Fourth June of 2003 and 8th of September 2003 reveals that, out of the total functions it was Moy Virundhu which tops the list with regard to the frequent occurrences. This is evident for understanding the Significance attached to the Moy Virundhu festival as an exclusively identity oriented ceremony taking care of the economic necessity of the individuals belonging to the Ahamudaiyar community.

**Socio - Functional Ethics**

Certain procedures are followed with reference to the conducting of the function and the collection of Moy though with required changes effected by the change of time. These can be termed as the socio-functional ethics. Some of them are apt to be mentioned as follows.

There should be at least a gap five years between two Moy Virundhu occurrences performed by an individual.

That the term ‘Patta Moy’ (Moy done previously) should be inscribed on the Moy identity card and the invitation. Those
who perform Marriage or House warming Cermony should collect the Moy on the date of occasion itself and not later.

The members of the Sangam should scupulously follow the (Guidelines issued by the Ahamudaiyar Sangam) then and there and revitalize them possibly. It can not be denied that the practice of Moy is often construed to be a small saving, in the study area. Also, it is deemed as a bridging force of human relationship in addition to being an instrument of augmentation of rural economy.

**Binding Forces**

What ever it be, Moy Virundhu is identified as the cementing element of the communal super structure. The Ahamudaiyar Uravin Murai Sangam is the steering force behind all the Moy Virundhu occurrences. All intimations are made only with the concurrence of the Sangam. No trans gression is made in the announced list of the Moy virundhu holders during a particular year. If any body holds any unauthorized function it
has to be ignored, according to the instructions given by the Sangam.

In fact the guidelines and the instructions issued by the Sangam are meant for streamlining the Moy-Virundhu functions reasonably.

Exception is given to nuptial functions. They do not come under the perview of the rules and regulations as enforced above.

It is to be noted that the Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyar Uravin Murai Sangam get registered in the year 1986 the registration number being 1/1986. The Sangam has taken up the first in of the verse of poet Bharathidasan namely, Arivai Viravu Cey (Expand knowledge) as its motto. Further, another verse by the same poet starting with the line ‘Ennarum Tamil Naattin kann Ellorum kalvi karru’ has been adopted incorporating certain details so as to popularisethe prowess of the Pathinonru Naattar community.
Organizational Structure

That, what can not be accomplished by gold can be done easily by Sangam (Thangam ceyyathathai Sangam ceyyam) is a popular saying in Tamil Nadu. The Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyar Sangam may well be cited as an instance in this regard.

The organizational set up of the above sangam consists of the,

President,

Vice President,

Secretary,

Deputy Secretary,

Treasurer,

Executive Members,

Uravin Murai Naduvar Manram and Academic council.

Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyar Community people become members in the above association. It deserves special mention at this juncture that an Academic council is set
up for a noble cause of providing educational assistance to the needy.

**Functions of the Sangam**

The pamphlets and notices issued then and there by the Ahamudaiyar Sangam reveal its identity-oriented affairs in addition to safeguarding traditional glory, encouraging industrious efforts, education, economic exuberance, extension of agricultural practices and the like. Valour is valuable. But wisdom and economic considerations are more valuable than valour. Taking this dictum into account, the Sangam used to chalk out its plans and activities so as to regulate the affairs involving the Ahamudaiyars. Emphasis is laid on the fact that the community relationship proves to be a strength of its own. The word function (Vizha) has another term as “Thevai” in Tamil, meaning need. Because functions are celebrated based on certain social and economic needs there is justification in the usage of the terminology ‘Thevai’. Moy virundhu invitations will contain the number of times moy has been accorded already to a particular individual. Besides serving as a reminder, this
device of noting down of the above particulars will indirectly call for the contribution of Moy at least twofold that of the already gifted amount.

**Varavu Ne:rvor**

It is customery in the Peravourani area to include in the invitation an entry as Varavu Ne:rvor - Relatives and friends. In other parts of Tamil Nadu the version would be like the following. Expecting your arrival eagerly - relatives and friends. A perusal of the phrase ‘Varavu Nervor’ would highlight various connotations. ‘Varavu’ refers to both ‘arrival’ and ‘monetary receipt’ Ne:rvor here means not only the parties who receive or welcome the guests but also receive the moy collection and hence be benefited by it. There are other related lexical items such as Ne:rnthu kol.lal and Nertthi Kadan which are to be understood in the light of the semantinuances of the word ‘Ne:rvor’.

It is also in vogue among those who are interested in getting back the Moy done earlier to state in categorical terms
that Pudhu Moy (newer one) should be avoided. The precautionary method is conducive towards averting unwanted repercussions both in social and economical levels.

**Targets**

The unwritten code in the matters concerned with Moy Virundhu is that, the Moy received by an individual is to be returned at least two or three times more than the actual amount, on completion of fives years the Moy virundhu conducted by the individual concerned. The month of Aadi though considered to be an I afforded one is preferred herein as the fittest month for the receipt of monetary gains. It is not strange to mention that crores of rupees have been received as Moy within a couple of hours by a certain individual in the study area. The practice of gifting something to the couple during nuptial ceremonies, an age old custom, might have been a fore runner for the custom of commencement of Moy Virundhu. Whatever it be, it has become highly commercialised one in the area concerned.
The Ahamudaiyar Sangam in fact has taken into account both the good and bad effect of the practice of Moy collection. It has issued instructions in order to curtail the adverse effects of the above custom, as evident in the circulars like “what has been a lifting hand at one time, is now relegated to that of a crushing force. Therefore take steps to minimise the occasions”.7 From a humble origin of an emotional munificence, Moy virundhu has grown to that of a pedantic exposition of the prosperity of certain individuals.

Information collected leads to arriving at the no less significant fact that the above function sows the seeds of economic and psychological pertuurbances and hazards in addition to loss of life, while it serves as a comenting force of unity in a particular community.
Economic Implications

The function of Moy Virundhu is associated with diverse economic mobilization. It is obvious that during the celebration days the arrangement such as spacious pandals, delicious dinner, decorations, flux boards and other connected items involve large number of people and greater amount of expenditure. It has therefore led to the formation of commercial and entrepreneurial establishments in the area. Evidently there are many mercenary establishments which engage themselves in providing the aforesaid amenities by charging fees. Even ordinary thatched sheds are converted into decorated pandals to rise up to the occasions. Monetary gain induces people to do such things either by hook or crook leading to a kind of exploitation. Transporting is not an exception to this condition. Buses are jam packed with the commuters on the day of occasion. Not even the top of the bus is spared. The conductor has to go over to the top in order to issue tickets to the passengers accommodated there on an usual sight not
prevailing elsewhere in the State. The credit in this regard goes to Moy Virundhu and the attractions which surround it inevitably.

It happens that the benefited individuals would be driven to the extent of bankruptcy in due course for the fault of their own, and at a stage, seek self immolation. Press in the State of Tamil Nadu has not failed to highlight such state of affairs. But it has become almost a ‘non stop’ culturally bound economic occasion prevailing in the Peravourani area. It is beyond doubt that Moy Virundhu serves as the channel for economic upliftment to the needy individual. At the same time it is not devoid of its own baneful effects a lesson to be borne in mind by those who are crazy after this colourful festive affair.

**Myth like Matter**

Informants provided a myth like matter in connection with the economic implications and the resulting despair consequent of Moy collection.
A certain individual parted with a lakh of rupees as contribution to another person. But he arranged his own Moy Virundhu within a week expecting at least one lakh ten thousand rupees from him. But got merely a thousand rupees as a shocking reward. He lodged a complaint in this regard to the Panchayat which on enquiry which passed the following judgment. “Moy is nothing but a kind of contribution made willingly. There is no litigation to get it back. By the by, it is the fault of the person who contributed a lakh of rupees and expect back the amount with additional sum, that too within a week. Hence it is up to the recipient to decide the amount of contribution to be made in the future functions”. The above incident should serve as the eye-opener to all those who do things with the undue mercenary motives.

In spite of the above fact, the number of Moy Virundhu occasion does not get minimised. On the contrary they register an upward trend.
Functions held in the year 2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total No.</td>
<td>299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moy Virundhu</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nuptial function</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ear boring</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naming of child</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puberty rite</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House warming</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above details express clearly that Moy Virundhu has taken the lead among the functions in the study area. Further we come to know that the number of occasions has increased considerably in the year 2006 when compared to 2004. Started with a humble objective of helping the poor, Moy Virundhu has attained the status of an economic exchange with greater significance.
**Specialites**

Certain customs associated with the Moy Virundhu evoke the interest and wonder of people hailing from other areas and communities. Generally in Tamil Nadu, invitations concerned with functions are either extended in person or sent by post. Any deviation in the procedure will be treated as dishonour. Contrary to this, Moy Virundhu invitations are thrown into the house held of concerned people.\(^\text{10}\) This practice is not regarded as uncourteous among the people in the Peravourani area.

Traditional aspects are observed scrupulously in matters regarding the catering etiquette. Some of them deserve mention here. Seating on the Jamukkalam in rows and serving food on the banana leaf are a must. Punctuality in the function is regarded as significant. The time duration is between 10.00 and 12 AM. When the meal is over, the banana leaf is horizontally folded by the diner. Mostly mutton is served, though vegetarian food is not altogether kept away. With the passage of time, liquor has become inevitably admitted as evident in the case of drunken men carrying out the affairs of the functions as well as
attending on those who are present. Chemicals are added so as to enhance the taste of non-vegetarian dish though unmindful of their ill effects. Yet another dimension pertaining to the mode of performance is noteworthy. Formerly individuals alone endeavored to organize the function. Presently functions are collectively held for obvious reasons that it would minimise cost, labour and time.

**Moy Virundhu and Poy Virundhu**

Curiously one of the factors associated with the origin of Moy Virundhu is the economic malpractice. An instance in this regard is traced back to 1970s. An individual from Tamil Nadu went to North India where he accumulated wealth by unfair means. He later returned to his home State. Finding unable to account for his amassed wealth, he sought the advice of his friends to turn the black money into white. His friends arrived at a crooked device. According to which the wealthy man conducted the Moy function without any festival footing such as marriage, ear boring and the like, but with the stealthy aim.
This practice in due course might have paved the way for the present Moy Vizha. Formerly it was confined to Peravourani area only. But now the custom has spread far and wide. What started as an initial collection 50 paise has spectacularly bulged into lakhs of rupees, now a day.

A scrutiny of the above facts and figures brings forth to the limelight the following.

Moy Virundhu is not only the cultural ‘festival identity’ of the Pathinonru Naattu Ahamudaiyars of the Peravourani area but also a pivotal determining factor for their socio-economic conditions. The Pros and cons aspects concerned with this custom are prone to deeper perusal. However data collected so far speak favourably (vide chart) in addition to revealing the ‘innate love’ of the people towards this socio-economic and cultural custom.