Chapter 7

R E S U M E

Lakshadweep is a group of 36 islands situated at the western side of Kerala in the Arabian Sea. Among these 36 islands, eleven islands are inhabited. There are two theories about the formation of islands.

Lakshadweep islands are coral islands. The Aravalli ranges of Rajasthan and Gujarat continue to the Arabian sea and it has been observed that Lakshadweep islands are the result of coral growth on these ranges. Androth and Kalpeni islands are known as 'Taravattu dweepukal' along with Kavarathi and Ammeni.

House names and family names of the mainland and the Lakshadweep islands share certain features but at the same time there are differences also between these two categories. Most of the house names are composed of two components, and this is applicable to all Dravidian languages.
The same names are seen repeated in different families on different islands. Family names indicate the locality of the house, the flora, the presence of water bodies, cardinal direction and geographical conditions of the place. There are house names which are derived from personal names and they were gradually changed into family names. Though separated from a single family the old names are not changed while occupying a new house. House name generic such as ata, ota, veedu, palli, ett, illam, Akam, pura, kad, al, mel, chetta, alam, idam, thottam, kara, talam, ali are in use. Arabic/Persian generics like mansil, villa, bunglow are modern trends. When a family represents a group of houses, the original house is called Avathu/Avathla.

Lakshadweep islanders have developed their peculiar speech habits from their frequent contacts with the other Malayalam speaking people of the malabar coast as well as the Arab mariners, who visited the island from the early medieval times for various purposes. The scarcity of contacts with other islanders resulted in the prevalence of a separate dialect in each islands belonging to the Lakshadweep group. The dialects of Lakshadweep are yet to attain the status of a standard language. The relation of the islanders with the Arab language is at a cultural level. It does not pre-date into their day to day life. The Arabi-
Malayalam was often used also by islanders for writing, mainly for prescribing traditional objects. Even among the inhabitants of an island there are small variations in the speech habits of the social groups of Koya, Mali and Melacheri.

There are two types of place names in the island. One is the root word category and the other is compound word category. Some are of the opinion that the root-word category is the oldest of place names.

Place name structure is important in that it indicate several linguistic peculiarities. More than 40 generic words have been identified in place names of Androth and Kalpeni islands. The grammatical linkage is visible more in compound place names than in single worded place names. All the sounds in Malayalam are not used in language of island. The island dialects retain some of the rules of the Tamil grammar also.

A common rule pertaining to all the forms of singular and compound names is that they follow the Malayalam grammar. In all possibilities the naming principle was in the form of binaries. Such as
Meli/kil (up and down or west and east), Kunnu/kundu (hill/pit), baliya/chertya (big/small), Thekku/vadakku (South/North) Ullu/Puram (in/out).

The history of Lakshadweep has come down to us from two sources. One of them is the traditional lore which is intended to trace the origin of Islam in Lakshadweep and the other is from the occasional references in the traveller's accounts from the ancient up to medieval periods and British administrators. While analysing the place names and family names of Androth and Kalpeni islands it becomes clear that migration to these islands started from the middle ages onwards. From the place names and family names one could observe that the migration to Lakshadweep took place at different times. Anthropologists have recorded the existence of small primitive communities in many parts of the world. Such communities were found mostly in island nations. Interestingly, in Kalpeni there seems to be a survival of the practice of naming communities after plants such as Shabayator, chonothor and Erangamthathor.

Place names such as Kara, Kad, Kulam Kunnu, Kal, thottam etc. are indicating social uses of spaces and social ideas of areas. The
middle portion in Androth island is a cultivable area. The prominent houses and taravad s were situated near the thottam, to have easy access to the farming areas. The next stage of development is characterised by spread of thottams. Pacha and Avuls are formed in farm areas and paddy cultivation was started.

The families became owners of the land during the third stage and it lead to private property rights. The mainland administrative system entered to the island society. Karyakkar and Kanakka pilla’s who appeared on the islands represented the king. Pandaram land were divided into plots and distributed among individuals. In this period the agricultural community started dividing into different layers. Koya, Thanikampirantavar, Mali and Melacheri thus originated in the society. Coconut and coir production increased. Tenancy system also made its appearance in the society. Pandaram land with the names Karaima, cowl and pervili were distributed among the farmers on lease.

When the people became conscious about property right, they invented several methods to acquire property. Since there was no much scope for reclamation of new land, the existing land had to be divided
among more members of the community. Acquiring membership in an alien family, quarrels, etc. were the methods adopted for this gain.

The division of land **Kad, Thottam, Pati, Avul** and **Kunnu** was based on the nature of land and its use. **Kad** was mainly for coconut cultivation. What the word **Kad** means in Kalpeni is the word **thottam** in Androth. For denoting the measurement of a farm its seed capacity was mentioned. **Avul** are the plots dug within the **thottam** and utilised mainly for paddy cultivation. **Thottam** was prepared by removing soil from ordinary land. The soil thus removed was accumulated to form **Kunnu**. **Pati** is the place where coconuts seedlings are grown. The word **pati** is also used for a different purpose. At least five types of paddy were cultivated in these islands.

Place name generic **palli** in olden days denoted a non brahmanical Budhist or Jaina centre of worship. The absence of names of artisan group is obvious in the place names.

*Thanikkampirantavar* produce coconut and agricultural products in **Kad** and **thottam**. The neighbouring *Melacheri* carry cargo to **aar** and load it in the vessel. The vessels are captained to ports on the
mainland by Malis. Thus the mutually depending system of life has developed in the island society.

_Thareequath_ movements in religion flourished the Sufi cult. Thus a human society of well designed and disciplined life seen emerging out in this remote islands where the horizon is the only limit.

The people who lived in Androth and Kalpeni were aware of the nature of their terrain and the structure of their soil. Sometimes identification of places may raise some doubts in connection with the ownership and/or occupation of landed property. On such occasions the elders and authorities settled the problem by digging the soil and clearing the doubt collecting information regarding the structure of the soil.

The islanders had developed an adequate knowledge about the sea. The area between the sea shore and the boundary of the lagoon are identified as _ali, aar, thodu, sal, bella, parali, par_ and _parambu_. What is noteworthy in these place names seems to be that the agricultural technology which was invented to suit the geographical peculiarities of the area of occupation and the human interaction with the nature which
resulted in the reclamation of more cultivable land due to the pressure of population growth. This process was followed in almost all taravad island except in Agathi where it was not successful. Foreseeing, the unexpected draught separate pits called Kuvval were made.

The community recognise the position of land with the words ‘bayal’ (vathil), keel (east, under). The people who connected the place names to natural phenomenon had utilised the environmental conditions for their livelihood. Odam was the only means of transportation which came in and went out through ali, ware houses and shops were constructed near ali. A township gradually developed near the main ali. Meat, egg, and milk were not much available. Cattle breeding as well as poultry was not commonly practiced. Vegetables were not main ingredients of food.

The chief economic source of islands was coconut. Copra was exported from Lakshadweep at least three times a year. The forth trip of odam went to mainland loaded with coir. The coir produced in Lakshadweep was in much demand in mainland. Wood from Indian coast was imported and used along with certain type of wood available in the island itself. The place name perumalthottam, tukkitithottam,
Arakalapattam, pattulithottam, nelkkari amal thottam, karyakurathottam are indicting the authorities who ruled the island.

The unit of society was family. Properties belong to the families. Androth and Kalpeni islands followed matriliney. Remarriage was allowed. When the number of women in a household increases naturally it leads to setting up of more houses in the vicinity. There is only rare likelihood that the first immigrants on the islands would have built houses made of stone.

The most remarkable achievement and invaluable contribution of the Islanders to the traditional maritime activities is perhaps their knowledge of the sea and sea faring. This knowledge in the form of a folk-wisdom has been preserved in the Islands among elders and especially among a section in the Tarawad islands called Mali’s. This traditional knowledge was variously known as ‘malikanakkku’.

Architectural remains of the three types of mosques which are found invariably on all islands except Minicoy, which culturally belong to a separate group retaining similarities with the Male Islanders. These remains are the Ujrapallis, Mohiyuddin pallis and the Juma
masjids. Ujira and Muhiyuddin palli's are two other religious or
worship centers of the Rifai thareequat and the Khadiriya thareequat of
the two famous Sufi movements respectively.

Kalali's in the island could be a military practice. Also it was in
vogue for centuries to protect the society from invaders. Kalari was
exclusively for melacheri groups in the traditional set up. Kalari
practice was aimed at imparting knowledge in use of weapons and
shield. When it lost its martial spirit, it became an art performance
namely Parichakkali.