CHAPTER II

SOCIAL CONDITION
Socially in Kanyakumari District is a typical one, because it has mixed customs and beliefs of both TamilNadu and Kerala. After the merger with TamilNadu, the district has the tamil based customs. The region Painkulam is the popular place in Kanyakumari district. Many different classes like Nadar, Nair, Muslim, Mukkuvar, Arayar, Viswakarma, Kammala, vannan, Thandar, Cheraman (pulayar), Sambavar, residing in this Panchayat. Their culture, religion, customs, aptitude, habits, beliefs etc are different. The present social condition of the locality is for better than the previous days.

Nadar:

Nadars who claimed to be ‘Shandarar’ or ‘Santoor’ means the enlightened. They are supposed to be migrated from Tirunelveli district\(^1\).

The Nadar people of Painkulam consisting of Hindus, Christians viz Catholics and Protestants, who possess 80% and 20% respectively of the total population. At present the status of Nadar in this locality is remarkably well. They are well of both in government and private sectors, such as

\(^1\) Jaya Pandiyan *Nadar Varalaru*, (Tamil) Madras, 2001, P.41.
doctors, engineers, lawyers, college lectures, professors, teachers, nurses, etc. A good number of people have their enlightened in foreign countries to make up growing in economy with their families\(^2\).

**Nair:**

The Nair caste claimed superiority next to the Brahmins in Travancore\(^3\). This is the most numerous class of Hindu society\(^4\). They were formerly a military class and were noted for marital virtues. In the later days many of them turned to agriculture and government service. In Painkulam areas there are 70 families at present and mostly working in government and private sectors. The Nairs of the Painkulam region are generally rich and highly influential and most of them are holding government jobs in TamilNadu and Kerala State\(^5\).

**Muslim:**

The origin of the Muslim takes as back to Arabia and their expansion all over the world remind as the rule of the prophet Muhammed Nabi and

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\(^2\) Personal Interview with T. Thomas, aged 60, residing at Amsi, Dated 07.04.2007.


\(^5\) Personal Interview with S. Mathava Nair, Teacher, aged 45, residing at Painkulam, dated 04.04.2007.
the expansion of Islam⁶. There are 75 Muslim families found in Painkulam region. The Muslim traders and saints, who visited Travancore, respected the customs and usages of the state and maintained good relationship with the local population. As a trading community the Muslim occupy less than ten percent of the population in the Painkulam region⁷.

**Mukkuvar:**

Fisherman community is also found in the Painkulam region. They are very poor and have no income other than the nominal profit they earn from their fish trade⁸. But the fisherman of the Painkulam region never go to sea for fishing. They used to purchase fish from the sea shore and sell them in the inland places. They are economically very poor, educationally backward and socially down trodden. In Painkulam area 75 families are found at present. Their children are largely studying in schools and colleges and a very few are working in government or private sectors⁹.

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⁶ Census of India, 1941, P.146.
⁷ Personal Interview with Janah.V.Muhammed, aged 52, residing at Thengapattanam, Dated 18.03.2007.
⁸ Personal Interview with S. Antony, Member of Fishermen Sangam, aged 46, residing at Thengapatinam, dated 07.04.07.
⁹ Personal Interview with Mr.Carlos, Fisherman, aged 52, residing at Thengapattanam, Dated 07.04.07.
Viswakarma:

There are 15 Gold Smith families residing in Painkulam Panchayat. Now they are known as Viswakarmas\textsuperscript{10}. Viswakarmas are divided into five occupational castes namely stone worker, iron worker, Thachchan or Asari (carpenter) and Thattan (Gold Smith)\textsuperscript{11}.

Kammalar:

Once carpentering was practiced by a particular sect of people. But now it is a profession of the people of all communities. People of this profession used to develop their jobs by getting orders for shops, house articles, decoration items, furniture etc.... There are 15 families lived and continued their business in Painkulam Panchayat\textsuperscript{12}.

\textsuperscript{10} Census of India, 1941, P.143.

\textsuperscript{11} Personal Interview with S. Krishnan Asari, Goldsmith, aged 50, residing at Parakani, dated 10.03.07.

\textsuperscript{12} Personal Interview with Mr. Pandiyar, aged 49, residing at Painkulam, dated 08.04.07.
Van nan:

The washerman community or ‘dhobis’ is called as vannan in Vernacular language. They usually reside on the river banks and in other places having water facilities. There are 5 families of this community living in the area.\(^{13}\)

Arayar:

People belong to Arayar community are residing at Arayanthoppu. This place is situated eastern side of Thengapattanam. Their main profession is making coir. They are going to sea for fishing on Sundays only, as the fishermen are not going to sea for fishing on Sundays. They are very poor. They are socially and economically backward. A few percent of the community are in Government service. There are 45 families in Arayanthoppu. They are not residing in other places other than Arayanthoppu.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{13}\) Personal Interview with S. Shanmugham, aged 55, residing at Painkulum. Dated 22.04.07.

\(^{14}\) Personal Interview with S. Selva Kumari, aged 38, residing at Arayanthoppu, dated 23.04.07.
Thandar:

Thandar community is coming in scheduled caste. They are also called Oorali. Their main profession is making coir and thatching coconut leaves. They are very poor. Most of the people of this community were residing in Puromboke lands, as they have no landed Propertion. Now the government have given patta to the lands in which they have built their huts. Now their position is some what better\(^{15}\).

Pu lay a r:

Pulayar community is also coming in scheduled caste. This community is also called as cheraman. Most of the people of this community are residing in Puromboke lands. The government has taken effective steps for the issue of the Patta to the lands in which they have built their huts. Most of them have government Pattas. Their main profession is Cooli. The gents have engaged work wet lands and ladies have engaged in planting paddy seedings in the wet lands. Their standard of living has also been improved because of the action taken by the government\(^{16}\).

\(^{15}\) Personal Interview with R. Maria Pushpam, aged 45, residing at Painkulum, dated 24.04.07.

\(^{16}\) Personal Interview with R. Bhagavathi, aged 59, residing at Painkulum, dated 22.04.07.
Sambavar:

Sambavar community is also come under scheduled caste. They are also called as Parayar. Most of the people of this community are residing in Puramboke lands. The government of TamilNadu has taken effective steps for the uplift of their standard of living. They are very poor by socially and economically and they are in most backward condition. Because of the government policy their condition is some what better. Their main profession is cooly work 17.

Houses:

During the early stage joint family system was practiced in this locality. Usually houses were built according to the convenience of the joint family system. Such types of the houses were called as “Nalukettus” 18. A wooden granary called “Pathayam” was mostly used inside of the Nalukettus. In the later stage, joint family system was slowly disappeared from the society and Nalukettus types of houses were demolished.

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17 Personal Interview with R. Ramani, aged 48, residing at Painkulam, dated 25.04.07.
18 Census of India, 1941, P.201.
Independent families began to build terraced and filed roof houses for their comfortable living.19

Food habits:

The people of this region had their own regional food habits, dress, ornaments, house, construction, festivals, amusements, marriage system etc.

The food habits of the people in and around the Painkulam region is the same of the people of the entire district. Rice is the main food of the entire people.20 How ever the 19th and beginning 20th century tapioca was the main food of the majority people of the Travancore state. Painkulam area was not exempt from it as it was a part of the erstwhile Travancore state. Brahmans are vegetarians and other caste hindus are non vegetarians. Muslims and Christians are generally used to make more fish and meat than others.21

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19 Sreedharan Menon A., Social and Cultural History of Kerala, New Delhi, 1979, P.128.
20 Census of India, 1941, P.145.
21 Census of India 1941, P.15.
The people living poverty and downtrodden usually eat only the gruel (Kanchi) and sometimes take taste it once a day.\(^\text{22}\)

**Ornaments:**

The high caste people used to wear gold and silver ornaments. The lower caste people were wearing the ornaments made up of iron. Usually the women used to wear gold chain, a pair stud called as ‘Kammal’ for their ears, a pair of bangles, gold rings and a pair of anklets made up of silver.\(^\text{23}\)

**Dress:**

At present the people of Painkulum were different varieties of dresses for their conveniences. They were sarees, chudithars, midi, maxi, nighty and the children used to wear frock, suits etc... The people of the area generally are so advanced in wearing the dress materials.\(^\text{24}\)


Entertainments:

The people of all community in this locality have entertainments. They are using the leisure time by watching television, listening radios, having shoppings and go to film in the nearby cinema theatre. Children used to enjoy themselves by playing together the games like cricket, flying kites etc... The upper middle class and rich families usually play the indoor games like chess, carom etc.

Marriage System:

The people of this region generally practiced monogamy. The ceremonies connected with marriage differ from community to community. Compare the horoscope of the bride and the bridegroom is the common feature among the Hindus. Wearing “tali” by the bride is an accepted practice among all sections of society. Krishnavakars and the Nairs are not

28 Subramanian, Sangam Polity Madurai 1972, P.130.
giving much important to “Tali” Tyring ceremony\textsuperscript{29}. An important part of the Christian will attend the first Sunday service in the bridegroom’s church and next in the bride’s church\textsuperscript{30}.

Muslim community consists of various sects. Most of them slightly differ from each other in marriage customs\textsuperscript{31}. Most of them retain early Islamic marriage customs. The marriage ritual among Muslim is called ‘Nikah’. The father of the bride and the groom sit face to face holding each others hand ‘Mahar’ (the amount that the marriage is betrothal known as ‘Parisam’ in Tamil). This takes place in the bride’s house before the marriage presided over by the priest of the church. Then exchange of rings and valuables with a nice feast. The Catholics exchange the rings in the church on that day, where as the protestants do it in their houses. Marriage service is made more attractive by special songs and prayers. Following the ceremony marriage feast will be held in the bride’s house. After the marriage the new couple bridegroom has agreed to pay to the bride will also be publically announced by the Muslim. In the Tamil country some common

\textsuperscript{29} I-bid, P.100.
\textsuperscript{30} Dr. Issac Jeyadhas R. and Dr. Yesudhas V., History of Tamil Society and Cultural Since 1336, Villukuri 2002, P.89.
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid.
rights are there among almost all the social and religious group of Tamil culture.\(^\text{32}\)

The marriage in ‘Mukkuvar’ community is done mostly in the way of Roman Catholic worship. After their marriage the bridegroom is expected to stay in bride’s house for the next five days. That is their own custom following their community.\(^\text{33}\)

Inter caste marriages are usually not in practice. Marriages with blood relation (uncle son) are encouraged in the beginning and later it was discouraged in all the communities.\(^\text{34}\) In the Nair society the women were allowed to follow the system of polyandry in the 19th century with the spread of English education polyandry, the uncivilized custom was gradually given up from the society.\(^\text{35}\)

\(^{32}\) Op-cit.

\(^{33}\) Personal Interview with P. Vargese, aged 65, residing at Painkulam, dated 10-03-07.

\(^{34}\) Personal Interview with T. Chandrakumar, President of Painkulam Village Panchayat, aged 35, residing at Painkulam, dated 22-06-2007.

\(^{35}\) Sreedhara Menon A., Social and Cultural History of Kerala, New Delhi, 1979, P. 96.
Festival:

Sivaratri is the important festival of Hindus. Sivaratri the night of Siva is a festival celebrated by the Hindus in general and the followers of Siva in particular. It is celebrated at the time of new moon in the month of February. Deepavali is celebrated all over the country as the festival of the lights. Pongal is the unique festival of the Tamils. First Pongal is called ‘Bhogi’ Pongal. On this day friends and relatives exchange visits and presents. The second Pongal is called Surya Pongal. The feast of the day is supposed to be dedicated to the sun. The third is known as Pongal of the Mattupongal. Cattle play a key role in the life of the peasants.

Christian festivals all over the world celebrate the three unique festivals of Christmas, New Year, and Easter. Christmas which falls 25 December in memory of the birth of Jesus Christ Easter though not as spectacular as Christmas, is the older of the two festivals. It commemorates

36 Dr. Yesudhasan V. and Dr. Issac Jeyadhas R., History of Tamil Society and Culture since 1336, P.94.
37 Sreedhara Menon A., Cultural Heritage of Kerala, New Delhi, 1979, P.71.
38 Dr. Yesudhasan V. and Dr. Issac Jeyadhas R., History of Tamil Society and Culture Since 1336, P.95.
the resurrection of Jesus Christ and falls in the month of April. The week begins with Sunday and special prayers are offered during this week\textsuperscript{40}.

The major festivals of Muslim are Muharram, Bakrid, Ramzan. Muharram is the first month of Islamic calender. It is considered as a most auspicious month. Ramzan is the ninth month of the Muhammadean year. A strict fast from dawn to dusk is observed to burn away the sins of men. The Muslim enjoy hearty feasts on Bakrid day. On that day all the men and boys, early in the morning after taking bath, rush to the mosques in new clothes for special prayers\textsuperscript{41}.

**Position of Women:**

According to 2001 census there are 13182 males and 16105 females in Painkulam Panchayat. The number of ladies is more than the number of gents. Regarding literacy males are 13,150 and ladies are 16030. In this section also the number of ladies is more than the number of gents\textsuperscript{42}.

\textsuperscript{40} Sreedhara Menon A., *Cultural Heritage of Kerala*, 1979, P.83.
\textsuperscript{41} Dr. Issac Jeyadhas R. and Dr. Yesudhas V., *History of Tamil Society and Cultural Since 1336*, P.98.
Most of the ladies are housewives. Some of them have engaged in tailoring and a small percentage wise 10% are in government service. Now there are self-help groups in Painkulam village. Most of the ladies have joined in the self-help groups and they have improved their position by lending loans through the primary agricultural co-operative bank, Painkulam. They have also engaged in social services.\footnote{Personal Interview with R. Sikamony, Retired Deputy Thasildhar, aged 66, residing at Painkulam, dated 15-04-2007.}