CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

The literature review while outlining some of the broad theories and concepts of space attempts to examine some of the recent writings on anthropology and architecture to understand the relation of material culture and society. Such writings create awareness of the cultural dimensions of architecture and enrich architectural theory and modern practice. To understand the theoretical and comparative studies in the same area, literature on vernacular and traditional building in the Indian context is reviewed. Books and essays on the social and economic aspects of Indian villages, the role of caste and kinship in the structuring of social relations within villages in India more particularly in Tamilnadu which is the focus of this doctoral work etc. are examined to understand the context of work. Meanwhile it is also pertinent to examine exhaustively the work on rural housing done within the state of Tamilnadu.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

Man has been involved in the conceptualisation and production of architectural space from pre-historic times. In doing so he evolved an architecture that was not just a shelter from the elements, but was a creation of a social and symbolic space- a space which both mirrored and moulded the worldview of its
creators and inhabitants. These spaces have materialised as a space of practice (Bourdieu) rather than a space that has been physically framed by constructions. The repetition of activities creates and defines or delineates a space by its frequent occurrence, whether this is done on daily, weekly, or monthly basis. Space then in the human sense has evolved (Bollnow\(^{15}\)) and was not there from the beginning (Euclidean concept). As a concept related to human perception and culture, it was originally closely related to dwelling and settlement and subsequently developed by extension of the spatial perception of man. Thus in its origin space was not a boundless concept, but on the contrary, was more or less clearly limited and defined. It is also closely related to the evolution of human settlements and culture of man.

In many societies the house is the principle locus for the objectification of the generative schemes of that culture. After early works in this area, in the later part of the 19th century, interest in house form and settlement appears to have taken a back seat. The development of structuralism in the 1960’s and 1970’s stimulated a new spate of analyses of the layout of space in terms of indigenous cosmologies and symbolic ideas. It is as Foucault\(^{16}\) observed, an ‘attempt to establish, between elements that may have been spilt over course of time, a set of relationships that juxtapose them, set them in opposition or link them together, so as to create a sort of shape’. The principle of opposition is fundamental to structuralism, and the world can be seen to be structured according to the system of paired opposites, of ‘binary oppositions’ such as inside/ outside, male/ female, sacred/ profane, etc. It helped look at the richness of symbolism in the world of architecture through the discipline of semiology (science of signs), which offered a mechanism by which the built environment could be read and decoded. However the theory of structuralism had its limitations as it represented a too rigid system that could not take into account the specificity of a time and place.

\(^{15}\) Mensch and Raum (Man and Space) 1963.

\(^{16}\) Of other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias; Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory: Neil Leach
To Bollnow (Mensch and Raum, [Man and Space] 1963) however space is expressed in polar relations. This kind of thinking is fairly new, that is relational. He does not clearly define space as this or that, but shows how various domains are related in human existence, that human existence is a kind of rhythm between contrasting poles. He thus constructs a ‘high theory of relativity’ of polar and complementary relations of spatial activities and experiences. Thus by describing space in close relation to human behaviour and environmental conditions Bollnow discovered the essential structure of space. Philosophically his studies are placed in a wider framework, related to ‘Phenomenology’ and the work of Bachelard, Heidegger, Straus and others. To them the house is a privileged entity for study of the intimate values of inside space considering both its unity and its complexity. To quote Bachelard ‘Living essentially means dwelling’. The house furnishes both dispersed images and a body of images, which are associated and provide illusions of stability. Phenomenology thus is concerned with the description of phenomena and how they appear. However this is not limited to the visual domain but demands receptivity to the full ontological potential of human experience. Space therefore is to be perceived not as abstract neutral space but as space of lived experience. Phenomenology has been criticised for being a self-referential system whose authenticity can be questioned as it lacks any normative foundations. However within architectural circles it is popular as a concept and as an approach to the study and evolution of space.

Production of space therefore is a production of a way of thinking. If the problem of architecture is to be traced to its roots, then attention needs to be focused on the thinking and considerations that inform its production. Traditionally architectural discourse has been largely a discourse of architectural form, and has been dominated by debates that revolve around questions of style. It has failed to

17 ‘O. F. Bollnow’s Anthropological Concept of Space’ by Nold Egenter; 5th International Congress of the International Association for the Semiotics of Space, 1992.
probe any further than this to investigate the underlying causes of its existence. It has not explored the way in which architecture may have been perceived. Architectural form is to be seen as a result of deeper concerns; to quote Siegfried Kracauer 'spatial images are the dreams of a society. Wherever the hieroglyphics of any spatial image are deciphered there the basis of social reality presents itself.' The study of inhabited space, its construction and daily use can thus provide a "way in" to a whole culture and its ideas. A large amount of work has emerged which addresses the question of understanding architecture within a broader socio-cultural context.

Most architectural studies have dealt on the monumental and the formal; it is only very recently that vernacular architecture has come to be viewed as worthy of admiration and study. This was the result of the Modern Movement, which swept away and replaced existing communities, cultural practices and regional identities determined by cultural and topographical conditions. It failed to understand these practices and conditions and build upon them. A series of publications which came as the result of the Modern Movement explored the basis of architectural theory as going beyond the purely formal and functional and created an awareness of the cultural dimensions of architecture. The emphasis turned to anthropological studies to seek a relationship between space and behaviour patterns to the problems and future of our habitat and settlements.

It has been thirty years since the publication of Amos Rapport's (1969)\textsuperscript{19} short, but provocative book on the relationship of house form and culture. Yet in all this time, only a handful of works has really served to develop these and other lines of research. Among architects, Bernard Rudofsky (1964\textsuperscript{20}, 1977\textsuperscript{21}) has been foremost in promoting an aesthetic appreciation of the powerful, most 'organic' qualities, the ingenuity and the appropriateness of what has been aptly dubbed 'architecture

\textsuperscript{18} Bachelard, G., Poetics of Space; Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid. Page No. 2
\textsuperscript{20} Architecture without Architects
\textsuperscript{21} The Prodigious Builders
without architects'. In the last twenty-five years or so, indigenous architectures have become the subject of a growing literature by both architects and anthropologists. We have excellent works by Anthony King (1984)\textsuperscript{22}, Paul Oliver (1969\textsuperscript{23}, 1975\textsuperscript{24}, 1987\textsuperscript{25}, 1997\textsuperscript{26}) Joseph Rykwert (1987)\textsuperscript{27} and a few other additional works by Amos Rapoport as well (1982)\textsuperscript{28}. The effects of these publications raised a new awareness of the cultural dimensions of architecture and enriched its theory and practice. These have also helped in redirecting the progress of research. This is also true of the literature in architectural semiotics. It is noticeable, however that these works, although ranging far outside the normal confines of Western architectural history, have tended to concentrate on particular regions of the world- namely Africa, S. E. Asia and the Middle East.

Nold Egenter (1992)\textsuperscript{29} points out that architecture is, after all, fundamental to all-human societies and cultures through both time and space. How then can one account for its marginalisation and its subordination with respect to the study of language, ritual, kinship, or religion? In his manifesto he turns to the promotion of what he terms architectural anthropology, a field he distinguishes most emphatically- from architectural design, architectural history and several other related sub disciplines. The essays in his manifesto point out that human 'constructivity' provide a critical link between the emergence of human systems of religion, symbolism, writing, urbanism and territorial organisation. Egenter uses his own extensive research as an ethnologist to illustrate this. Notable is his work and writings on architectural ethnography (semantic and symbolic architecture in the framework of Japanese village Shinto rites), ethnology (concepts of dwelling, territory and space among a traditional population of hunters and gatherers, the Ainu) and primatology.

\textsuperscript{22} Bungalow- As a production of a Global Culture
\textsuperscript{23} Shelter and society (ed.)
\textsuperscript{24} Shelter, sign and symbol (ed.)
\textsuperscript{25} Dwellings: The house across the world; Oxford, Phaidon
\textsuperscript{26} Encyclopedia on Vernacular Architecture
\textsuperscript{27} On Adam's House in Paradise
\textsuperscript{28} Meaning of the built environment
\textsuperscript{29} Architectural Anthropology Vol. 1-8
Another volume, which bridges the disciplines of architecture and anthropology and marks a major step in our understanding of the relation between material culture and society is ‘About the house- Levi Strauss and beyond’\textsuperscript{30}. This collection of essays reveal some of the different ways in which, houses stand for social groups, and represent the surrounding world. They focus on the relations between the buildings, the people who live in them, and the ideas they represent. The contributors critically assess Levi- Strauss’s notion of the ‘house society’ in various Southeast Asian and South American cultures. Most authors take as their starting point Levi Strauss’s oft- cited definition of the “house as a corporate body holding an estate made up of both material and immaterial wealth, which perpetuates itself through the transmission of its name, its goods and its titles down a real or imaginary line, considered legitimate as long as this continuity can express itself in the language of kinship or of affinity and most often, of both”. They demonstrate how an analysis of the house can bring together areas of social life which anthropology has tended to separate. Their innovative approach stresses kinship as a process of lived relationships, and links the anthropology of the house to that of the anthropology of the body.

Roxanna Waterson (1997)\textsuperscript{31} also pays homage to Claude Levi Strauss whose suggestively sketched concept of house societies provided part of the inspiration for the analysis of architecture of Southeast Asia. While trying to trace the origins of recurring elements of architectural style, Waterson examines the technological and cosmological considerations behind them. By viewing the house as the real focus of kinship systems she outlines how social relations define the use of space within the house and how rules of space in turn oblige individuals to act out

\textsuperscript{30} Edited by Jane Carsten and Stephen Hugh- Jones; 19995; University Press, Cambridge.
\textsuperscript{31} The Living House: An anthropology of architecture of Southeast Asia
these relations in their own movements. Questions are also raised for the survival of indigenous architectural forms in the face of rapid social change. This study of Southeast Asian houses provides the direction by which further studies of inhabited space, its construction and daily use can be documented and analysed so as to provide a ‘way in’ to a whole culture.

The study of vernacular architecture in India was initiated in the early 70’s. One of the first studies done was that of the Desert region in the state of Rajasthan, India, by Kulbhushan Jain and Minakshi Jain. It was carried out at a time when there was not much literature available for methodological reference. The earliest essay of those published by them (1970) was called ‘Generic Form’ and then revised as ‘Thematic Elements’. However a book on the architecture of this region was only published in 1992 after systematic documentation of the house typology and the study of architecture- craft relationship of this region. In the study of the five districts of Rajasthan, they illustrate that regional variations in built form are evident though constants can be seen in the use of circular and rectangular enclosed spaces, courtyards, raised mud platforms, etc. Regional variations in decoration parallel those that exist in built forms. All this has been extensively documented but the socio cultural aspects and their influence on the shaping of the habitat are very concise. Primarily this work is only a detailed classification of house and settlement typology but nevertheless provides a strong, substantial basis for further research.

The ‘Bungalow as a production of a global culture’ is an excellent work of Anthony D. King (1984). The dwelling form is presented not only as a physical entity, but an economic, social and cultural phenomenon not only in India but the world over- Britain, N. America, Australia and the African states. The first chapter of the book particularly deals with India and explores the way in which architecture and

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32 Mud architecture of the Indian desert; Aadi center, Ahmedabad; India
33 The Bungalow- the production of a global culture; Routledge and Kegan Paul; 1984
urban form not only result from social change but also helps to bring it about. It examines the process by which traditional Indian culture and the dwellings in which it was contained were influenced and transformed by an international market economy and the influence of European lifestyles and ideas. Besides, the book also speculates on a number of issues, for example, about the way in which different societies whether capitalist, socialist, ‘mixed’ economy or others have responded to the phenomenon of urbanism. The book however suggests some ideas and approaches, especially for more comparative studies, whether undertaken over time or contemporarily, between different cultures and societies with different forms of political economy.

Another pioneering work is on the Havelis34- wooden houses and mansions- of Gujarat, India. V. S. Pramar in an earlier article on the ‘Sociology of the north Gujarat urban house’35 illustrates that the great mansions are no different in their spatial arrangements from those in the house of the ordinary trader or artisan. The only difference is in the quantitative and not on the qualitative and therefore the relationship between the spaces remains the same. This spatial relationship he concludes is a reflection of social relationships and social distances. The book (1989) which followed this publication classifies the house into the two regions of the state- North and South Gujarat- and draws parallels between the rural and urban house. This illustrates that though context changes, the socio cultural manifestation of the house form is a mere elaboration of the basic type. Speaking of architectural style the author goes on to elaborate that the scale of wooden craft decoration on the facades of the houses as well as within the courtyards speaks of the social status of the inhabitants and their lifestyle.

34 Pramar V. S;1989
35 Contributions to Indian Sociology (n.s.) 21, pp 331-345; 2 (1987); Sage publications; N. Delhi
The Vastu Shilpa foundation (1986)\textsuperscript{36} has also researched on the habitat of the Vohra Muslims in Gujarat. The first Vohras reached India in the 11\textsuperscript{th} century from their native lands in Yemen following the visit of the Fatimid missionaries. Their habitat manifests interesting improvisation of the basic Hindu dwelling to suit their needs in changing times from 11th century to the advent of the British with whom they traded significantly. Their dwellings manifest their constant search to maintain an identity in the varied circumstances of their trading activities and social identity. The study is based on documentation of about 30 dwellings of Vohras spread over nine settlements in Gujarat preceded by a history of Vohras in Gujarat, a detailed account of their ways of living followed by measured drawings of the selected dwellings. There is also included a brief comparative study of typical Hindu, Vohra and British dwellings.

In the southern state of Kerala, India, Dr. Ashalatha Thampuran\textsuperscript{37} (1993) has made an exhaustive study of the popular form of traditional residential building- nalukettu\textsuperscript{38} and briefly sketches the concepts and theories as outlined in the Sanskrit regional and classical literature, which provide the rules for building\textsuperscript{39}. This work is a prelude to the book 'Traditional Architectural forms of Malabar Coast\textsuperscript{40}', which is an elaboration of the same theories and provides region wide distribution of typology through an exhaustive documentation, done over a period of ten years of the eleven regions of the state. The book outlines the features of the traditional nalukettu

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid. Page No.26. It is non-profit organization set up in 1978, at Ahmedabad and is headed by architect B V Doshi.

\textsuperscript{37} Together with Dr. Balagopalan T S Prabhu; Journal of the Indian Institute of Architects; pp 2-8; September-October 1993

\textsuperscript{38} The Malyalam word nalukettu is derived from the Sanskrit word ‘chattusala’ meaning an edifice with four halls or salas.

\textsuperscript{39} The regional text studied in detail by Dr. Ashalatha Thampuran is the Manusyalayacandrika written in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century AD. The surviving examples of traditional architecture was compared with the text.

\textsuperscript{40} Traditional Architectural forms of Malabar Coast; Pub. By Vastuvidyapratisthanam Academic Center, Kozhikode, Kerala; (2001)
(chattusala) which was a large familial residence traditionally meant to accommodate the perpetually expanding joint family and was peculiar to the upper castes, *Nairs* and *Namboothris*. (Ref. Plate No: 1) This dwelling is an individual homestead with a central courtyard and four *salas* distributed around it in the cardinal directions. The object of the book was also to analyse the buildings to trace the evolutionary stages with a view to derive regional and causative factors and inferences which have relevance in modern context. The book concludes with a synoptic theory of house form. The book provides the canons for house building as translated and analysed from the ancient and classical texts in comparison with existing traditional buildings. It dwells on the Hindu concept of ‘the world in the house’ and explores domestic space as a cosmic system in and of itself, neglecting the unique system of kinship and society that exists among the various castes groups of the Malabar Coast and their role in the shaping of spaces within the habitat and vice versa. (Ref. Plate No.2)

Many researchers have studied the Kerala dwellings with an obsession for ancient architectural theories and there has been very little attempt to bridge anthropological studies with that of architectural theory. Though the case study of the *Kutali Talattu Vitu*- an old ancestral House in North Malabar* (2001)*; Kerala, describes the house as an institution with its rituals and ceremonies organised in an hierarchical architectural space, the focus of this literature is to compare the surviving examples of the house with the rules for building as drawn from *Manusyalayacandrika*, one of the most popular medieval Malayali Sanskrit treatises on housing.

41 *Nair* and *Namboothri* are priestly castes found in the state of Kerala

42 Henri Schildt; Proceedings of the International Conference on Vernacular Architecture; January 2001; Chennai.

43 Malayali is the term used for a person hailing from Kerala with his/her mother tongue as Malayalam.
This dwelling in Padmanabhapram, was occupied by the king's concubine and therefore the kitchen and the ancillary spaces are segregated from the main dwelling.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Ankanam: Central Courtyard

Diksalaas: On four sides of the ankanam in the four cardinal directions

Vidiksalaas: Rooms at the four corners in this example forming bedrooms and puja

Mukhayamams: Wide verandahs all around the dwelling

Cosmology: As per the dictates of the texts the kitchen is located in the north east quarter of the house. The house is strictly oriented to the cardinal directions.

SOURCE: Traditional Architectural forms of Malabar Coast; Dr. Ashalatha Thampuran
TYPICAL NALUKETTU AS EVOLVED FROM MANDAPA

THE CHATTUSALA NALUKETTU ADHERES TOTALLY TO THE CANONICAL PRINCIPLES REGARDING SITE DIVISION, POSITIONING OF BUILDING IN THE SITE, VASTUPURUSH, POSITIONING OF 'DEVAS', 'M A R M A M S' AND 'S U T R A M S'

NORTH

NALUKETTU

COSMOLOGY

PLATE: 2
Literature on 'the Goan house' \(^{44}\) elevates the Euro-centric world view of a former ruling class, upper caste Portuguese speaking Christians, and thus assumes that the residences of a fast-fading aristocracy are the only kind of houses meriting mention. Neo classical facades convey to the world an image of Goa as a predominately Christian society ruled by gentlemen aristocrats whose roots are in landed wealth, the church, and state office and whose sensibilities are oriented away from India towards Europe. The houses of the lower caste Christians are not considered, neither are those of the Hindus. The 'Goan house' described in the literature is therefore synonymous with the houses of an elite which has undergone a rapid political decline. The literature also removes the house from the world by focusing only on the house form. Consequently the ideological constitution of domestic space is ignored. Dr. Caroline Ifeka (1987)\(^{45}\) has constructed domestic space among lower and upper caste Hindus and Christians followed by an analysis of domestic space as an ideology. At one extreme end are older houses which embody the very Hindu notion of the 'world in the house', and at the other are the Catholic homes representing the Western and Christian idea of 'house in the world'. The analysis shows that houses are not as literature assumes, divorced from society and culture, but in their interior aspects are shaped by values derived from caste as well as class society.

Subrata Ghosh (1982)\(^{46}\) in his research thesis examines the traditional Bengal home to study the spatial characteristics of the house in a rural setting. His observations which are very valid in the present context show that the influence of urban lifestyle and technology has manifested itself not so much in spatial terms.

\(^{44}\) Goa, for the last two centuries was under Portuguese dominion and is currently a state under the Indian Constitution

\(^{45}\) Domestic space as an ideology in Goa, India; Contributions to Indian sociology (n. s.) 21, pp307-327; 2 (1987) SAGE Pub.

\(^{46}\) 'A House at the Juncture of History and Now'; Jadavpur University; 1982- Extract published in Architecture + Design; pp 82-85; May-June 1988.
within the dwelling as in the use of new materials of construction and introduction of ‘technology’ spaces⁴⁷. In a comparative study of an urban dwelling he illustrates how certain images of memory and culture are recaptured in a totally new context and environment. He therefore stresses the need for architects to search for those elements of constancy, which have gained validity over a period of time to provide clues for the design of a habitat in the modern context.

Vernacular architecture in India has always been an expression of man’s inner impulse to adorn and embellish. A lot of work exists on the styles of decoration and ornament- both functional and non-functional elements- but this is often looked at from within the framework of architectural style and theory. However the world over it has been shown that the astonishing emotional response to architectural decoration is deep rooted in a fundamental parallel between building adornment and traditional decoration of the human body, that is, in anthropologically determined spaces of architecture rather than in those depending on changing aesthetics and techniques. Articles in a MARG Publication⁴⁸ on the forms of architectural decoration in India attempt to look beyond the physical manifestation of decoration and adornment but view the same as an almost human- and implicitly personal-aspect of architecture. Most articles in this volume investigate forms and concepts of architectural adornment in traditional building practices and clearly illustrate one way or the other the remarkable phenomenon of the close relation between body decoration and architectural adornment. However they do not attempt to present a coherent theory of the anthropological foundation for architectural decoration. Nevertheless it lays the groundwork for further work in this area and for a formulation of theories within various regional or local contexts.

⁴⁷ Technology spaces refer to improvised kitchens and toilets.
⁴⁸ Impulse to Adorn: Studies on Indian traditional architecture; Dr. Saryu Doshi (ed.) Jan Pieper and George Mitchell (Guest ed.); MARG publications; 1982.
In India the Vastu Shilpa Foundation, a non-profit organisation approved as Scientific Research Institution by the Department of Scientific and Industrial research of the Ministry of Science and Technology, was set up in 1978 in Ahmedabad. Headed by architect B. V. Doshi, the organisation's aim was to initiate research, studies and investigations relevant to the study and practice of architecture and planning in the Indian context. Apart from conducting research in the science and technology of construction, the foundation attaches tremendous importance on the relationship of tradition, culture and lifestyles of people with architecture and planning. The major emphasis of various studies undertaken at the foundation has been to understand traditional habitat and to evolve planning and design guidelines to suit the prevailing socio-economic and technological conditions in the various parts of the country. The findings of various studies provided this foundation a good base for the Aranya nagar community housing project at Indore-, which has been awarded the prestigious Aga Khan Architecture Award, 1995.

Very little documentation and research has been done of the traditional architecture and settlement patterns of our country. This has adversely affected the growth and evolution of norms for building design and settlement planning suitable to our country. The Vastu Shilpa Foundation, Ahmedabad in association with the NASA also conducts competitions for students of architecture all over the country every year under the aegis of the Louis Kahn Trophy. It invites students to document and study the heritage of our country on a specific theme every year. This has accumulated a large amount of valuable documentation and research over the last 21 years. Some of the student competition projects of Tamilnadu that have been accepted by the Foundation and are available for reference are:

49 NASA (National Association of the Students of Architecture) is an all India Architecture Student body with around 105 member institutions.
(i) 3 Tombs of Tippu Sultan, Vellore Fort, Tamilnadu, 1982; documented by the School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University, Chennai, Tamilnadu.

(ii) Chettinad Housing, Tamilnadu, 1988; documented by the School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University, Chennai, Tamilnadu.

(iii) Tamizhagam; Ootacamund District; Nilgiris; Tamilnadu; 1994; documented by School of Architecture and Planning; Anna University; Chennai, Tamilnadu.

(iv) Chettinad Palace; Tamilnadu; 1994; documented by the department of Architecture, Regional Engineering College, Tiruchirapalli, Tamilnadu.

The above list shows that the archives of the Vastu Shilpa Foundation as a result of the Louis Kahn Trophy competition have collected a documentation of historically important buildings and high style vernacular of Tamilnadu.

Within the state of Tamilnadu a lot has been written about the land of Chettinad, which is known for its stately mansions reflective of the wealth of the Nattukottai Chettiar also known as the Chettis of Nagarathar who lived there. The historian S. Muthiah (2000) has outlined in word and picture the past and the present Chettinad in the book The Chettiar Heritage. This book provides a glimpse of the social, cultural and economic life of a unique community whose lifestyle is spoken of with awe in South India. The book is an excellent pictorial record of Chettinad houses, villages, history, customs, traditions and rituals and its art and craft. The narrative is descriptive in nature and outlines the material aspects of the culture as exhibited in the stately mansions. It dwells on the nature of the various spaces inside the Chettinad house and the grandeur in the use of materials and interior finishes. The book though it primarily engages with architectural style, excludes the

50 Chettiar is a caste group who are hereditarily traders and Natukottai is the name of the sub caste
51 S. Muthiah, Meenakshi Meyappan, Visalakshmi Ramaswamy; The Chettiar Heritage; Chennai 2000
eclectic nature of its architecture, which is a result of the contact this merchant community had with other communities overseas. The lack of analysis in this book may also be because of the fact that it has been promoted by the Chettiar Heritage (a trust) with a view to primarily record the rich cultural and architectural heritage, which in the near future may come under the threat of development.

Other studies of the Chettinad house (Deborah Thiagarajan 1991\textsuperscript{52}, 2001\textsuperscript{53}) illustrate how belief in the house as a microcosm is enacted daily by the Chettiars through daily ritual and observances. Beliefs and superstitions in the construction and spatial layout of the settlement have been recorded more from common practices and observations rather than an examination of the ancient texts. The Vernacular Architecture of Tamilnadu, Vols. 1 & 2\textsuperscript{54}, a research report, documents a few examples of what can be termed as high style vernacular – royal architecture and the dwellings of the affluent- and pays no attention to the dwellings of the common man. Chettinad dwellings are also figured in this collection of articles. Here again the emphasis is more on the question of architectural style and it does not engage in architecture as a fundamental part of human society and culture.

Other literature on the vernacular architecture of Tamilnadu focuses on the tribes of the Nilgiris Mountains notably the Todas. William A Noble in his essay on ‘Toda huts and Houses: Modern and Traditional’\textsuperscript{55} illustrates not only the functional arrangement of the interior of the Toda dwelling in the original type as well as the modified and extended unit but also examines anthropology and the way social and spatial relationships are determined. However today due to the dispersion of the tribe there are very few surviving examples of the lived-in Toda dwelling.

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(Plate: 3)
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\textsuperscript{52} Vernacular Architecture of Tamilnadu; Vol. 1 & 2; Madras Craft foundation; sponsored by The national Museum of handicrafts and Handlooms, N. Delhi; 1991
\textsuperscript{53} Proceedings of the International Conference on Vernacular Architecture; January 2001; Chennai.
\textsuperscript{54} Madras Craft Foundation; sponsored by The national Museum of Handicrafts and Handlooms; 1991
OTHER SALIENT FEATURES

1) The entrance door is built either slightly to the left or to the right.
2) The door is so low that people have to crawl in and out of the hut.
3) An interior oil lamp is placed at some height above the entrance, or slightly offset to the right or to the left. The lamp is lit to the accompaniment of prayer.
One can conclude therefore that literature on the vernacular architecture of Tamilnadu has confined itself to the very narrow area of high style vernacular with very little work in the dwellings of the common man. To understand the vernacular in the total context one needs to inquire into the historical and cultural background within which this architecture has developed. There is no other better way than to reconstruct Tamil social life than from the era of poetic compositions and literary grammarians belonging to the classical age. (Dr. S. Singaravelu 2001) The social life of the Tamils has been given great importance and written extensively about in the Ancient Classical literature. Contemporary writings examining literature of this era show that in its physical aspect, the ancient Tamil speaking world of the three centuries before and three centuries after Christ was a distinct geographical entity. It was situated between the Tirupathi hills in the north and Cape Comorin in the south and known as Tamilakam\textsuperscript{56}. The concept of society and economy in Tamilakam is contained in two Anthologies—\textit{Ettutokai} \textsuperscript{57} (Eight Anthologies) and the \textit{Patthuppattu} \textsuperscript{58} (Ten Idylls) belonging to the period from about 100 AD to 250 AD and are the earliest surviving Tamil Literature known as the ‘Sangam’ literature of the classical period. The early Tamil social thought divided the ‘Tamil’ world into five regions namely, \textit{kurinji} (montane), \textit{palai} (arid), \textit{mullai} (pastoral), \textit{marutham} (riverine or agricultural) and \textit{neythal} (littoral or coastal region) and developed a distinct conception of social life peculiar to each of these regions. Socio cultural factors and particularly the behaviour patterns in love and military matters are related to the

\textsuperscript{56} The term Tamilakam denotes the Tamil country

\textsuperscript{57} The eight anthologies are: Ainkuninuru (500 love poems); Akananuru (400 love lyrics of varying length); Kalittokai (150 love poems); Narrinai (400 short poems on love); Paripatal (twenty four poems in praise of gods); Patirrppattu (a shot collection of poems of ten verses in praise of the king of the Cera Country); ams Purananuru (400 poems in praise of chieftains and kings.

\textsuperscript{58} The Ten Idylls are: Cirupanarruppatai (261 lines) by Nattattanar; Kurinicipattu (261 lines) by Kapilar; Malaipatukatam (583 lines) by Perunkaucikanar; Maturakkanci (782 lines) by Mankuti Marutanar; Mullaippattu (103 lines) by Napputanar; Neturalvatai (188 lines) by Nakkirar; Pattinappalai (301 lines) and Perumpanarru ppatai (500 lines) by Unattirankannanar; Porunarruppatai (248 lines) by Mutattamakkanniyar; and Tirumurukarruppatai (317 lines) by Nakkirar.
geophysical aspects of region, the flora and fauna, the economic activities, the religion and diet of each region, and behaviour pattern peculiar to each region.\textsuperscript{59}

The social life of the Tamils was enclosed within what may be described as concentric circles of companionship and fraternity. Outside there was the \textit{natu} or the 'nation', which dominated the social relations of everyone who belonged to it. \textit{Natus} were the units of settlements (corresponding to the five ecological regions), that were variously known as:

(i) \textit{mutur} or \textit{kurinji} in the montane region;
(ii) \textit{kurumpu} in the arid region;
(iii) \textit{ceri} or \textit{pati} in the pastoral region;
(iv) \textit{perur} in the riverine plains and
(v) \textit{pattinam} or \textit{pakkam} in the littoral region

Tamil literature also outlines some of the settlements and describes the nature of dwellings within the \textit{natu} in the ancient Tamil country. It is said that in the montane region the settlement was known as the \textit{kurinji} and it is characterised by the smallness of its communal aggregates and consequently by a great social homogeneity.\textsuperscript{60}

As for the settlement in the arid regions, there were thatched dwellings of the community with thatched ramparts. These shelters and other dwellings were fenced with thorny creepers, while separate palisade like wickets served as gates for these dwellings.

\textsuperscript{59} K Sivathamby; Early South Indian society and Economy: The tinai concept; Social Scientist; Vol 16; June July 1988 pp 35-50

\textsuperscript{60} Dr. S. Singaravelu; Social life of the Tamils- The Classical Period; International Institute of Tamil Studies; 2001
The pastoral settlements of the ancient Tamil country also had thatched huts with doors made of wooden sticks tied together. The huts were propped on short sticks or posts on which leafy twigs were hung for the ewes to munch. The shepherds pastured their cattle and sheep upon the adjacent grazing ground for which a close row of thorny bushes served as hedge or fence.

The fourth type of settlement was the permanent agricultural settlement with a number of dwellings either placed close together or sometimes irregularly in and around the paddy and sugarcane plots, or even sometimes away from the cultivated fields in a row of streets. Besides the farmers’ pretty thatched huts with courtyards in which children played and the cattle sheds which were attached to the farmers’ dwellings, the agricultural settlement was also marked by the heaps of paddy grains and the smoky sugar houses. In the riverine plains there were also towns which became distinguished from the rural settlements by the term perur. While the towns in the interior were mainly centres of internal trade, the coastal towns and cities known as pattinam were increasingly associated with foreign trade and commerce.

The fifth type of settlement was the coastal or littoral settlement of the fisher folk who inhabited the long littoral tracts of the sandy territory lying on the eastern and the western seaboard of the ancient Tamil country. In a typical settlement of the littoral dwellers, the huts were thatched with taruppai grass. Besides there were also sheds built of the branches of the laurel tree. The fish baskets and knotted nets lay on the banks of the deep fishing pools. A little further away there were many two storeyed mansions located in a network of streets where the traders and merchants lived with their womenfolk.

Thus the ancient Tamils are known to have lived in various kinds of settlements, the hill dwelling tribes living high upon the mountains and the highly advanced traders and merchant princes with their women folk living in the mansions in the urban areas of the coastal regions as well as the interior. Other people – the
agriculturists, the pastoralists, and the hunters—living in humble dwellings or thatched huts located on the rich plains, pastoral regions; or on the arid tracts of the ancient Tamil country. It was within the settlements that each elementary family had a dwelling.

The ancient texts also outline the Vedic theory of *Varna*\(^61\). The Vedic theory of *Varna* is the first textual reference to the Indian theory of social organisation, which makes the distinction between status and power. It was in the extension of the Vedic principle of graded ritual status to the entire range of social life that caste classification—division into *jati*—originated. The *jati*\(^62\) system is an empirical order, verifiable by direct observation of caste ranking and other familiar distinctions. Whereas the *Varna* system is fairly uniform to the entire country, the *jati* system is by no means uniform, varying from region to region\(^63\).

In a village, population clearly divides itself into three broad strata: the Brahmins, the non-Brahmins and the Adi Dravidas (Scheduled Castes). These Hindu castes have traditionally formed a hierarchy with the Brahmins at the top and the ‘untouchable’ or ‘scheduled caste’ at the bottom. The caste system is very rigid with numerous castes and sub-castes, all graded in a social ranking system. The caste or a sub-caste within it was usually associated with a traditional occupation, although many castes carried on agriculture in addition to their regular occupation. The internal structures of several castes can also differ in terms of how they function and relate to these culturally defined units. There are several spatial components or nesting tiers of

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\(^61\) *Varna* system comprises of four categories, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, and Sudra, which are not four castes as commonly believed but classes or estates.

\(^62\) *Jati* is a caste system whereby a society is divided up into a number of self contained and completely segregated units, the mutual relations between which are ritually determined in a graded scale.

\(^63\) Richard Lannoy; The Speaking tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society; Oxford University Press; 1971
The caste or 'jati' ranking played an important role in the layout of settlements. According to Slater (1918), to maintain the caste system intact, each caste had its own quarters within a settlement. In the villages in the Ramnad District, shepherds, artisans and others occupied their main portions while the untouchables were segregated from the main portions of these villages. They lived in the outskirts of the villages without causing pollution of any sort to the 'clean castes'. Similarly in the Trichinopoly District also each caste had its own streets (P. Subramaniam, 1996). The Brahmin and the Sudra quarters are separate and in the last of these the pallans and pariyans live in separate streets. In villages, unclean castes like pariyans and pallans neither had free access nor were permitted to draw water from the wells, which were exclusively meant for the 'clean castes'. Similarly the 'unclean castes' were prohibited from entering the temples meant for the 'clean castes'. The out castes had their own wells and temples, which the 'clean castes' would not use for fear of pollution. This is also ascertained in Sripuram a Tamil village in Thanjavur District (Andre Beteille 1975) which shows that the physical structure of a village was divided to accommodate different castes in different streets.

Villages and towns are therefore multi-caste communities, with each caste or each small group of similar castes occupying a separate street. Not all castes are found in

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64 Peasant Society in Konku; University of British Columbia.
65 Some South Indian Villages, Madras, 1918
66 Social History of the Tamils (1707-1947); D K Printworld (P) Ltd.; N. Delhi; 1996
67 Trichinopoly is today known as Tiruchirapalli
every town or village. Distribution is discontinuous, and some of the smallest, highly specialised castes are found only in smaller towns. Before and to some extent during the British rule, the castes of a village had designated economic functions in the village establishment, under the authority of the dominant caste\textsuperscript{69}. Correspondingly they held hereditary, differential rights to shares from the produce of the village lands. During the British rule, with the gradual development of capitalist relations, castes lost their legal rights in village produce and some occupations slowly changed. In the pre Independence era the members of a caste, or in some cases of a sub caste within the caste, might eat together, enter each other’s households, touch others of the same sex, and share a relatively egalitarian social life. Among castes, and to a lesser degree among those sub- castes of a caste that were ranked in relation to one another, rules of ritual pollution obtained. For example, a member of a lower caste might not eat with one of a higher caste, touch him, enter his family’s kitchen, or in some cases even penetrate his house or his street. Many other prohibitions associated with pollution existed and this is addressed by untouchability legislation after the 1950s. By the 1950s castes had also become partly disembedded from the economic system and the ritual rules governing their relations were challenged.

It can be therefore concluded that the social system, which till the end of the nineteenth century was a relatively closed one, - different elements are combined in the same way- has since then become increasingly open- elements are recombined in diverse ways. In the traditional sense positions in the class system and the power structure did not exist independently of caste to any significant extent, and positions in the caste structure were immutable and could be acquired only by birth. In the relatively open system, power has shifted from one set of dominant castes (the Brahmins) to another (the non-Brahmins). It is still true that being a landowner or a member of the dominant caste provides one with certain advantages. But they do not completely determine the positions in the political system, which are now open to

\textsuperscript{69} E. Kathleen Gough; Essay on Caste in a Tanjore village in Aspects of Caste in S India, Ceylon and N. W. Pakistan: edited by E R Leach; Cambridge University Press 1960.
increasingly wider sections of society. Thus the power structure has become relatively autonomous although again it is closely linked to both caste and class (Andre Beteille 1975). In many villages of Tamilnadu and India the Hindus are still numerically dominant. Christians, Muslims, and members of the other non-Hindu religions also form castes that are ranked in relation to one another and to major Hindu castes, although rules of ritual pollution are less strictly observed by non-Hindus.

For the understanding of any aspect of the elementary social life of the Tamils, it would seem essential to have some knowledge of their system of kinship. Among the various institutions that compose rural society, the joint family unit has been its very foundation and thus the most important. A small part of the Indian village still remains a cluster of joint families, though due to a number of historic-economic causes, the joint family has been steadily disintegrating and fast disappearing. As early as 1950 only 15-20% of the families were joint families, as per the survey done by Kathleen Gough (1955) in the villages of Thanjavur district. In some cases the *kudumbham* as the family is called is not only composed of the family but frequently includes distant relations. Another essential characteristic of the rural family is that the family unit forms a single economic unit, whatever the occupation. All members of the family are engaged in the occupation whether agricultural or craft based and work is distributed mainly on the lines of age and sex distinctions. In agricultural occupation the property is commonly held and managed by the eldest member of the family. Thus the interdependence of the members of the rural family and the dependence of its individual members are far greater than in any other context. Another striking feature of the rural family is that its members are all engaged in work connected with the household and therefore spend more time with each other.

70 E. Kathleen Gough; The social structure of a Tanjore village in India’s villages; edited by M. N. Srinivas; Asia Pub. House; 1955
During the last one hundred and fifty years, the traditional joint family and the familistic rural framework have been undergoing a qualitative transformation. Its economic homogeneity based upon a single cumulative economic activity of its members has declined. The joint family property tends to be disrupted since its individual adult members demand its partitioning. Being engaged in increasingly different occupations, they earn independent separate incomes, which they retain as their own. Thus from a massive joint family composed of members belonging to a number of generations, the family is increasingly shaping as a small nucleated unit.

In a rural area the *kudumbham* is the basic commensal group and is simultaneously the basic unit in all-kin networks. By definition it is built around the hearth of a married couple. A non sanguine female who cooks for a man in his household or territory is thus, by definition, his wife. A man who kept a woman without marrying her would not expect her to cook for him. In such a situation, the man and the woman would continue to eat food prepared on the hearth of their official marriage partners, or in the kitchen of a member of their family of origin. If three or four generations of people are clustered together then their eating habits determine whether they are a single *kudumbham* or several. If a man eats regularly with his parent’s *kudumbham* then he belongs to it. If he eats separately with a sexual partner and her children then he has formed a separate household. In the broadest sense, the term *kudumbham* can also refer to all of a man’s closest relatives.

The number of joint households in any village are on the decline and are roughly between 15% to 20% of the number of households that dwell in a village. Brenda E. F. Beck has illustrated this in the early 70s through the survey of villages in the Konku region, Tamilnadu. Also in the same region the percentage of joint

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71 The Tamil word for family is *kudumbham*

72 Brenda E. F. Beck; 1972

73 Konku region is one of the five traditional regions in Tamilnadu and is located to the western regions of the state at the foothills of the Niligiri Mountains.
families in Brahmin or in orthodox higher social groups were higher as these families are imbued with the teachings of India's classical literature which places strong emphasis on family harmony with close kin and on respect for elders. The break-up of the joint family as seen in these villages first started with the partitioning of the kitchen followed by a separation of living quarters and lastly the division of the family property.

According to Baden Powell (1896) a study of the economic structure reveals that the original Dravidian type of village existent in South India consisted of several families each constituting a separate land holding unit, but having certain bonds of local union and kept together under the rule of an hereditary village-chief. Each village group thus contained a small number of household or family holdings, the holdings being larger or smaller as the means and the requirements of each family suggested. This form of village organisation is the 'ryotwari' village. These villages were a self contained community attracting to them a body of resident craftsmen and menials. They were not paid by the job, but were employed by the village on a fixed remuneration, sometimes a bit of rent free land, sometimes by small payments at harvest (grain fee), as well as by customary allowances. Each was also given a home site in the village, or in a group outside it forming a sort of a suburb. The list of artisans varies in different parts, though of course some being indispensable were found in all cases, like the barber, potter, carpenter, washer man, etc. A headman, whose office was hereditary, looked after the governance of the village. But when kingdoms came into being, the ruler introduced into the village structure a sort of a second headman who overshadowed the original chief, as he was necessarily a literate and kept accounts. This office of the village accountant – kanaku pillai, also came to have a hereditary status and both were officially recognised.

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74 Baden Powell; The Indian village community- Studies in Indian History; Cosmo Pub.; 1896 Republished 1977

75 The word derives from 'ryot' who is an individual holder of land.

76 Kanaku pillai is the Tamil word for Village Accountant
The other type of villages owned by co-sharing families or groups of families were the growth under special circumstances and certainly did not represent any universal custom of land holding. This system of land holding was common in the Aryan culture in North India. In the state of Tamilnadu some such exceptional villages existed. Such villages in fact consisted:

(i) Largely of *agraharams*, or villages held on hereditary grants to *Brahmins*. They are especially numerous in districts, which had been the demesne of the ancient kingdoms of *Chola* and *Pandya*. These *Brahmin* communities held villages sometimes *samudayam* (undivided), sometimes and more usually divided (*arudi-karat*).

(ii) A certain number of villages held by secular caste men, appear in the districts of Tanjore, Trichinopoly and Tirunelveli and probably Madurai.

(iii) The largest and the most important group is found in part of the country known as *Tondai- mandalam* - Chingleput and the adjoining district of Arcot - held by *Vellalar* caste men.

These villages probably at their very first foundation had families, which were more closely connected by clan ties than they are now. There certainly were some distinctly shared villages still in existence in 1790-1814; though their status had been much impaired, even in districts where they were most clearly in evidence (Chingleput and Arcot districts), while in other districts only traces of this form of tenure could be found. Today joint holdings of village properties are still in

77 Baden-Powell’s information is drawn largely from Revenue and Settlement Records as early as 19th century from the editions of the Gazettes of various states.

78 Tanjore is presently known as Thanjavur.

existence in the Nilgiri Mountains, where tribal law and custom have prevailed over the years in spite of change and development.

The nature of revenue system which early governments adopted in dealing with villages greatly influenced their solidarity. When the old custom of State grain share was quietly followed out, the headman managed the whole, and every holder in the village knew what he had to contribute. These villages were compact groups and the social organisation was complete - the hereditary headman with his ex-officio hereditary holding of land, the village accountant, and the regular staff of village artisans and menials paid by grain fees. But in course of times, when this system, with its natural complications caused by deductions and allowances on this account, and the practice arose of fixing lump sums in cash, for which various speculators contracted, elements of oppression were introduced. When the government of the village by its own headman was interfered with; lands were sold or mortgaged to bankers and others who advanced; or were security, for the revenue. The old order was thus upset, lands abandoned and the original holder ejected.

Landholding in the middle of the twentieth century was held by a mirasdar (landowner) and land ownership was called the mirasi. They were lands owned privately by individuals or, in the case of ancestral lands, jointly held by a man and his heirs in the patrilineal line. The mirasdar could grow whatever crops he wished or leave the land fallow. He and his family did not work on their own lands as their social status did not permit them to do so, but leased out lands to cultivating tenants who paid him revenue. Large landed estate owners were the zamindars and these land holding groups controlled the economy of the village. The cultivating tenants were at their mercy. Higher caste groups normally held zamindari estates. Brahmins were given 'inams' or royal grants of land of considerable size.
Today the original status of landownership given to the Brahmins and a few higher caste groups has nearly disappeared. These zamindari estates and private inam estates were abolished shortly after the Independence of India under the Madras Estates Act of 1948. Under this act, the government in return for substantial compensation confiscated inam and zamindari rights. Lands, which were rented or leased by ryots from the zamindars and inamdars changed hands. The ryots became owners of land and they paid revenue to the government becoming landowners in their own right. Inamdars and zamindars were permitted to keep the remaining lands subject to government revenue and thereby came under the general category of landowners with reduced estates. Temples and educational institutions that had previously owned inam rights were allotted lump sum as compensation from the government, roughly equivalent to their former incomes from their inam rights. These public establishments and their servants came to be paid annual salaries by the government.

Today these privileged classes of people no longer have economic control over their tenants and labourers. As early as the late 60s over one third of lands had been sold by the impoverished landowners to more prosperous traders and merchants in nearby towns. Many migrated temporarily to urban centres in pursuit of other professions and better jobs. Their lands were sold or leased out and they made a small profit by collecting rent. Besides this, people of other caste groups managed to buy land which they cultivated themselves. Only around 20% of the lower caste groups work as bonded labourers for payment in kind. Even these people are obliged to receive part of the payment in cash. Villages have thus emerged from a relatively closed, stationary system with a feudal economy and co-operation between the ranked

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80 A type of a very large landed estate.
81 Inam estates were royal grants
82 An individual landowner.
83 Kathleen Gough E.: Rural Sociology in India; 1969
caste groups in ways ordained by law- religious and otherwise, to a relatively ‘open’ changing system governed entirely by secular law.

The distribution of power is somewhat more difficult to characterise in formal terms. For one thing, power is located not only in corporate groups such as castes or legally defined entities such as classes but also in a variety of informal associations. There are two Panchayats\(^\text{84}\) in a village one is statutory and the other customary or traditional. The first is the *Village Panchayat* which was reorganised under the Madras Panchayat Act 1950 and the Madras Panchayats Act, 1958. Under the latest act the village panchayat is integrated into the three tiered structure of the *Panchayati Raj*. The Panchayat has a president, Vice-President and Secretary. The village panchayat is responsible for the repair maintenance of roads and other public utilities, lighting, sanitation and so on. Its financial resources are meagre but membership of it has many advantages as it provides access to government officials and important politicians. The President of the village Panchayat is a member of the Panchayat Union Council, which looks after the governance of 5–10 villages and has superior resources and therefore is a more powerful organ.\(^\text{85}\) The second panchayat is confined to the *cheri*; its jurisdiction is limited to the Adi Dravidas (untouchables) and its decisions are not legally binding; it is nonetheless an important instrument of social control. The financial resources of this body are limited since it does not enjoy statutory rights or taxation. A village administrative office with a Village Administrative Officer in charge maintains land and revenue records, population and census data, looks after developmental activities, runs schools, mid day meals and health care programmes. Though land and social reform have removed many impediments to the development of the village and the up-lift of the poor, village economy is still shackled by the problems of caste and the unequal distribution of resources.

\(^\text{84}\) Local administrative body

\(^\text{85}\) Madras Panchayat Act, 1958
The culture of the rural people is predominantly religious. Religion in rural areas is practised in a number of ways. (Richard Lannoy, 1971)\textsuperscript{86} One of the ways of practice is through prayer. The individual is enjoined to offer prayer to various deities at home as well as outside. At home the family offers prayers at the family altar. The family altar is most commonly found in an alcove- \textit{puja}\textsuperscript{87} - within the main living space of the house sometimes occupying the entire wall space, or provided within the kitchen. In the houses of the affluent and in that of the Brahmin community where worship is a part of daily ritual the altar is provided in a separate room called the \textit{puja} room.

Every caste generally worships a separate deity and maintains, if possible, caste temples where the deity is installed. Further a street or locality in the village has its own deity, and there is a village temple in which the village god is installed. Sacrifice is another way of worship in which a variety of sacrificial acts are performed ranging from sprinkling a few drops of water and offerings of food to offering an animal to the deities worshipped. Within the dwelling the forms of sacrifice involve simple offerings of food on festive and auspicious occasions and thus the kitchen plays an important part in the various rituals and together with the \textit{puja} is considered sacred.

One of the significant features of the life of the rural people is its meticulous domination, even in details, by rituals. The conception of purity has been elaborated in the past Indian society to such an extent that it became a veritable principle. Rituals are the religious means by which purity of the individual and the social life becomes guaranteed. These rituals are associated with most of the life activities of the rural people. A ritual is prescribed whenever the individual or the

\textsuperscript{86} The Speaking tree: A Study of Indian Culture and Society; Oxford University Press; 1971

\textsuperscript{87} \textit{puja} means prayer in all Indian languages and is the name of the space/ room within the house where worship is done.
social group initiates an activity even though the activity may be, like food taking, repeated in future. For example, before an individual Brahmin starts consuming food in the dish he is required to draw a magic circle round the dish and apportion some of the food to the God or Gods. Besides there are rituals prescribed for a number of such ordinary mundane and secular activities. There is a bath ritual, an occupational ritual, rituals connected with house building and house occupation, separate rituals when a farmer sows or reaps the harvest. Rituals have been prescribed for auspicious days and also for the start of a new season. In fact the life of the rural human is a succession of rituals corresponding to a succession of activities he is engaged in from morning to night, from month to month and year to year, almost from birth to death. In fact, it can be remarked that it is very difficult to locate in the Hindu society where religious observance end and secular practices begin.

It is important here to state the importance of the village temple in the life of the rural people. The temple has remained through the ages as a place of worship and prayer but also as the main centre and initiator of village activities. The temple was also associated with education and did philanthropic and social work in the village. The temple organised collective social and religious functions. The temple also embodied and was the guardian of all traditional culture, literary and artistic. It was the source of ethical values, which regulated the life of the village people and played an important part in the economic life of the village. The temple serves as a social centre and even village gossip is largely carried on within the precincts or the periphery of the temple. Public meetings are generally held near the temple since it is the most significant and spacious place in the village. Besides the village temple there are a rich variety of other temples in a village. There are caste and sub-caste temples as well as temples consecrated to deities worshipped by the village people in common with the entire Hindu community as a whole. There are also temples for the worship of deities of specific religious cults and temples where local village deities are enshrined.
Other ritual and practices are also outlined in early Sangam poetry. One of them is the *kolam* or the ritual floor designs that are drawn on the floor of the average home on festive occasions. These geometrical patterns, traditionally made of rice flour and laid on a moist, dung-base surface, are always made by women as a daily ritual. They are also commonly drawn in doorways or under windows. No overt explanation is given for their use, except that they are thought decorative and generally auspicious. However, these maze-like designs, which are drawn as part of everyday ritual may have, once been thought to trap malevolent influences like that might otherwise enter the house and attack a place where ceremonies are performed. (Layard 1937)\textsuperscript{89}

These floor designs appear to be based on a core pattern employing a square\textsuperscript{90} oriented to the cardinal points of space, a ritual *mandala* invoking the moon and the sun. The basic shape is usually marked by four corner dots and or four mid points. One additional point is added to locate the centre. The points are laid first and then the space is outlined. Slowly each point becomes ‘trapped’ or contained by a series of lines drawn around it. Finally the centre is filled in. The four or eight points for such drawings serve to mark the basic directions of space while the central point serves as a sort of cosmic mid point for the whole. (Brenda E F Beck 1976)\textsuperscript{91} These ritual designs are representations of space in the ceremonial context in the home and are given a general festive significance. Special *kolams* are often used on designated occasions like Pongal, a harvest festival to the Sun God. These *kolams* in conjunction with other rituals act as a catalyst in the renewal of life forces in the house accompanied by a removal of all that is bad and unwanted.

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\textsuperscript{88} The Hindu temple; George Mitchell;  
\textsuperscript{89} Folklore XLVIII  
\textsuperscript{90} The squares simply multiplied for large designs.  
\textsuperscript{91} The symbolic merger of body, space and cosmos in Hindu Tamilnadu; Contributions to Indian Sociology; Vol. 10 No.2
Apart from this there are very many ritual practices associated with house building. These are outlined in the classical texts such as the *Manasara* and the *Mayamata*. The dwelling (veedu) is more than just a building and viewed as an organic space, a mini universe subject to both good and bad energies. The closing of space with a wall and roof to form a house has the effect of projecting the pulsating cosmic forces into that space in a miniature form. Hence a number of rituals are conducted when beginning to build and daily rituals are performed to sanctify the house. These house-building rituals done by *stapathis* (non-Brahmin priests) are done traditionally to ensure that the house will be harmonious, fertile, peaceful and auspicious for the householders as well as structurally sound. They consist of:

(i) Testing the soil: squaring the compound (as the universe is perceived as square) and locating the house in the proper position according to the calculations of the *stapathis*.

(ii) Planting of a stem on the ground before the construction. If it sprouts it is a sign that the house will provide a fertile environment.

(iii) Conducting a special ceremony in the corner of the house to mark the beginning of the foundation. The four directions are appeased, the bad spirits are removed and apologies offered for disturbing the earth- *Bhoomi puja*

(iv) Conducting ceremonies at the installation of the main door, and subsidiary doors- *Vasakaal puja*

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92 *Manasara* is a Sanskrit text in eleven manuscripts, written by Agasthya devoted to the science of architecture. The work has been rendered into English by P. K. Archarya as the “Architecture of the *Manasara*” published by the Oxford University Press, 1963.

93 This Classical text written by Maya in 400 AD has an English translation done by Bruno Dagens; Sitaram Bhartia Institute of Scientific Research.
Conducting a ceremony at the installation of the main beam, and the commencement of the roof- *Kubera puja*

Finally the *Grahapravesham*- a ceremony to purify the house and invoke prosperity before the house owner moves in. With all this, the house becomes ready for occupancy and can function as a dwelling.

These rituals are performed to propitiate a being called *Vastupurusha* who resides in the ground. The dwelling itself is generally fashioned after man- the *Vastupurusha* or the spirit residing over the ground. This is outlined in the *Vastusastra*[^94], which says that *Vastupurusha* is the spirit encompassing the universal space as well as the designed space. Vastupurusha is graphically portrayed face down in the square as shown in the figure with the head in the north east corner. The square is translated into various grids, which is called the Vastupurusha mandala. Reclining on his left arm, he faces the east, hence an eastern orientation is preferred. Eight deities preside over their specific territory and the central point is auspicious and sacred, representing the lord of the cosmos, Brahma. Corners are more vulnerable as it is believed that the evil spirits guards them. The *Vastupurusha Mandala* is therefore the horizontal space confined within the boundaries and which represents the three dimensional universe in a two-dimensional form.[^95] Thus the dwelling itself is constructed on the model of the human body.

Besides there are other ways in which Hindu religious thought attempts to link the human body to the structure of the dwelling through the many details. [^96] For example the niches on either side of the entrance door where lamps are lit correspond to the eyes of the man, the windows correspond to the nasal cavities and the central

[^94]: *Vastusastra* gives broad concepts and principles involved in the construction and design of edifices and is outlined in the classical treatises like the *Mayamata*, *Manasara*, *Silparatna*, etc..

[^95]: Traditional Architectural forms of the Malabar coast; Dr. Ashalatha Thampuran; 2001

[^96]: C. P. Venkatarama Aiyar, Town planning in Ancient India, 1987
The concepts of the Hindu house as a universe in miniature, subject to good and evil forces, which must be controlled, and with all its corresponding auspicious and inauspicious, sacred and vulnerable areas is also contained in the written texts of the *Vastu Sastras* such as the Manasara and their abridged Tamil version the Manaiyadi Sastra. Perpendicular axes lying north-south and east-west divide the plan into four quarters. The central point at which the axes converge is the place of the focusing of energies. A perfectly square plan will cause these energies to be exaggerated in quantity and is thus considered beneficial only in places occupied by those capable of its control, for example within a temple. The rectangle is thus advised for a residential building. Besides, the entrance to the house should face any one of the four cardinal directions. The intermediate directions are to be avoided. If the site extends from the north to south the entrance should be on the north; if the site extends from the east to west then the entrance should be on the east. The door of the entrance should be fixed on the left side of the threshold. The entrance should not be higher level than the inner apartments. The level of the house should gradually rise from the main entrance. These are some of the dictates of the Vastusastra with respect to dwelling.

Caste and ritual order, rituals and practices and social hierarchies have created social and spatial distances in not only the way the dwelling is configured but also the villages of which they are a part. However other physical characteristics also have a bearing on the nature of settlement. It is important here to examine the literature in this context. Classical texts tell us how village sites were chosen. Caste and ritual order, rituals and practices and social hierarchies have created social and spatial distances in not only the way the dwelling is configured but also the villages of which they are a part. However other physical characteristics also have a bearing on the nature of settlement. It is important here to examine the literature in this context. Classical texts tell us how village sites were chosen.

C. P. Venkatarama Aiyar, *Town planning in Ancient India*, 1987
(i) The land had to be fairly level and high enough to be free from floods during the rains. This is such a common feature that it usually does not impress itself on one at first sight. The surface conditions near a village-the lie of land round about it is an important controlling element in its life and activities.

(ii) The land had to have good water supply in close proximity. Water required in the first instance for drinking and washing for man and beast was also required for irrigation, for the rituals of temples and for daily ablutions by the Brahmans. It is interesting to note that many agraharams rose usually along the banks of rivers or near big tanks since the Brahmin population living in them required a good perennial supply of water for ritual purposes almost throughout the year. In fact the size and wealth of the village depended almost entirely on the abundant and steady supply of water for irrigation purposes almost throughout the year.

(iii) The fertility of the land to be cultivated was yet another criteria.

Enayat Ahmed (1987) has demonstrated that villages in India are a sort of natural growth within their physical and cultural settings. Although they do not possess well-defined shapes and a distinct internal plan, there is considerable arrangement both in the internal structure and external outline of the villages, which is very clearly related to the nature of their site and cultural features. There is a unmistakable connection between the configuration of the site, surface water (River, canal, tank or pond, well), the nature of the soil, cultivation, groves and the shape of the fields on the one hand and the patterns of settlements on the other hand. Village cart tracks, roads, temples, squares, etc. are intimately linked to the structure of the village. The state of village insecurity in the past and the social make up of the village are also significant factors in the development of the villages. (Ref. Plate No.4)

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98 Enayat Ahmed, Indian Village Patterns, Contributions to Indian Geography: Rural Geography, pp 83-93, Heritage Publishers, N. Delhi, 1987
PART PLAN OF LUDIA: A VILLAGE IN RAJASTHAN

SCATTERED PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT

ELEVATION

A CLUSTERED SETTLEMENT

COMPACT PATTERN OF SETTLEMENT

SETTLEMENT PATTERN

SOURCE:
Enayat Ahmed; Indian Village Patterns; Contributions to Indian Geography

PLATE: 4
The most common village pattern in India where compact nucleated settlements occur is roughly rectangular, one of the main reasons being, the shape of the cultivated fields. The unit of land measure- 'bigha', generally based on a square unit has resulted in a similar field pattern whose boundaries generally run north-south or east-west and are some sort of a rectangle. Village paths and cart tracks, which run on the boundary of the fields usually, conform to the field pattern. The rectangular form was also the most ploughable shape. In a rural environment everything was subservient to cultivation and thus the dwellings adjacent to these fields conformed to the lines dictated by the fields. The villages in Tamilnadu are no exception to this.

Compactness, which is a result of various other factors, required that the houses lie as close to each other as possible. In the absence of a fortifying wall the most convenient form was the clustering of the dwellings effected in some sort of a rectangle. Another factor was the belief about house orientation. The houses were built in such a way that it conformed to the north-south and east-west axes. This has been brought about with reference to ancient texts on the science of building. Combined with the need for aggregation and given the rectangular shape of the house such an orientation of the dwelling results in a rectangular form of a village. The rectangular shape is also a heritage of the ancient past brought out by reference to standard village plans in Manasara where eight village plans are described all of which, are rectangular.

The checkerboard or a rough gridiron pattern is a feature of some rectangular villages. In some cases the rectangle becomes a square where the village consists of four distinct blocks lying at the intersection of two main roads. The hollow rectangle/square is a variant of the rectangular type in which there is a space in the centre of the village where the temple is located. Sometimes this space was left open to host a weekly market or a fair, or more simply there was a pond or grove at
the notional centre. Another frequent form within the rectangular pattern is of the elongated village where one of the axes of the village is markedly longer than the other. This could be more the influence of the site. Natural or cultural forces could have either restricted the growth of the village in some directions or fostered its extension in others. Natural elements like a sea or river, elevated ridges of mountains, etc. could dictate the linearity of the settlement.

Among cultural features it could be a road or a cart track along which the settlement may have developed, or a village with a trading class status, etc. that influenced the shape and resulted in an elongated pattern. The other patterns of settlement like the circular and the fan shapes are related to the needs of defence and result from the peculiarities of site. The growth of the village however depends on a number of other considerations and additional advantages of good communication and a central and strategic location.

In the contemporary context the village is an aggregate of a large number of built structures such as dwellings, animal sheds, rice mills, wells, the primary school, small retail shops, temple and shrines and community buildings. The houses vary in type even in the same village, from flimsy one room huts made by the occupants themselves out of locally gathered materials to substantial dwellings with four to five rooms, made largely with purchased, manufactured building materials.100 The predominant tenure pattern in rural settlements is owner-occupancy. “Ownership” may mean no more than that the occupant built the house, with or without receiving any formal title or deed. Today the renting of houses or even portions of houses is also becoming a common occurrence in the villages to the villagers themselves or to people from outside the area who are living in the settlement temporarily. In villages even the poorest people manage to build some type

99 The text referred to is the Manasara
100 Jon Lang, Madhavi and Miki Desai; Search for Identity-India 1880 to 1980; Architecture and Independence
of shelter, which, even if it is not a permanent structure, provided some security of tenure.

Many dwellings and even entire villages, lack reliable water supplies and sanitary methods of waste disposal\textsuperscript{101}. Water is drawn from private and public wells, tanks or rivers if within accessible limits, common bore wells and sometimes through a piped water system with common taps. The quality of water available in a village varies, but is usually untreated. Sanitation problems exist in many villages because existing facilities are not properly maintained; they are affordable to only a few and because people dislike latrines and will not build or use them. Traditionally as it exists in most villages, a small but enclosed space is used for bathing and urinating. The water is simply allowed to absorb into the ground, evaporate or run out in a small opening made in the wall. All calls of nature take place in designated fields.

Besides dwellings and related structures, like animal sheds, granaries, wells and latrines, villages often contain a number of community facilities like a school, a few shops, community spaces and temples. Sometimes villages often contain a limited health facility like a dispensary but many villagers have to travel to nearby towns for better health care. Many villages have at least one retail shop selling a few groceries and other common household goods. Shops to supply rations at a subsidised rate have been established by the government. These shops come under the Public Distribution Scheme (PDS) of the government where provisions against a Family Card are issued to each household.\textsuperscript{102} Family cards are issued based on the size of the family as well as the total income of the family. Many villagers shop on a daily basis as they cannot afford large cash outlays at any one time and also the prices at these shops tend to be higher than in nearby towns, because of extra transport and the low volume of sales. On rare occasions, when they can afford to purchase clothes or

\textsuperscript{101} Source of information: Public Works Department and Panchayat office

\textsuperscript{102} Source of information: Panchayat Union office
cooking utensils, the villagers usually travel to nearby towns. Itinerant vendors serve some villages.

Some villages of moderate size support primary schools; but the existence of schools does not guarantee the quality of education. The only motivation for children to attend primary school is the Free Noon Meal Scheme implemented by the Government of Tamilnadu. Besides primary school children are also provided with a free set of uniforms as well as footwear. The seasonal character of agricultural work results in high seasonal school absenteeism in many villages. During the planting and harvesting times, the children are needed either in the fields or in the home to care for the younger children so that their mothers can go out to work. Higher education and vocational training can be pursued in nearby towns and cities.

The streets in villages are most often unpaved, except for a few main roads and are not very well maintained. Streetlights are rare and only provided on main roads. Streets form the loci of many activities. Besides providing for movement of pedestrians and vehicles, they form spaces of social interaction and are sometimes used for drying grain, to display merchant’s wares and as children playgrounds. Bus services are provided for most villages and private means of transport is most often walking, and the use of bicycle and bullock drawn carts.

Energy from fuel is mainly used for cooking and lighting. The most commonly used fuel for cooking is wood used in a traditional ‘choola’, which is installed at the floor level of the dwelling. However the use of kerosene lit stoves and the use of cooking gas is seen in the houses of the more affluent families changing the methods of cooking. Traditionally cooking is done squatting on the floor but the introduction of stoves for cooking in the more affluent homes has resulted in elevated

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103 Source of information: Panchayat Union office

104 ‘Choola’ refers to the traditional mud hearth provided on the floor and fueled with firewood.
cooking platforms. The amount of forested areas has depleted because of the continual use of wood as an energy source and families buy firewood from suppliers who can collect and transport it. Attempts to popularise the use of gobar gas as a substitute for wood has failed because of social inhibitions and hence non-acceptance attributed mainly to the use of fuel generated from human and animal excreta for cooking. Most villages are electrified and electricity is used mainly for lighting and operating pumps.

Whereas the sociology of the Tamil village, its economic characteristics, the caste and power structure, etc., has been the subject of interest of many scholars, in the field of habitat and settlement not much researched or documented material is available. Ancient and classical texts have been analysed to look at the various cosmic influences and ritual practices that go into house building. But the study of the physical characteristics of the rural house in Tamilnadu and the spatial organisation and the shaping of social relations of the same has only caught the attention of scholars in the passing. As mentioned earlier only the high style vernacular has been extensively written about but these books engage primarily in architectural style and theory. A documentation of rural dwellings of the common man in Tamilnadu does not exist. A lot of contemporary study and writing on the rural house in Tamilnadu have attempted to categorise rural house. But most follow the classification done by the National Building Organisation (NBO) which differentiates between two basic house categories- kutch and pucca, and several additional sub-categories. These categories apply to houses throughout India; the definitions have been made on the basis of the wall and roofing materials predominantly used.

105 NBO and ESCAP handbook; 1984 p.21; see section 2.1 and 7.2
Table 1 House types as defined by building materials (NBO Classification)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pucca</th>
<th>Semi-pucca</th>
<th>Kutcha</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wall</td>
<td></td>
<td>Serviceable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Burnt bricks</td>
<td>Wall</td>
<td>Wall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Burnt bricks</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>Concrete</td>
<td>Stone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>Stone</td>
<td>ACC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal Sheets</td>
<td>Cement</td>
<td>RBC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metal sheets</td>
<td>RCC</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mixed materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mud</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thatch</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thatch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pucca houses are built with relatively stable or permanent materials such as bricks for the walls and tiles for the roof. Kutcha houses are made of less durable or permanent materials like mud and thatch. They are considered unserviceable if only thatch is used. Semi pucca refers to a mixture of kutcha and pucca materials.

According to R. B. Mandal (1979) due to lack of a scientific and technological approach in the construction of houses, the basic form and type is influenced by the availability of building materials, adaptation to physical conditions in different localities and its use in response to physical and human agencies. Therefore in order to classify these dwellings and map their distribution only a basic classification is possible. Houses can be classified according to the physical factors, build and architecture, accommodation space, sanitation, occupancy rate, density of buildings, etc. Thus in the classification of house types, their size and shape, building materials used and methods of construction become important, while houses differ in their architectural planning and building materials according to the choice and means

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106 Introduction to rural settlements; Concept Publishing Company; N. Delhi- this is a reader in rural settlement geography.
of their individual owners. Mandal classifies rural dwellings according to housing structure, their functional importance and the economic standard of the people into four types:

1. Rudimentary house  
2. Compact house type  
3. Straggling house type and  
4. Vertical house type.

Though R. B. Mandal goes on to say that the size and nature of dwellings is primarily determined by cultural factors he means those that can be quantified such as economic conditions and the size of the family. He also suggests that classification of type can be done according to size, building materials and shape. Here again it is based on those that be quantified and are tangible.

One of the earliest books on Rural Housing in Tamilnadu is by V. Rengarajan\textsuperscript{107}. The monograph written by him covers rather expansive ground under the following issues:

a) determination of a physical features of a housing program  
b) transformation of the physical qualities into price or value terms, and  
c) Application of a norm as a basis for deciding on how many houses, when and where.

The purpose of the study was to arrive at certain tentative conclusions with regard to rural housing policy in relation to factors mentioned above, that is, the physical qualities of housing needs in rural areas and their costing in rather broad order of magnitude. What was generally aimed at is a set of policy recommendations

\textsuperscript{107} V. Rengarajan; Rural Housing in Tamilnadu; Sangam publishers © madras Institute of Development Studies; December 1976
with regard to rural housing and not its social valuation. Therefore the categorisation of the various house typologies in Tamilnadu falls into two very broad classes:

(i) labourer's house and
(ii) ryot's house.

According to this classification the former is usually built of mud and has a roof of palmyra thatch. In front is a verandah or *pial*\(^{108}\) and the interior consists of a single room. The dwelling of the average ryot is usually built of mud and thatch and in some case tile. The *pial* is raised higher than the ground and the interior consists of four or five rooms opening on to verandah, which surrounds a small courtyard. One of the rooms is used as a kitchen, one as a storeroom for grain and other assets and the rest as sleeping rooms.

The houses of the richer villagers are much the same form though the rooms may be somewhat larger and more numerous while the courtyard may contain a well. Houses of more than one storey are not numerous and all the houses are ill lighted and ill ventilated. Window openings are either few and narrow or totally absent. But they provide accommodation, floor space or living room reasonably required for its inmates. This is a very broad and general classification, which attempts to describe in a nutshell some of the physical characteristics of the rural house.

One of the more exhaustive and recent efforts to study the rural house in Tamilnadu has been done by Bernhard Glaser\(^{109}\) as a result of a collaboration between two academic institutions- Indian Institute of Technology, Chennai and the Social science Research Centre Berlin (WZB) in W. Berlin. The project was designed to promote improvements in housing technology for the low-income rural residents,

\(^{108}\) *pial* is otherwise called the *thinnai*, denoting the raised front platform in front of the house.
keeping in view the social, environmental as well as technical aspects and with particular reference to geographic conditions in Tamilnadu. The goals of the collaborative project were:

♦ To help improve the technical quality of houses by means of better, more appropriate materials and building technology.
♦ To contribute to the fulfilment of the socio economic needs of the rural inhabitants.
♦ To ensure that the measure proposed would be environmentally compatible.

To achieve this a study of the socio cultural and building technology and constructional aspects of traditional rural housing was necessary. At the core of the research is a household survey with the aim of identifying needs and wishes of Tamilnadu villagers. Special emphasis was placed on housing requirements and the functions a house should fulfil. Villages for study were confined to 23 villages within a radius of 70 Km around Chennai, specifically in the districts of Chengalpattu (22 villages) and N. Arcot (1 village).

In reviewing the socio cultural and technological aspects of existing traditional housing in these villages Bernhard Glaser draws information about the classification of traditional houses in Tamilnadu by T P Ganesan110 who has categorised the houses based on the layout and space. Prof. T. P. Ganesan again classifies the house into 
kutcha and pucca. The 
kutcha house made of mud walls and thatched roof is of a small rectangular one room (2.40m x 3.60m) and in its extended version has two rooms. Pucca houses according to him also have simple and extended

109 Bernhard Glaser: housing, Sustainable Development and the rural poor- A study of Tamilnadu; sage Publications; 1995
110 Prof. Ganesan T P (1987) Typical village houses in Tamil Nadu (mimeo); Indian Institute of Technology; Chennai. (Prof. T.P. Ganesan draws information from first hand knowledge and personal experience having spent his youth in villages)
versions. The basic type made of burnt country bricks set in mud/lime mortar has a tile roof and is of size 7.80m x 14.10m. In front is a raised platform covered by a lean to roof of thatch or tile and the interior focuses on a small courtyard surrounded by a verandah or multipurpose space. The doors of the house are aligned along a single axis. This pucca house has an extended version in accordance with the size of the family and may have one or more courtyards.

However Bernhard Glaser during his observations in the investigated area follows the classification done by Mathews and Lenz\textsuperscript{111} who have attempted to categorise the rural houses in three villages in the same investigated area. The categorisation is an elaboration of the one done by T P Ganesan and classifies the rural house based on use of certain structural members and building materials in the construction of the type.

1) **Natang hut**- derives from the use of two palm tree posts called natang set up vertically to support the horizontal pole forming the ridge. The walls are of mud and roof of thatch and the house has an approximate area of 200-sq. ft. (20-sq. m.)

2) **Doolum hut**- this is an improvement on the earlier type and derives from the use of two timber beams called doolum placed across the walls to support the ridgepole. The walls are made of burnt bricks and roof of thatch.

3) **Khatri hut**- this less common form derives from the triangular truss known as *khatri* (Literally: scissors) Walls are made of mud or burnt brick and the roof of bamboo poles and thatch.

\textsuperscript{111} Mathews M. S. & C. Lenz; 1986- Report on Housing in Tamil Nadu (mimeo); Indian Institute of Technology, Madras; pp 92-112 (In the villages of Chellam Pattidai, Kovalam Kuppam and Meppur, Chinglepet District)
4] Tiled House- The tiled house has an area of approximately 300-sq. ft. (30-sq. m.) and has walls made of burnt brick in mortar and a sloping roof of country tiles resting on rafters. Mud mortar and cow dung are used for plastering.

5] Flat roofed house- the walls are of burnt brick in cement mortar and have a reinforced concrete roof or Madras terrace. This is a pucca house adapted from urban areas retaining some traditional features.

Other kinds of classification are those done by the government and non-government organisations (NGOs) which reflect the hierarchy of physical conditions of the shelters and the socio economic status of poor families in general and their present needs in particular. One such classification is based on (i) No shelter (ii) shelters- need to be dismantled (iii) shelters- need some structural improvement (iv) shelters- need major repairs (v) shelters- need some additional facilities. This classification is the result of the need to find an immediate solution to the rural housing problem and comes from the serious crisis of housing shortage and silent crisis in housing plan, policy and program. Many NGOs like the Asha Niketan Welfare Centre, Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh; Housing Activities Project (HAP); Baroda Citizens Council, Baroda, Gujarat; Pipla Palli Samiti (PPS), Pipla, W. Bengal; Spiorex India Ltd., Pune, Maharashtra advocate designs based on construction techniques that can effect savings in labour, use indigenous materials and craftsmanship and the use of materials that can give a life span of at least 25 years and do not require continuous maintenance.

One of the pioneering attempts of the Tamilnadu government under the Ministry of Housing to provide housing for the rural poor was the ‘Three million

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113 Madhav Achwal; Voluntary Agencies and Housing; 1979
Housing Project' initiated in 1985. The Chengai Anna district was taken for the pilot project and a survey of 30 villages in this district was undertaken. Implementation of housing projects was undertaken in a few villages near Dindigul, Anna District, during 1986-1989. *Pattas* were provided to villagers and houses were built with self-help. But the focus again was to use indigenous material and build cost-effective houses.

In the Indian context the house relies extensively in the use of external/outdoor space. The need to study the wealth of outdoor spaces in housing units existing in the country and documenting them to arrive at appropriate solutions to existing housing problems was felt by the NBO under the Ministry of Works and Housing of the Government of India. This took the form of a research project *'A study of outdoor space: as a cost-effective extension of indoor space'* with Tamilnadu as the focus of study. The objective of the same was to analyse outdoor spaces, identify their usefulness in today’s context and evolve appropriate designs, which will have a wide application in the field of housing. The occupational structure and the lifestyles of people have a major bearing on the house types and the outdoor space case studies were conducted in and around cities and towns where land is a scarce commodity. As a result of the research type designs were evolved for various income categories without attempting to study the rural vernacular where land is available to a greater extent and open space forms an integral part of the house and its activities. The type designs evolved indeed fulfil the primary objective of the project, arriving at house types with outdoor space as a cost-effective space. But what is overlooked is that there cannot be a universal application of the type as it has to be

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114 The pilot project survey was undertaken by the Center for Human settlements; School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University in May-June 1985 and implementation was undertaken in one of the villages during 1987-1989.

115 *Patta* is the Tamil word for a Title deed standing for ownership of property.

116 This research was undertaken by the Center for Human Settlements, School of Architecture and Planning, Anna University, Chennai; 1989-90
relevant to the context and flexibility in type design is of crucial importance to cater to the cultural needs of the inhabitants.

In Tamilnadu the various panchayat unions have promoted the building of *samathavapurams* in 1996 as part of the Tamilnadu Government scheme to provide low cost self help shelter to the rural and semi urban poor. As many as 150 schemes were completed all over the state by 1999 providing a serviced plot with a minimum shelter. One such *samathavapuram* - Thundlkazhzi located in the Kunrathatootor taluk, Chinglepet district of Tamilnadu, around 25 km from the city of Chennai occupied in 1999 uses a cost-effective design by architect Laurie Baker. However it has not taken into consideration the lifestyle and culture of the people as changes both internal and external are evident. This goes on to highlight the fact that in the absence of enough documented and researched work in the area of rural dwellings no criterion for the design of rural dwellings for the common man exists. Hence cost effectiveness in construction overlooks the possibility of developing a type which is culturally acceptable.

2.2 SUMMARY

The entire gamut of literature on vernacular architecture that has been reviewed shows that in the West scholars have made great strides in not only documenting vernacular styles (Paul Oliver 1997 and others) but also in viewing them against a cultural background. The objective of such work was to arrive at a theoretical framework for the existence of those styles and laying the direction for architectural practice against a cultural and regional background. The emphasis was to link architecture and anthropology to seek a relationship between space and behaviour patterns. Foremost amongst such works are those by Amos Rapoport, Joseph Rykwert, Paul Oliver, Nold Egenter, etc. However much of this work has been limited to traditional societies and primitive cultures. Nevertheless it provides a
guideline and format for research amongst other cultures. Clare Melhuish\textsuperscript{117} (1996) points out that the rise of multi-culturism, globalisation and tourism in the late 20\textsuperscript{th} century has raised many new and fascinating issues, which are relevant to architectural practice. Therefore the study of social institutions and cultural value systems should not be limited to the pre-modern age but should be viewed in the wider perspective.

Jan Peiper (1979)\textsuperscript{118} commented that in India very little consideration has been given to the physical and the spatial aspects of cultural phenomena, such as settlement patterns, urban ritualism, traditional modes of building and culture specific habits related to the built environment. An offshoot of this was that there was a sudden interest in the architecture of traditional societies and the cultural background and physical framework within which they exist. Amongst such works Anthony D. King (1984)\textsuperscript{119} book on the 'Bungalow' not only illustrates how this type of building was the product of a global culture but also lays the method for more comparative studies between cultures and societies with different forms of political economy. Dr. Caroline Ifeka (1987)\textsuperscript{120} states that history outlines only the material aspects of architecture that can be termed hi-style architecture. By studying the houses of the lower caste Christians and Hindus in Goa, she shows that houses are not as literature assumes divorced from society and culture, but in their interior aspects are shaped by values derived from caste as well as class society. Most of the other literature on vernacular styles is a mere classification of house type and inquiry into the causal factors, which have validated their existence. Much of this writing has been limited to the cultures of the north and northwestern parts of India with the Vastu Shilpa Foundation, Ahmedabad under architect B. V. Doshi providing the necessary

\textsuperscript{117} (ed.) Architecture and Anthropology; Architecture Design; No. 124; November 1996

\textsuperscript{118} (ed.) Ritual space in India: studies in Architectural Anthropology; Seminar, Bombay 1979

\textsuperscript{119} Ibid. Page No.18

\textsuperscript{120} Ibid. Page No.24
leadership. However these works provide the background against which further theoretical work could develop.

In the context of the state of Tamilnadu a number of books have been written about traditional buildings but these have been limited to temples, palaces and high style vernacular. Literature on the dwellings of the common man is virtually absent. In the absence of detailed studies of typologies it is first necessary to classify and categorise the rural dwelling against the cultural and contextual background before any theoretical or comparative studies can be done. In view of this it was necessary to examine contemporary writings on the concepts of society and economy, which have their basis in the ancient classical texts belonging to the Sangam age. Besides there was the need to look at various rituals and practices, which have, been dictated both by texts as well as by common practices.

Other contemporary study and writing on the rural house in Tamilnadu have attempted to categorise the rural house but with the objective of quantifying the dwelling in terms of the materials used in its construction and the technology adopted so as to develop cost effective houses for the rural poor. The classification does not examine the rural dwelling against its cultural and contextual background but provides a general categorisation, which can be applied to rural dwellings in any place, and any context. It is thus clear from the literature review that classification has to be context and culture specific and it is this area which requires to be researched and understood. The aim of this thesis is to therefore to look at the rural dwelling in Tamilnadu as architecture, to understand the causes for its existence, and to provide a classification, which in turn will provide valuable clues for the future of the rural habitat and the settlement.