Medical education was one of the curricula. The different types of education imparted to women, temple as part of educating centre of women and the role of teaching in Jainism and Buddhism in promoting women’s education.

“Chola Royal Women and Temple Endowments” in the fifth chapter discuss the royal women donation, other common women donation of land, sheep or goats, utensil, gold, Kasus (coins), perpetual lamp (Nanda Vilakku), Ghee, temple renovation and feeding food supply for festival day.

In the conclusion an evaluation of the multifarious role played by women in various fields at all levels, their successes and failures and a critical examination of different factors that were responsible for their subordination to men between the period 9th to 12th century A.D. have been attempted.

CHAPTER-I

CASTE SYSTEM AND TAMIL SOCIETY UNDER THE CHOLAS

The word “society” denotes a number of individuals lived together. The term “society” is derived from the Latin word “socius” meaning “a companion”. A group people, who is held together or less permanently is often called a “society”. The history of a country is the history of its people. It is enormously wider than the history of their kings and ministers, wars and treaties. Social history deals with the real life of the people in each successive age of the past. Modern trend in historical research is focused on the socio- economic and environment factors, which constitute important aspects of human

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civilization.\textsuperscript{21} Without social history economic history, is barren and political history is unintelligible.\textsuperscript{22} Tamil literature generally imitates life; and the ‘life’ is in a large measure, a social reality. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the literally craftsmen usually leave a record of their social experience.\textsuperscript{23} It is useful to write the social history of the Tamils. It is an acknowledged fact that the Tamil society is noticed for its high antiquity. The Sangam literature besides throwing an appreciable flood of light on different branches of knowledge reflects each and every aspect of the Tamil Society.\textsuperscript{24}

Social history, as K.K.Pillay deems “primarily concern itself with the daily life of the people, the character of family and household implements. It examines hoe the prevalent conditions of war or peace and the general nature of the administration influence the everyday life of the people. It comprise the human as well as the economic relation of different classes to one another, the social stratifications and groups, occupations, craft and traders, the condition of labour and of leisure, the attitude of man to nature, the culture of each age as it arose out of those general conditions of life and reflection of this culture on religion, literature, music, dance, architecture, learning and thought. Intimately connected with these, these appear the history of ideals and aspiration of manners, customs and belief and superstitions.”\textsuperscript{25} Historians in the past have tended to view society in early south India as generally smooth and free from any contradictions. In fact Nilakanta Sastri would go as far as to glorify the ‘political spirit of the time (which)\textsuperscript{21}

\begin{itemize}
\item S.Singaravelu, \textit{Social Life of Tamils}, University of Malaya, 1996, p.23.
\item V.Perumal, \textit{Glimpses of Tamil Culture}, Chidambaram, 1982, p.23.
\item P.Subramanian, \textit{Social History of the Tamils (1707-1947)}. New Delhi, 1994, p.2
\end{itemize}
aimed at securing the harmony of classes, rather than their equality’, and the ‘healthy society, which was free from the glaring economic oppression of one class by another’.  

The Tamil society in the early period was an extension of the Sangam age. It was an unequal society, for it had *Varna, caste, kudi, tribe* and other divisions as its cardinal features. Ideas of pollution, taboo, untouchability, concept of high and low in the birth, etc., kept this society in closed compartments, which were bound together by only certain attitudes. Apart from these, even the men and women were considered very much unequal, the women being put under heavy subjection. In the domestic as well as public sphere, women constantly suffered an inferior position in the society. The medieval society was feudal in character and structure. Monarchy was the system of the day. The Tamil society from the ninth century onwards was ruled by monarchy with imperialistic design.

**SOCIAL STRATIFICATION:**

The people had different modes of living and occupations owing to the topographical division of land were the dominant factors which regulated the lives of the Tamils, of that age their lands called *Tinais*. They are called *Kurinji, Mullai, Marudam, Neithal* and *Paalai*. Hunter lived in the *Kurinji* region, Shepherds in the *Mullai*, Peasants in the *Marudam*, Fisherman in the *Neithal* and the merger of *kurinji*

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and *mullai* areas are called *Paalai*. So, the half of *kurinji* lands and its works and *mullai* area and its works. Their habits and customs, professions and duties, beliefs and worship differed from region to region. Yet they were dependent in one or the other.\(^{30}\)

The most distinctive feature of Tamil caste system was the *Brahmin*, the *Arasan* (king), *Vanigan* (merchant), and the *Vellalar* (peasant), who clearly corresponded to the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and Sudras of Aryan caste system.\(^{31}\) The Sangam classics also mentioned the *Nar Perunkulam*, the *Andanar*, the *Arasan*, the *Vanigar*, and the *Vellalar*.\(^{32}\)

_Tolkappiyar_, a Brahmana by caste who also mentioned about the four castes namely *Andanar, Arasan, Vanigar*, and *Vellalar*.\(^{33}\) From the Tamil literature it’s known that the Tamil country was inhabited by a large number of races. Of them four peculiar group like *Pãnar, Virraliyar, Porunar, Kûttar, Kûttiyar*, Weaver, Potters, *Umamars*, Fisherman and Hunters were lived.\(^{34}\) It is remarkable that although the early Tamil society was tribal one, the people were of very generous. In the Tamil country however the bard began as an individual group to whip up the martial sprit of the soldiers engaged in war and to sing of their victory.\(^{35}\)

Presumably the Brahmins had been an integral part of Tamil society ever since cultural contacts between the Aryans and the Tamils. They were mentioned in every


\(^{32}\) *Purananuru*, 183.

\(^{33}\) *Tolkappiyam*–Porul, 625,626.


text in Sangam literature. They had been ambassadors, priest, ascetics, householders, merchants, judicial advisors. They had played the role of patrons also.\footnote{P.T.Srinivasa Iyengar, \textit{History of the Tamil upto 600 A.D}, New Delhi,1983, p.340.} Early Tamil literature gives no evidence of caste system in Tamilnadu but, the entering of Aryan influence of caste and the development of a more complex in political and economic structure produced a caste system, in some, ways, more rigid than that of the caste system in the north.\footnote{Romila Thaper, \textit{A History of India}, Middlesex, 1966, p.252.}

**CASTE DISCRIMINATION:**

The word “ caste” is a Portuguese word ‘casta’ signifying breed, race or kind, one to describe the social division among the people of Hinduism. Caste is also tacitly and so completely accepted by all, including those who condemned it, that it is everywhere the unit of social action.\footnote{M.N. Srinivas, \textit{Caste in Modern India and Other Essays}, New Delhi, 1962, pp.39-42.} Caste as a primordial tie persists in the midst of change, retaining its traditional endogamy as the basic primary unit beyond the family. The word ‘\textit{jati}’ or caste used in India specific a subdivision of the larger division, ‘\textit{Varna}. \textit{Varna} is believed to have been based on colour or race. In post-Vedic time in north India the four-fold division seems to have appeared.\footnote{K.K.Pillay, \textit{The Caste System in Tamilnadu}, Chennai, 2007, p.2.} In the Dravidian languages (Tamil, Telungu, Kannada, Malayalam), the major caste division is called \textit{Varna} and sub-division called \textit{Jati} which in Tamil is termed as \textit{Kulam}.

**VARNASHRAMA SYSTEM**

\footnote{Dharma Kumar, \textit{Land and Caste in South India}, New Delhi, 1992, pp.55- 56.}
The *Varna system* was not established in ancient India functioned as the larger framework within the society was formed. After, the entering the Aryans in India from Central Asia, their created four *Vedas*. According to the *Rig Veda*, the oldest four *Vedas*, the distinction of the four *Varna*s. That is to say, at the time of Creation, the *brahmana* were born from the mouth of Purusa (*Brahma*), the *Kshatriyas* from His arms, the *Vaisyas* from His thighs, and the *Sudras* from His feet. However, the four *Varna*s were actually established during the middle of the Later Vedic Era (1000-600 B.C.E.), which marked the formation of Aryan *agrarian* society. During this time that the above myth was created and inserted into the *Rig Veda*, the most important scripture of Brahmanism, in order to legitimize the four-*Varna* system\(^4^1\) or caste system. It is believed that the hierarchical caste system with its many attendants of evils was brought into India by the Brahmins. According to *Varnashrama Dharma*, the Indian society was divided into two larger sections, the high and the low castes, or the pure and the polluting castes.\(^4^2\)

The Aryans who were familiar with the conventional system of *Varnashrama Dharma* in North India found an entirely different social set up during their migration to South India. Until their migration, the Tamil people felt free with their respective professions.\(^4^3\) They never thought of their superior or inferior of status or their did not know caste or *Varna* system. Further, the status afforded to the Brahmins by the Tamil kings and the increasing use of Sanskrit forms provided the base for the

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\(^{4^1}\) H. Kotani(ed), *Caste system, Untouchability and the Depressed*, *Japanese Studies on South Asia No.* 1, New Delhi, 1997, p.3.


introduction of the hierarchical organisation of caste in Tamil country and the Tamil society.\textsuperscript{44}

According to the Tolkappiyam, the ancient Tamil social order was much like any other society, priest, merchants, farmers and kings.\textsuperscript{45} In the Tamil country the entire the society divided itself sharply into the Brahminical and Non-Brahminical division which still endures. The \textit{Varna} division, possibly not at all to the \textit{Varnashramadharma} of the classical type, and the rulers were Tamilians professing Kshatriyas customs. Nor the Tamil peasants were Sudras. From king to peasants intermarriage was imaginable without restriction, based on the narrowness of sub-creeds. The Tamil society was divided into four on the basis of profession in ancient times. This is continued in a modified from the Chola-Pandya Age in the Tamil country.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{BRAHMANAS}

The Brahmans were numerically a minority in the society, but at the same time they were the head of the society. The Brahmin community was seemingly steeped in Vedic studies and well-versed in all \textit{sastras}. The \textbf{Brahmanas} are known by various names the term \textit{Brahmana} meant originally one who possessed “\textit{Brahma}”.\textsuperscript{47} The \textit{Brahmanas} meant those who enquire into the Brahman or the absolute one otherwise

\textsuperscript{44} Robert L. Hardgrave, \textit{The Dravidian Movement}, Bombay, 1965, pp.8-11.
\textsuperscript{47} A.L.Basham, \textit{The Wonder that was India}, Delhi, 1967, p.40.
called Philosopher.\textsuperscript{48} Their main occupation, according to the scriptures, teaching, studying, conducting scarifies for their merit of others, giving gift and receiving gifts. There was also expected to be very in the knowledge of the \textit{Vedas, Vedangas, Dharmasastras, Itihasas} and \textit{Purunas}.\textsuperscript{49} In Tamil language there are equivalent words to denote the \textit{Brahmana} such as \textit{Andhanar},\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Parppar},\textsuperscript{51} \textit{Vediyar},\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Vedantar},\textsuperscript{53} the \textit{Mevum Tholilar},\textsuperscript{54} \textit{Bhattar},\textsuperscript{55} \textit{Muppurinulor},\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Pusurar},\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Vedavanar}\textsuperscript{58} and \textit{Shenti Valappor}. Moreover plenty of references are also available to describe their duty or work. Inscriptions reveal that the \textit{Brahmanas} were called as \textit{Vipra} and \textit{dvija}.\textsuperscript{59} These epigraphic were committed to the ideals enshrined in the \textit{Dharmasastras}. The Kasakudi Plates praise the \textit{Brahmanas} as \textit{devas} on the earth,\textsuperscript{60} that means \textit{bhudevah}. Pallava

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{48} N.Subramanian, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.274.
\item \textsuperscript{49} K.Karuppiah, \textit{A Socio-cultural History of the Later Colas: As Gleaned through Epigraphy}, Delhi, 2010, p.44.
\item \textsuperscript{50} \textit{Tolkappiyam}, Marabiyal, 70.
\item \textsuperscript{51} \textit{Purananuru}, 34,7 Porul 75:134.
\item \textsuperscript{52} \textit{Paripadal}, 11:84.
\item \textsuperscript{53} \textit{Thirumalisai}, Trichandam, 9:3-4
\item \textsuperscript{54} \textit{Silappatikaram}, 1 : 29.
\item \textsuperscript{55} \textit{Thirumandiram}, 1-82:4:1.
\item \textsuperscript{56} \textit{Thondaradi Thirumalai},42.
\item \textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ibid.}, 1-81;1-2.
\item \textsuperscript{58} \textit{Ibid.}, 5:398-1.
\item \textsuperscript{59} \textit{S.I.I.}, Vol. II, No.72.
\item \textsuperscript{60} \textit{S.I.I.}, Vol. II, No.73, p.347.
\end{itemize}
Copper Plate mentions the term *devadviji guru urdhoparasevanah* meaning those who nourished the Gods, twice-born and spiritual preceptors.

In the medieval Tamil society, the *Brahmanas* held high esteem. Feeding of the *Brahmanas*, who were well-versed in the Vedas in the temple, was considered an auspicious and meritorious service. Charity-minded people instituted endowment for the feeding of *Brahmanas*. As they were learned in the spiritual lose they formed an indispensable segment of the society. *Bhakti* literary works refer to their spiritual love and their knowledge in Vedas. The *Brahmanas* were mostly engaged in the Vedic studies and teaching. Performing the Vedic sacrifice is described as *muththi* or *Oouthi* and *Iperumvelvi*. The *Brahmanas* enjoyed royal patronage particularly in the post-Sangam age, but they lost it in the Kalabhara period and regained it in the Pallava and the Pandya dominion. They were patronized by the Pallava kings other chieftains. The Pallava rulers were ardent supporters of Hinduism particularly Brahmanism. They patronized *Brahmanas* so called custodians of Hinduism. The *Varnashrama Dharma* dominated during the period in the Tamil society. *Bakthi* movement was a turning point in the change of religious attitude. Attracted by a large number of people, the movement revived the Hindu religion and spread its principles among the people. This paved the

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63 *Periyapuranam: Thadutharkkondapuranam*, 195-197.
64 *Silappatikaram*, 23-70.
way for the composition of innumerable bhakti hymns and the agama sastras and the simultaneous proliferation of the temples.67

The Brahmana priest performed enormous service to the royalty. The accession of a king to the throne had to be legitimatized by the Brahmanas. A royal heir had to ascend the throne with the Brahmana priest or Purohita conducting the anointment ceremony. The coronation festival was conducted only with the advice of the priest, in the presence of subordinate kings, official members of the royal family and other Brahmanas. They had manifold function in the state and in the palace, society and religion. Temple properties were protected with intense care by the state, society and the Brahmanas.68 The Brahmana village of Dayamughamangalam had a total of 308 Brahmanas, who had mastered the three Vedas and Smritis.69 The learned Brahmanas bore various title like chatervedins,70 Trivedins,71 Somayajina, Vasatyagins,72 Sadangavids,73 Bhatta Kramavids,74 Sarvakratugsjins75 and Vajapeyins.76

The Karandai plates of Rajendra Chola I refer to the formation of colony for the benefit of the Brahmanas by Parantaka I named as Parantaka

68 E.I., Vol.XXVI, No.5.
73 S.I.I., Vol.XII, No.33.
74 A.R.E., No.101 of 1929.
75 A.R.E., No.99 of 1929.
76 A.R.E., No.123 of 1914.
The agrahara was founded by Parantaka in his own name as Viranarayana chaturvedimangalam. The two Uttiramerur inscriptions they down qualifications other than learning, which enabled them to exercise their right of taking part the administration of brahmadeyas. During the reign of Kulottunga I, a few land owing Brahmanas were unable to pay the royal dues and migrated. Their lands was confiscated, sold and added to the temple.

The Brahmins of the Chola society were primarily divided into two religious sects, the Saivites and the Vaishnavites. Sri Vaishnavas are also called Vaikhanasa. The Saiva Brahmins were called Siva-brahmanas. Among the Vaishnavas was also probably a sect called Arulaladasa. They seem to have had their own matha called Arulaladasa matha. The Brahmin community of the Chola country not only consisted of the local inhabitants but also Brahmins from Malayala region, Brahmins from Kasmiradesa, aryabrahmanas from Gowdedesa and brahmanasa from Uttararastra of Uttara-patha. The Vaishnavites are priest in Vishnu temple. They were called pattigal, paranjoti and peradigal in one inscription.

The Chola monarch and people alike, recognizing the quality and high standard of their learning, received them with open hands and made them settle happily in the country and pursuers their vocation peacefully. The Brahmana settlement was

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79 A.R.E., No.620 of 1919.
designated as *tancyan* that means separate settlement. Appadorai opined that it must have been either free or independent settlement.\textsuperscript{83} The Brahmins mostly lived in their own *Agraharams*,\textsuperscript{84} *Mangalam* and *Caturvedi Mangalams* and occupied the highest temporal positions. *Agraharams* is a small Brahminical settlement and *Mangalam* is a bigger settlement of the *Brahmanas*. *Caturvedi Mangalams* as the name itself indicates was a settlement of Brahmins, who were well versed in the four Vedas. Small settlement was called *parpanacheri*.\textsuperscript{85} There was also Brahmin Street called *asil-teru*.\textsuperscript{86} Brahmins were also addressed by the *bhattas* and sometimes with suffix *Aryas*.\textsuperscript{87}

*Brahmanas* also served as the *madhyasathas* (judges) of the *sabha* of the places. Sometimes the *madhyasathas* of the *sabha* were appointed by the king himself and most of the times they were elected or selected by the people of the places and they had an important role to play in the daily life of the society.\textsuperscript{88} The temples had played a significant role in the socio-religious life of the people. Temple authorities became the makers of rules and regulations to control the life of the people.\textsuperscript{89} Like other parts of Tamil Nadu too, the temples were considered as the abodes of Brahminical deities.\textsuperscript{90} They were closely inter-related with the institution of caste system. It is believed that

\textsuperscript{84} *A.R.I.Ep.*, No.465 of 1909.
\textsuperscript{87} *A.R.I.Ep.*, part.II, para-28, p.70.
caste’s was the contrivance of the Brahminical mind by which the Brahmins always sought to maintain their racial superiority at the cost of the non-Brahmins.\(^91\)

The **Brahmans** as a landlord became an important phenomenon in the medieval period. In fact the **Brahmanas** had a direct and full benefit from the **deavadhanas**, became of their crucial role in the affairs of the temple. The Brahmin priests alone were permitted to enter the inner-shrine or **Garbhagraha** (sanctum sanctorum) of the temples. The Hindu worship is congregational, even if the worshippers belonged to the castes which enjoyed the privilege of entering the temple, they could make their offerings to the deity only through the intermediary class of priests. Even now, they could not themselves perform the ritual of **Archana** (chanting of mantras with flowers) to the deity directly.\(^92\)

An inscription dated 1030 C.E. in Pudukkottai region refer to a gift of land to a priest for performing **pujas**, offering food and burning lamp in the temple.\(^93\) Karashima opined that the **brahmadeya** villages played a crucial role in spreading Brahminical ideas among the resident of the non-**brahmadeya** villages and in maintaining social order in the locality. They were the local heart of the Chola power structure, their functions being to integrate and control the surroundings non- **brahmadeya** village.\(^94\) The **Brahmanas** were supreme in social and religious spheres. They were held in high esteem. They served as minister, priest, commanders, councilors and sometimes local administrators. They received variety of gift from the rulers, in the form of lands, gold, gold,


\(^94\) *Ibid.*, p.120.
money and other moveable assets. In the society and in the religious field in particular the Brahmanas involved themselves in multi-dimensional functions. Moreover, all temples related service required the service of the Brahmanas. On the whole, their influence was felt strongly in the socio-cultural lives of the Tamil society.

VELLALAS

Tamil society was organised on the basis of caste system. The Vellalas were a major agriculture caste in Tamil country. The Vellalas were the influential non-Brahmana caste. They were also acted as functionaries in royal administration and the top most crust at land owning gentry. They were the industri people and merchants. They were considered to occupy the first place in the social scale among the non-Brahmanas. They called themselves Pillai, Chettiar, and Mudaliar. Though they were known by different names they observed uniform essential customs and manners. Among the non-Brahmins the most dominant caste was the Vellalas.95 The earlier Tamil works describe that there were two sections among the Vellalas or pure Dravidians namely the cultivators and the non-cultivators. Vellalas were originally dominant caste of landowners.96 They were the nobility and landed aristocracy of the ancient Tamil country. They had maintained close contact with the different royal dynasties. The Chera, Chola and Pandiya kings, and most of the petty chief of Tamilakam belonged to the tribe of

95 Burton Stein (ed.), Essays on South India, New Delhi, 1975, pp.155-156.
96 T.K.Venkatasubramanian, Political change and Agrarian Tradition in South India, New Delhi, 1986, pp-63-64.
Vellalas.⁹⁷ Literary and archaeological sources are tracing the origin of the Vellalas to a group of chieftains called vel or velir.⁹⁸

The word ‘Vellalam’ is derived from the word ‘Vellamai’(vellam-water, anmai-management) meaning cultivation and village.⁹⁹ Of these the Marutam regions were the fertile agricultural tracts along the fertile river valleys with prosperous villages known as Ur inhabited by peasants called Ulavar, Vellalar, etc. in literature.¹⁰⁰ The terms Ulavar literally means ploughmen and the term Vellalar, literally means masters of the soil indicating possession of land rather than work on other's land for wages.¹⁰¹ Gustav Opert considers Vellalas to be etymologically identified with Pallan and Palupaali that means the lord of the Vellas or Pallas.¹⁰² An inscription of Rajendra I mention the Thiruvappur Velan Venkadan, Parakesari Muvendavelan, Adavallan Varudevan alias Mudikondachola Muvendavelan and Kalakalan alias Kadavur Velan.¹⁰³ Kaviti was a special distinction bestowed upon the minister of the State. Many such gotric name found in the ancient Tamil inscription.

Bhudevi (goddess of earth) produced from her body a man carrying a plough, who showed them how to till the sail and support themselves. They included Ko-Vaisyas, Bhu-Vaisyas and Dhana-Vaisyas. Among them the Bhu-Vaisyas were Vellala

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agriculture people. The Ko-Vaisyas were ploughmen. The Dhana-Vaisyas were trading people. 104 The subdivisions of the Bhu- Vaisyas were the Karkattor karala Vellalas, Tuluva Vellalas, Choliya Vellalas, Kondaikatti Vellalas, Sembaratti Vellalas, Kodaikkal Vellalas. 105 Periyapuranam clearly describe the Vellalas and their position in the society, their economic condition and their benevolence. 106

A number of inscription of Tamil country frequently refer to many division or sub-caste of Vellalas. They are Tondaimandalam Vellalas, Soliya Vellalas, Jaina Vellalas, Kodaikkal Vellalas, Urattur Vellalas, Kongu Vellalas, Nanchilnad Vellalas, Karaikattu Vellalas, Milalaikkuru Vellalas, Vembanattu Vellalas and Thenmandala Vellalas. 107 In Pudukkottai state, Kodaumbalur and its surrounding villages were the homes of the Vellalas. Tekattur palm leaf manuscript stated that a Vellala Chief namely Adanachakaravarthy brought many Vellala with him to the Chola territory. The Chola land was occupied by the Vellalas was named as Konadu (land of the king) and the Pandya territory named as Kanandu (forest land) in Pudukkottai state. 108

Cholamandala Jatakam mentions that the Chola Vellalas consisted of 64 Kudigal 109 (64 divisions). 64 Nadus are comprising to all together 756 villages. Among them 212 villages were granted as devadhanam and 21 villages as brahmadeyasm. The ruler of Tamil country also settled the Brahmanas in the land purchased land from the

106 Sekkilal, Periyapuranam, Padal;872.
bhumi
ttirar (Vellalas land owners) or the Nattumukkal. Nattumukkal, enjoyed the full right over the villages they were all Vellalas. Pudukkottai State Manuscript stated them as Nilattarasu (ruler of the soil). They lived independently with the support of the rulers. The bulk of the land was owned by the Vellalas, the agriculturists, who commanded a high social rank. Naccinarkkinayar distinguish them as the rich and poor Vellalas. The rich Vellalas held high official posts under the king in the civil and military administration. They held the titles of Vel and Arasu in the Chola country and Kavadi in the Pandya country and the Jusconnubii (special privilege) with royal families.

The Vellalas were recognised as a respectable body of the community. These was a ceremony called tulabharam (weighing in scale) observed by the ancient king. When the Chola king performed this ceremony, the right to weighing king in person was accorded to the Vellalas Chettis. This shows that the Vellalas were also recognised as a respectable body of mercantilemen in charge of weight and measures. The Cholas imposed certain taxes and collected them through the officials. Besides, the taxes collected by the rulers, the local administrative units like village assemblies also enjoyed the privileges of collecting the taxes. An example of such regulation emphasized in a royal order of Rajendra II. According to it, right to raise such dues in the village of Vakkur was made the monopoly of the Vellalas, who are said to have had the kani of the place.

\[110\] A.R.E., 43 of 1936-37.
\[111\] Pudukkottai State Manual, p.547.
In 1286 C.E. an epigraphic, states that the land holder named Sengadir Chola Muvendavelan suffered due to the arrears of land dues. The royal officers, Brahmadarayan threatened him and ordered to put in prison. The Vellalas held almost all important professions during the medieval period. Champakalakshmi opined that the Vellalar took six professions such as cultivation, smithy, pottery, weaving, cattle rearing and trade. In the medieval period agriculture and trade were the two unique economic segments of Tamil society. These unique activities gave rise to various settlement, different group and institutions. The Vellalas, who were the actually agriculturists and actively participated in the cultivation process. The contributions of Vellalas in the royal and military services were significant. The Vellala officials who distinguish themselves in the royal service were conferred titles like Sembian Muvendavelan, Solavelan and Mavendavelan.

Aditan Suriyanakia Muvendavelan was a chieftain of Poygiandu at Rajendrasingh Valanadu in Cholamandalam. In 995 C.E. he was granted gold to the Brahmin for reciting the Devaram. He was very close to the king Rajaraja. Anaimangalam Copper plates mention that the Mathuradhaka Muvendavelan was the local chieftain of Arulmozhi DevaValanadu Nenmalinadu. Velan Madhavannakia Raja Vallava Pallavarayan was the important and efficient minister of Kulottunga I. The government conferred him with titles Vendanal Vel and Raja Valla Pallavarayan.

115 A.R.E., 24 of 1914.
118 E.I., Vol.XXII, No.34.
119 E.I., Vol.XXII, No.35.
Vellakkutan Alias **Sembian Muvendavelan** was the minister of Rajendra Chola I.⁴²⁰ Rajendra Muvendavelan alias Thiruvarangan was another **Vellala** minister of Vira Rajendra.⁴¹ Muniyatarayas was another military commander, who also rendered heroic service to the Chola army under the king Vikrama Chola. He also took part in north Kalinga expedition in 1165 C.E.⁴²² In Kaligattubarani his name was included as one of celebrities. He was praised by Ottakuttan in his *Muvarula*.

The medieval Tamil country the **Vellalas** held high esteem in the society. They acted as the substitute of the monarch and involved in the administrative works. The **Vellalas** were prominent in the medieval Tamil Polity, economy and society. They were not only active militarist, administrators and officials but also had strong base as land holders of the fertile paddy growing tracts. Their position as landed elite with administrative military powers continued through the subsequent periods. Besides, the Brahmins, the **Vellalas** constituted a part of the elite group in Tamil Nadu. The **Vellalas** were the great land-owning caste and even today they are strongly represented in Tamil Nadu.

**VANIGAR**

The word *Vaniyam* signifies trade and trade in oil, as well as its manufacture. An inscription of Parantaka I figured them as suppliers of oil to the temples.⁴²³ The oil- mills articulated by the *Vaniyans* were gingelly (*sesamum indicum*)

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⁴²¹ *A.R.E.*, 228 of 1912.
Coconut, iluppei (Bassia longifolia) Pinnei (calophyllum inophyllum) and ground nut
(Arachis hypogoea).\textsuperscript{124} Vaniyans whose were the primarily producers of oil seeds and
engaged in production and sale of oil. Oil-Mongers were engaged in the production of oil.
Besides meeting the household requirements of oil, the temple could have emerged as a
major consumer of oil products in Tamil country. They oil-Mongers were named as
Sekkar or Vaniyar or Oil-Mongers.\textsuperscript{125} They held low status in the social scale, the
provided significant service in lighting the temple. They earned their high position. They
used the fertile of Joti Nagarattan (dwellers in the city of light) and Tiruvilakku
Nagarattar (dwellers in the city of holy lamp).\textsuperscript{126} One group came under left hand
division and another under Right hand division. Pearl was an important article of trade
and was used as a unit of barter. A particular Parava community was associated with
pearl fishing. Pearl fishing was their main sources of livelihood by which they could pull
on their day to day life. It was considered as an auspicious ornament and decorated the
chest of Pandya crown prince. The 104 pearl were arranged in a silk string and hung
around the neck by the royal prince.\textsuperscript{127}

\textit{Saliya Nagarattan} was the cloth merchant. They were Weavers who sold
their own cloth. These Saliya Nagarattar were mostly settled around Kanchipuram
region and involved in trading activities. They exported their cotton cloth to other
countries under the Pallavas. Mostly they were the member of Nagaram. The Cholas
were interested in promoting trading activities. So, the Nagarattar of Kanchipuram

\textsuperscript{126} \textit{Ibid.}, p.215.
\textsuperscript{127} C.Bhavani, \textit{`Pearl through the Age in Tamilagam'}, \textit{Proceeding of the South Indian History
Congress 25\textsuperscript{th} Silver Jubilee Annual Session}, Madurai, 2005, p.455.
continued their prestigious position. The *Saliya Nagarattar* in this region played a managerial or supervisory role. They became the weavers of the royal garments and maintained the temple accounts. According to the *Devaram* hymns, were four types of merchants, viz., *Viyaparigal, Saliyar, Sankarapssdiyar,* and *Vaniyar*. The *Saliya* was another major community of the weavers. They were popularly known as *saliyas*. The ‘sale’ or the ‘saliya’ community classified as the *Padma sale* and the *Pattu sale*.\(^{129}\)

Salt merchant were *Umanar*. They took their products in cart loads or on donkeys. They were the producers as well as sellers. They were ready with deadly bows to kill the merchants at sight. So, the *Umanar* had to be familiar with martial arts. Pudukkottai Sate Manual describes them as *Uppiliyans*. They were also named as *Karpurachettis* because of selling Camphor as well as Salt Petre. *Ilaivaniyars* or the *Ilai* were the another group of the Merchant community. Their main occupation was the cultivation of betel creepers and selling of its leaves. They were producers and sellers. Their activities were very much limited and localized. But, their business seemed to be one of the most popular trading activities in South India.\(^{131}\)

**PARAIYARS**

The name *Paraiyars* is mentioned in the *Purunantu*.\(^{132}\) It describes that a *Paraiya* belonged to the caste of drummers. There is a view that the *Paraiya* was known

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130 *Pudukkottai Sate Manual*, p.539.
132 *Purunantu*, 335.
as the *Puliyan* in the Sangam age.\(^{133}\) The term *Paraiya* is derived from the root word *Parai* which means a kind of drum or musical instrument. Few *Paraiyas* acted as drummers at marriages, funeral and village festivals and on occasions like government or commercial announcements were proclaimed.

Another occupation of the *Paraiyas* was torn-tom beating. They beat the drum on festive occasions in the temple and on all occasions, government orders in the villages. Some of them were agricultural labourers and domestic servants as grave-diggers, watchmen, scavengers, hunters, soldiers and potters.\(^{134}\) During the medieval period, the *Paraiyas* were engaged in many tanks such as cultivation, weaving and drum beating, beating, watching in village, doing funeral service and attending to other menial jobs. They claimed to be the descendants of *Ravana* who resisted the Aryan cultural invasion in the South. They hunting *Paraiyas* were called *Valai Parayas*.\(^{135}\) The *Paraiyars* as a caste seemed to have enjoyed and more privilege in the Chola period.

*Periyapuranam* mentions that sometimes the *Paraiyas* also possessed some lands. Those lands were known as called *Iraiyili Parai thudamai*. They made them as cultivable lands.\(^{136}\) An inscription of Rajaraja I (1014 C.E.) mentions *Cheries* of the *Paraiyas*. The people who worked in the fields were called *Ulapparayar*. They lived in a separate Cheri. *Paraicheri* were also called as *Paraiyar Kudiyiruppu*.\(^{137}\) The *Paraiyas*


\(^{136}\) Tamilnattu Varalatru Kulu, *Chola Peruvendar Kalam A.D. 900 – 1300*(Tamil), part-II, Madras, 2000, p.34.

\(^{137}\) *A.R.E.*, 59 of 1900.
played a significant role in the local administration of the Tamil country. The inscription mentions that a member of village office-bearers who signed the document was *Paraiyas*. They were *Periyanattuparaiyan, Kananattup Paraiyan* (king servant), *Arasarmikap paraiyan* and *Ainuttrup paraiyan*. It seemed that they also held important position in local administration. Since they were literates, they signed the sale deeds themselves.\(^{138}\) Some of the Paraiyars worked as village guardians and workers. They were called as ‘*Thalaiyari*’ and they were imposed with a tax called ‘*Thalaiyarikaanam*’. Inscription of Sundara Chola and Rajaraja Chola I show that the ‘*Thalaiyari*’ of cheri of certain village were exempted from this tax.\(^{139}\)

An inscription mentions that when a man called Poovan Paraiyan dug canals and converted an infertile land into a fertile one; the king praised him and gave him the name ‘*Ariyan Anukkan*’. The land which was made fertile by Poovan Maraiyan was called as ‘*Paraiyan Vasakkal*’.\(^{140}\) Some of the Paraiyas seems to have been engaged in weaving in the Chola period. They had separate looms called *Paraittari*. A tax called *Paraittariyirai* levied on them.\(^{141}\) The people with higher status among the Paraiyars were the ‘*Paraimuthali*’. They were also included in the village governance committee. A Chola inscription says that *Paraimuthali, Chakkilimuthali, Kaikolimuthali* and *Vellalamuthali* were included in a village governance committee.\(^{142}\)

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The village was granted by a Cholas in the 13th century show the remittance of a number of taxes including tax on *Paraittari* is mentions.\(^{143}\)

*Periyapuraman* says that *Paraiyas* were granted with rent free land called *Parai tutaimai*.\(^{144}\) It is clearly mention the inscriptions issued by Rajaraja II, that the lands occupied by the certain *Paraiyas* caste were exempted from taxation. The *Paraiyas* worshipped generally *amm* (mother). Sometimes, they worshipped *kaniyamma* (virgin) or seven virgin. Polygamy was in vogue among the *Paraiyas*.\(^{145}\) Besides, the widow remarriage was common, though there was no formal ceremony in all such cases. The *Valluvas* was one of the sections of the *Paraiyas*. They are mentioned as among the only four great *Kudis* or clans of the *Mullai thinai* of Tamil country. The famous four classes are *Panan, Paraiyan, Thudian* and *Kadamban*.\(^{146}\) In the post-Sangam literature *Valluvas* are spoken of as a distinct group. The famous Tamil literary work refers to *Perukathai* refer *Valluvas* as *Muthamahan* meaning ‘elder statesmen’ and was provided with an elephants and a small band of soldiers called *selvachenai*.\(^{147}\)

The *Valluvas* acted as priest. *Tivakara Nikantu*, a Tamil dictionary of the 11th century describes the *Valluvas* as royal priests who performed the funeral obsequies in the kings’ household. They were also good astrologers and fortunetellers. They looked into different kinds of almanac and calculated the auspicious days. Before, the advent of Sanskrit and Sanskrit known Brahmanas astrologers, the *Valluvas* seemed to have been


\(^{144}\) *Periyapuraman*, Lines 62.


\(^{146}\) *Purananuru*, 335:7-8.

doing that job. The Valluvas wore the sacred thread and even learn some Sanskrit mantras which they murmured during marriage ceremonies. They abstained from beef-eating a habit continued by the other Pariyas, and also gave up Polygamy, liquor and remarriage of widow. The Puliyas was one of the sub-division of Paraiyas. The beaters of Por-Murasu (battle drum) were called as Puliyas in ancient Tamil classics. The drum beaten at such times was called as Chapparai meaning ‘funeral drum’.

**CHAKKILIYAR**

Chakkiliyars were Chucklers or cobblers. Chakkla means ‘leather’ in Kannada. Chakkili means ‘leather worker’. Mainly they made things made up of leather. Semman, totti, and totiyan were the other names of leather workers. Their main work was shoe making in leather. They were the dressers of leather and makers of slippers. The vettiyan was employed in measuring all the heaps of grain and carrying letters and money. They also burnt the dead and did add jobs of various kinds. Chakkiliyars of Tamil country is not the natives of the soil. They were immigrated Andhradesa and Karnataka state. They spoke Telugu or Kannada at their homes. An inscription of the Cholas dated C.E. 1030 mentions the residential area of Chakkilian keentil (plot of the Chakkiliyan).

**CHETTIS**

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149 *Narrinai*, 77:1, 2.
The caste name ‘Chetti’ particularly applied to the merchant group. It derived from the Sanskrit word ‘Sresti’. In all probability ‘Sresti’ had title to do with Chetti.\(^{153}\) However, the term Chetti, occur for the first time only in ‘Manimegalai’. It might have emerged from the Tamil word Chetti meaning ‘trade’. Chettis were the most influential commercial community. The weavers, oil-Mongers and other used Chetti as a suffix to their names. The Chetti groups were numerous and widely distributed. There were many sub-divisions among them. Sarkar Periyapalayam inscription mentioned that the “Chetti Chetti Vira Puthuirarkalum”.\(^{154}\) The ancestors of the Chettis evidently constitute caste belonging to Vaisyas caste of the ancient Indian society. Pudukkotai State Manual mentions the different sections among the Chettis. It also describes that, the Chettis were divided into 12 sub-divisions.\(^{155}\) They were Nattukkottai Chettis, Ariyur Chettis, Sundaram Chettis, Vallam Chettis, Vellanad Chettis, Vandakottai Chettis, Vellan Chettis, Karakkara Chettis, Viralur Chettis, Narayanapuram Chettis, Seniyans and Senaittalaivans. The places where they lived were called as Nagarattars.\(^{156}\)

**NATTUKKOTTAI CHETTIS**

Among the chettis, Nattukkottai Chettis occupied important place in trading activities. A remarkable enterprising community people of Tamil country were the Nattukkottai Chettis. The Nattukkottai Chettis are said to have come from Kaveripattinam.\(^{157}\) They were patronised by the Chola king and enjoyed the privilege of


\(^{155}\) *Pudukkotai State Manual*, p.548.


\(^{157}\) *Pudukkotai State Manual*, p.549.
placing the crown on the king’s head at the time of the coronation. Edgur Thurston opines that a Pandya king, name Sundra Pandya asked the Chola king to send some of the Chettis in his land to settle in the north of the river of Vaigai, east of the Piranmalai.\textsuperscript{158} The Chettiar left the Chola land in a group and settled to the south of the Vellar, the southern boundary of the kingdom. They would never allow their women to cross the Vellar into Chola country. Ariyur Chettis, Vallanadu Chettis, Vandakkottai Chettis and Viralur Chettis were the sub-division of the Nattukkottai Chettis caste.\textsuperscript{159}

**BERI CHETTIS**

Beri Chettis belonged to another enterprising group. They had migrated from Kaveripattanam near Kumbakonam, when the Chola king wanted to marry a girl belonging to this group; but the Beri Chettis refused to give his daughter to the Chola king. So, the Chola king persecuted them and drove them out of his domain.\textsuperscript{160} The Beri Chettis had come into existence as a separate group and also claimed themselves to be Vaisyas.

**KUDIRAI CHETTIS**

Another interesting trading group, flourished during the time of Imperial Cholas was Kudirai Chettis. Their name itself indicates that they were traders in horses. The Arab horse’s trade was its peak during the Chola period Sekkilar, the contemporary of Kulottunga II stated the importance of horses in the sea-trade in his celebrated work

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{159} *Pudukkotai State Manual*, p.590.
\end{itemize}
Periyapuranam. A Chola painting, portraying Arab merchants with their horses standing in front of king Rajraja I, is found on the back of the Tanjore temple. The Kudirai Chettis were honoured with the title of Etti and Vanigaradittan.

KOMMATTI CHETTIS

The Kommatti Chettis were another group of the merchant communities, who were engaged in the trading activities. The activities of Kommattis of South India, as traders and money lender were traced from the tenth century onwards. Their original home was northern parts in around the Krishna and Godavari rivers. A series of commercial opportunities created by various conquests and political changes of the various empires had helped them settle down far and wide in the Tamil country. They started their commercial operation down to the east coast of Madras city, of Salem, Coimbatore and Madurai.

AHAMBADIYARS

The name Ahambadiyars is derived from the root aham, in Tamil language. It means a house and another one earth, and hence it has two meaning, house holders and land holder. The suffix udiyars indicates ownership. They must have been generally influenced by their contact with the Brahmans. In the Uttiramerur inscription

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163 Ibid., p.137.
164 *Pudukkottai Sate Manual*, p.125.
Dantiarman, these agricultural peasants were known as *Ahambadi Udaiyans*.\(^{165}\) They were not an affluent class and lived in the humble houses in the Pallava period.\(^{166}\) The *Ahambadiyars* were found in all district of present Tamilnadu. In their manners and customs, they closely resemble *Vellalas*. They engaged *brahmana* priests for performing their birth, marriage and death ceremonies like *Vellalas*. The *Ahambadiyars* in the south pursue the *Vellalas* and the *Maravar* in their ceremonial observances.\(^{167}\) The worshipped various minor deities *Aiyanar, pidari, karuppusamy* and so on. Endowment was also made by them to the temple. In 5\(^{th}\) regnal year of the Chola king Rajaraja I refer to a sale of a house and eight coconut trees to the temple by an *Ahambadiyar*. He was the servant of the temple of *Tirnallur Nayanar*.\(^{168}\)

**MUTTARAIYAR**

Before, the formation of a separate Chola Empire, Tanjore and the surrounding regions were ruled by the *Muttaraiyar*. After Vijayalayan invaded and captured Tanjore. *Muttaraiyars* became soldiers and army-generals in the Chola army. They got a special name from the Chola kings called ‘Aryan’. Some of the chiefs who worked under the Chola army are Parantaka Muttaraiyan, Araiyan Sankra Narayana Chola Muttaraiyan, and head of the elephant army Raja Malla Muttaraiyar, Kadanthai

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\(^{165}\) *A.R.E.*, 479 of 1908.


\(^{167}\) *Pudukkottai Sate Manual.*, p.125

Chenthen Athithanana Vangara Muttaraiyan, Kadanthai Pandaliyana Vangara Muttaraiyan, and Vijayalaya Muttaraiyan.\(^{169}\)

**AMBATTAN**

_Ambattan_ (Barbers) were the main “servants of indoor” in the medieval Tamil society. They were also known as _Navidan, Nasuvan, Maruttuvar and Nosivan_. _Ambattan_ is derived from the Sanskrit word _amba_ which means ‘near’ and _Ha_ means ‘to stand’.\(^{170}\) They stand near to shave their clients or to treat their patients. _Narisan_ means a ‘holy man’ and _Nasuvan_ “those sprung from the nose”.\(^{171}\) _Maruttuvar_ is derived from the word ‘_Marauntu_’ which means ‘medicine’ as they act as the village doctors. Their wives were called _maruttuvacci_. They generally attended the deliveries relating to child birth in villages. Plenty of inscriptions refer to the _Ambattan_ practicing as physicians.\(^{172}\) The land enjoyed by them was known as _maruthuvapperu_.\(^{173}\) The _Ambattan_ were well-versed in medicine adopted the title _Vaithiyam_ physicians.\(^{174}\) Among the _Ambattan_, there were both _Saivites_ and _Vaishnavites_. Widow re-marriage was prohibited among the Barber.

**PALLARS**

\(^{172}\) A.R.E., 399 of 1904.
The **Pallars** were the class of agricultural labourors in the medieval Tamil country. They were usually employed in the cultivation of paddy lands. The **Palla** women were to be considered particularly skilled in planting paddy, seeding and wedding paddy plants. They were specialized in the art of paddy cultivation even from the Sangam age. The **Pallars** are also denoted by the little of **kadasiyar, ‘Malla’** described in the Sangam classics were probably the ancestors of the **Pallars**.\(^{175}\) The **Pallars** were settled mostly in the southern region of the Tamil country. They were found chiefly in the Pandya country and in the neighboring region, such as Trichy, Tanjore, Kongu region, Salem and Coimbatore. The name **Pallar** is derived from the word **Pallam** means a pit or a law lying region. Since, wet lands were usually found in low lying areas and **Pallas** usual engaged in the cultivation of paddy in such lands, it has been suggested that the caste name **Pallar** must have derived from the word **Pallam**.\(^{176}\)

The **Pallars** called themselves as Devendra kulattar or descendants of Indira. According to a legend, the sweet the Devendra fell in a plant glowing in the water from which arose child who became the ancestor of the **Pallars** namely **Vadivelu kutumpan**.\(^{177}\) **Vadivelu** had two wives and he had four sons by the first wife. They became the ancestors of **devendra, Totayanatl, pandya** and **kadayanattu pallans**. Through his second wife the minor **Pallas** such as **Kongu Vattai Ati, Kalkalli Vanni** and **Tavallaillinni** were born. Hence, it’s believed that Devendra created there people for the purpose of the serving the **Vallalas**. Whatever they were the slaves of the **Vallalas**, in the

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\(^{175}\) K.R Hamumenthan, *Untouchability- A Historical Study upto 1500 AD with Special Reference to Tamilnadu*, Madurai, 1979, p.100.


ancient period and regarded by them merely as *chettels*. They were brought Pandya *mandala* by the *Vallalas*.\(^{178}\) Probably this was one of the aboriginal races in South India. The *Pallars* were belonged to an ancient community of Tamil country, became the owners of the land. They were suppressed in to slavery in course of time by the powerful tribes who came from others parts of south India. In fact, they were a well organized community, their headman was called *Palakan* the chief guru, *Samiyar* the priest, *Valluvan* and servant called *Othumpillai*.\(^{179}\)

**KAMMALAS**

The *Kammalas* were one of the artisan communities of Tamil society enjoyed better social status during the Chola period. It must have been due to the great temple building activities of the Cholas. There was an increase in building of temples in South India. The sculpture and other artifacts noted for their excellence and dignity. It is due to their contributions of the temples perceived extravagant promptness. The rich carvings by the artisans made the stone exceptionally great. So, the services of the *Kammalas* were indispensable. The famous craft guild *Virapanchalas Anju jatiyen*,\(^{180}\) included five communities such as Carpenters, Stone Mason, Coppersmith, Goldsmith, Goldsmith,

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and Blacksmith. They were frequently mentioned in many inscriptions.\textsuperscript{181} They were known as \textit{Vira Panchalar}\textsuperscript{182}, \textit{Anjuiti Panchalattar}\textsuperscript{183} or \textit{Panchalavaru}\textsuperscript{184} and so on.

During the period Imperial Cholas, the \textit{Kammalas} belonged to the left hand caste. They called themselves as \textit{Visvakarmas}.\textsuperscript{185} The \textit{Kammalas} were the chief among the left hand caste people during the time of Kulottunga III. He was vexed with the dispute between the \textit{Vellalas} and \textit{Kammalas}. He asked them to appear before him. An inscription found at Aduthurai mentions that the \textit{Kammalas} were under the left hand division. Srinivasa Aiyangar opined that the \textit{Kaikkolar, Kammalar, Vanigar}, and \textit{Ambalakkarar} were either \textit{Nagas} or were the descendents of a mixed race of \textit{Nagas} or Dravidians.\textsuperscript{186} During the Chola period the \textit{Kammalas} used the \textit{Rathakara} designation to strengthen their claims for high social status. The Uyya Kondan Udaiyyar inscription of C.E. 1118 mentions the \textit{Rathakarars} of goldsmiths, silversmiths, carpenters, stone cutter, and mason.\textsuperscript{187} They were also designated as mobile artisans.

The \textit{Kammalas} were further divided into five occupational sections viz. \textit{Tattan}\textsuperscript{188} (goldsmith), \textit{Kannan} (copper smith) \textit{Tacchan} (carpenter) \textit{Kal-tacchan} (stone

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{181} \textit{S.I.I.}, Vol.II, No.47, 48, 50 and 63.
  \item \textsuperscript{182} \textit{E.I.}, Vol.XX, No.90.
  \item \textsuperscript{183} \textit{E.I.}, Vol.III, pp.67-69.
  \item \textsuperscript{184} \textit{A.R.E.}, 371of 1921.
  \item \textsuperscript{185} K.K.Pillay, \textit{Op.cit.}, p.344.
  \item \textsuperscript{187} \textit{S.I.I.}, Vol.III, No.203.
  \item \textsuperscript{188} \textit{E.I.}, Vol.VIII, No.2.
\end{itemize}
mason) and Kollan or Kauman (blacksmith). These professional artisans settled in and around the temple. So, the temple town emerged as the centre of artisans activities. The Tanjore inscription of Rajaraj I dated C.E.1014 supply the information about the separate quarters set up for the Kammalas. Kammalas lived in a magnetic castle called Kandakottai. Their residential area was known as Kammalcheri. Kammalcheri enjoyed the tax free land. In Tanjore district, the Kammalas occupied seven villages during the Cholas period. Kasavur and Perur inscription mention that Kammalas were granted certain privileges by the Chola monarch. The two inscriptions belonged to the 12th and 13th century at Kovilur, Dharapuram district refer to the right gained by the Kammalas who resided in the area covering Talaiyur nadu, Vengala nadu and Arya nadu. They had the right of performing their own marriages and religious ceremonies.

GOLD SMITHS

The Tattan or gold smith was known as Por-kollan. The made gold ornaments and jewelry. They were remarkable artisans. Their gold ornaments were in great demand in foreign countries. They had occupied a special place in the society, economy and particularly in the temple building activities. Some information about

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goldsmiths is available in the Bahr Plates of *Nirpatungavarman*. Meenakshi opined that this goldsmith was named of his sovereign, *Nirpatungavarman*.\(^{196}\) The Chola inscription found at the Brahadeeswara Temple Thanjavur reveal the names of numerous gold jewels presented to the deities in this temple by Rajaraja I, his queens and other member of the royal family.\(^{197}\) The Thanjavur temple inscription refers to the nine varieties of gems (*navaratna*), namely diamond (*viaram*), sapphire (*nilam*), pearl (*muttu*), topaz (*puparaga*), cinnamon stone (*gomedhakam*), coral (*pavalam*), emerald (*pacchai* or *maragatham*), lapi-lazuli (*vaiduyaram*) and ruby (*manikam*) set in a gold ornaments.\(^{198}\) Moreover, the gems of Tamil country were in great demand in foreign countries.\(^{199}\)

**BLACK SMITH**

The black smith or *Karaman kollan*\(^{200}\) was the soul of village industry. His wheel and smelting fire kept the mechanical crafts of the land. He was the *kollan* a veritable *Vulcan*. His arms were strong. The iron wheel was made by him. He assembled and repaired many metallic weapons needed for the army. The term *perumpannai* which was in usages denoted the lathes of blacksmith. The art of the blacksmith is vital to any society as many other artisans such as carpenter, goldsmith and weaver are dependent on him for providing them with the necessary tools and implements. Wars being a very

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\(^{197}\) *A.R.E.*, 61 of 1974-75.


\(^{199}\) *E.C.*, Vol.IV, No.7.

common occurrence during the medieval periods, the block smith must have been in great demand for producing various types of weapons of warfare.\textsuperscript{201}

**CARPENTER**

*Tacchan* or carpenter was a busy craftsman. Carpenters were closely associated with the temple activities. They assumed the titles like *koil tachchapiran, Periyakoil Nambi*,\textsuperscript{202} and *Periyakoildasan*. Carpenter of Cheranmadevi assumed title like *achchari* and *achcharians*.\textsuperscript{203} The master carpenter was popularly, known as *tachcher acharian*.\textsuperscript{204} *Thatchu* in Tamil means joining two pieces. Thus, the people who had adopted the wooden work were known as *thatehan*.\textsuperscript{205} His contribution ranged from the wooden structures in Palaces to wheeled toy carts for children. They built boats, carts, bedsteads, planks, doors, chariots and temple cars.

**STONE MASON**

The services of the Stone Mason were required in a variety of specialized jobs. The inscribers on the stone or the copper plates were called as *shilpis, smiths, and shapathis*.\textsuperscript{206} They called themselves as *acharya, karumans* and *Viśwakarumas*.\textsuperscript{207} During the time of the Pallavas, the stone cutting work became a unique one. The

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{202} *S.I.I.*, Vol.V, No.749,820.
\item \textsuperscript{203} *A.R.E.*, 631,633 of 1916.
\item \textsuperscript{204} *S.I.I.*, Vol.II, No.66.
\item \textsuperscript{205} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{206} *E.I.*, Vol.XII, p.333.
\item \textsuperscript{207} Thirty Pallava Copper Plates, *Op.cit.*, p.320.
\end{itemize}
sculptural glory of that period attests the workmanship of Stone Mason. The stone cutters or the *kal-kuttigars* were the prominent one and the *sutragrahi* were responsible for measuring and marking the stone prior to the carving of images. The sculptors were called as *sirpi* or the *thirumeni seivor*. The *sthapathis* had acted as *Vastu thajan*, who had the knowledge of the science of architecture. The Chola kings had highly honoured the artisans and the craftsmen. The artisans who built the important temples got their names inscribed at the ends. The great temple of Rajarajeswaram in Thanjavur was built by one great architect by name Viracholan Kunjaramallan alias *Upperuntaccan* and two assistant carpenters namely *Ilatti Cataiyan alais Kantaraditta peruntaccan* and *Kunavan Madurantaken* alias *Periadapperuntacan*. *Kammalas* were held in high esteem in the society. They considered themselves as equal to the *Brahmanas*. They were the sacred thread, on the *Upakarmam* day. Most of them were Vegetarians. The *Kammalas* professed the Siva form of the Brahmana religion. They worshipped *Pillaiyar*, the favorite son of Siva.

**METAL SMITH**

*Visvakarma* was considered as the lord of arts. The people who belonged to this community were also considered as the master of hundreds of crafts, building and palaces by which art men lived and deathless gods they continuously worshipped. One of the most important authentic evidences of the Pallavas for the existence of metal art is the Thirty Copper Plates and other inscription. The inscription throws light on the donation

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of the king to the temples and they also describe the multifaceted activities of the temples. The Pallava rulers had donated many lamps known as ‘Nandavilakku’. The sculpture of Pallava periods exhibit various kinds of ornaments such as chains, necklaces, armlets, crown, armbands known as bahualaya, pearl strings known as vira sangili, anklets such as silambu, kinkini and sadangai.211

The Brahadeeswara temple of Rajaraja refers to various kinds of jewellery works with pearls and diamonds. Apart from the jewellery works, making of all types of vessels, lamps, art plates and many other ornamental works had been referred to in many inscription describe one set of visvakarma known as salyoddhara or the makers of weapons.212 The art of metal craft had existed and flourished in Tamil country even before the Cholas but this art had attained the greatest development with the rise of the Cholas of Vijayalaya line.

KAIKKOLAR

Kaikkolas were also weavers involved in the weaving and other related works. Many epigraphical sources refer to Kaikkolas and their activities. Terinijakaikolars and kaikkola senapathi were frequently referred to in the inscription. During the Rajaraja I, many weavers were invited to the Tamil country. Being dissatisfied with the quality of cloth, Rajaraja I brought the saliya weavers from Andhra. After that Kaikkolas learnt how to weave fine cloths. The Devanga weavers hailed either from Andhra or Karnataka region. They moved into Tamil country. A Cholas inscription

referred to tailor as tunnakkarar. The ‘sale’ or the ‘saliya’ community classified as the Padma sale and the Pattu sale. The weaving communities of Kaikkolas played a vital role in the Tamil country during the rule of the Cholas. The name ‘Kaikkolan’ is further derived from ‘kai’ (hand) and ‘kol’ means (shuttle). These suggest that the traditional association lived in 72 Nadu or Desams. Some of the Kaikkolas women became the practice for every Kaikkola family to dedicate at least one girl to temple service. But, the Kaikkolan dancers were distinct from the Devadāsis.

**IDAIYARS**

Sangam ages the idaiyars were very dominant and a numerous caste in the society. They were to curably respectable. They lived in idaicheri. The Mullai region was inhabited by the people who specialized in dairy farming and sheep rearing. Their residential area was known was Ayarpadi, Ayapadi and Ayar kulam. The shepherds were known as Idaiyars. The word ‘idai’ means middle and Idaiyan means those who lived in the middle of region lying between lands of Kurunji and Marudam. The word ‘ko’ means cow and kovvalar means those who tended the cows. The Cholas inscriptions refer to Padaithalaivan, Manrodi, Yadhavan, Sri Gopalar, Kon,

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213 A.R.E., 273 of 1935; Silappadikaram, Cantom:V, stanza 16-17.
215 K.K.Pillay, History of India (with special reference to Tamil Nadu), Madras, 1969, pp.340-341
Vetti kudigal as the names of for Idaiyars. They also mentioned their contribution to the society and the endowments they had made to the temple. They also speak the glory of the community.

LEFT HAND AND RIGHT HAND DIVISION

The terms idankai and valankail (these are the Tamil terms). There are equivalents which can be given the same English translation in Kanada and Telugu, the other two principal languages spoken in areas where the right-left division was once prominent) have generally been translated as "left-hand" and "right-hand," respectively. The English term "hand," however, is misleading. Unlike English, the Dravidian languages do not make a critical distinction between arm and hand, or between leg and foot. The term translated above as "right-hand" can equally mean "right-arm."223

The division of the right hand and left hand (Idankai and Valankail) peoples or castes appeared in forgoing significant social links among a variety of dependent people of diverse localities. It is difficult to determine the exact identity of each caste. These groups involved in regular socio-economic activities such as agriculture, trade, making art, crafts and so, on. Many inscription of Tamil country mentioned the social and economic activities of these groups as well.224 The genesis of the division into right hand and left hand castes is one of the riddles of south Indian

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History. These were various legends that ascribe the origin of this peculiar social division to one or other circumstances.

According to a legend, the Rishi Karyappa and his associate Rishis conducted a holy sacrifice. Many people actively helped the sage. After the holy sacrifice, they were honoured by King Arindama Chola, who took them in a chariot and settled them in a new colony. At that time the non-

brahmana castes that co-operated with them all along stood on the left side of the chariots and helped them. They were designated as left hand castes. The sages bestowed on the people of the left hand castes certain privileges like the use of the horn, conch and bugle. They were also authorized to have as their symbol. Another tradition was that the Chola emperor Karikala grew vexed with the disputes between the Vellalas and Kammalas in his dominion and asked them to appear before him in order that he might settle their dispute. The Kammalas arrayed themselves on the left of the king and the Vellalas on the right. From time onwards the Kammalas were called the members of the left hand caste. The Chola Pura Pattaya lists out the castes included in left and right hand division. It is only in the 10th to 13th century that there was a clear manifestation of the caste formation. Few inscriptions describe the settlement quarters of the Valangai and Idangai factions. The two 10th century Tanjore inscriptions supply the information relating to the separate quarters respectively for land holders (ur irukkai) and artisans (Kammala Cheri) and

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\(^{225}\) A.R.E., 482 of 1912.
\(^{228}\) A.R.E., 185-188 of 1910.
\(^{229}\) J.S.F.Mackenzie, *Valangai and Idangai Jatiyar Varalaru*, Madras, 1876, p.43
\(^{230}\) S.I.I., Vol.IV, No.529.
Paraiyar (parai-cheri). Castes lower in hierarchy than the Brahmanas, are also referred to in some records only in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The political dissension between the Pallavas and the Pandyas led to the rise of two divisions, when the Cholas came to power the mighty kings began to conquer many places not only in India but also overseas. When they decided to defend the newly conquered territories they handed over them to the soldiers who fought for their victory. The military expansion of the Chola Empire throughout the early half of the 11th century provided some outlet for the emergence of these divisions. The newly recruited soldiers from the newly conquered territories also provided an opportunity for the emergence of two divisions. The original soldiers of Chola army were called as Valangai soldiers and the new recruited were known as the Idangai soldiers. An inscription of Kulottunga I inscription refers to Valangai Mahasenai. An inscription at Thiruvisalur also refers to Valangai army. K.A.Nilakanta Sastri suggested that the people belonging to Valangai division were ever ready to defend the king and his cause with their lives when occasion arose. Abbe Dubois, a French Missionary pointed out that the division did more harm than good by being a perpetual source of disturbance.

234 Ibid., p.325.
among the people.\textsuperscript{240} In tenth century onwards, the ninety eight sects under each of the two divisions were generally of the industrial and agricultural classes.\textsuperscript{241} The Brahmins and a few other communities who claimed the highest predominance were kept aloof from these two groups. These superior castes acted as the creators of trouble between the right-hand and the left-hand factions.\textsuperscript{242}

\textbf{RIGHT HAND DIVISION}

The Valangai division was always the supporters of the kings and Brahmanas. They occupied high positions in the military services during the Cholas and the Pandyas. At the earliest the term Valangai was referred to in tenth century, when Rajaraja I organized a large army for his imperial expeditions, he organized a Valangai Mahasenai.\textsuperscript{243} A poll tax was also collected from them.\textsuperscript{244} It was known as Valangai Megamai. This special tax was collected during the time of the Pandyas also. During the time of Rajaraja I (C.E. 985-1014) and Rajendira I (C.E.1014- 1044) were entitled Idangai and Valangai groups consisted of 98 castes.\textsuperscript{245} An inscription refers to joint declaration made by them for their safety and security. This inscription also refers to the maintenance of a mutt jointly by them.\textsuperscript{246} A twelfth century inscription lists out the castes

\textsuperscript{240} Abbe Dubois, \textit{Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies translated by Henry Beauchamp}, Oxford, 1897, p.75.


\textsuperscript{242} P. Chidambaram Pillay, \textit{Right of Temple Entry}, Nagercoil, 1933, pp.246-248


\textsuperscript{244} S.I.I., Vol.VII, No.4.


\textsuperscript{246} A.R.E.,103 of 1906.
included in Valangai division and list out the different sections of Velaiyara army\textsuperscript{247}. It includes, Sriudanam, Pillaikaldanam, Vadugar, Malaiyalar and Palakalanai\textsuperscript{248}. But, K.A.Nilakanta Sastri suggested that these names did not denote actual classes, in which the soldiers were drawn\textsuperscript{249}.

The Valangai group included merchants, Craftsmen and Agriculturists and Weavers. They held high social status. Later on the rathakaras also joined in the right hand division. They considered themselves as enjoying high status. An inscription of Uyyakondan Udaiyar records a gathering of learned Brahmanas at Rajasraya Chaturvedimangalam to consider the status of a group of craftsmen including goldsmith and silversmith and carpenters\textsuperscript{250}. Komatti Chettis and Beri Chettis were included in this faction. An inscription at Chidambaram distinguishes Brahmanas from other superior castes (kudigal). There Kudigals included two merchant groups of Valangai, Samkarapadaiyar and Viyaparin\textsuperscript{251}. It is also included Vellala, Salaiya and Pattinavar as belonging to Valangai group. The subordinate workmen were tachan (carpenter), Kollar (blacksmith), tattar (goldsmith) and Koliyar (weaver) were included in the Valanagai group. The Parayan and Kammalas were also included in the Valangai group\textsuperscript{252}. The Valangai group enjoyed special privileges, bestowed by the rulers\textsuperscript{253}.

\textsuperscript{247} E.I., Vol.XVIII, pp.337-338.
\textsuperscript{248} Idem.
\textsuperscript{251} E.I., Vol.V, No.22.
\textsuperscript{252} S.I.I., Vol.II, No.47.
\textsuperscript{253} A.R.E., 564 of 1902.
made endowments to the temple and involved in various social activities during the Chola Period.

**LEFT HAND DIVISION**

Some of the inscriptions at medieval Tamil country list out the castes included in the left hand divisions. They describe the social activities and settlement quarters of the division. An inscription of 1218 C.E. at Uttatur relating to the solidarity pact of *Idaingai* group refers to the mythical origin of the *Surutimas*. Their settlements were associates with five *Nadus*. They were known as five *Nattars*. They had the title *Nadalvan*. Valikandapuram inscription of 1227 C.E. refers to above is again a solidarity pact of the left hand communities, which included the communities like *Brahmana, Asariya, Nattaman, Malaiyaman, Pannattar, Vaniya nagara* and *Kaikola*. Another inscription of 13th century refers to the entry of the *Malaiyaman* and the *Nattaman* in the left hand group. This inscription also narrates about the oath took by the members of left hand division. The other members also endorsed the pledge. The member included *Andanar, Akayar, Niyayattar, Kikkolar, Vaniyar, Pon-nattar* and *Saliyar*. The *Malaiyaman* and the *Nattaman* occupy the top positions next only to the *Brahmana* caste. The *Nattaman* was the leader of the *Yadava kula* (yadava caste) obviously a pastoral community. A few inscriptions include the agricultural castes in the left hand division. The *Palli or Pallar* was the agriculturists included in the left hand division.

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254 *A.R.E.*, 489 of 1912.


257 *A.R.E.*, 184 of 1940-41.

258 *A.R.E.*, 276 of 1943-44.
castes. The left and right hand division were capable of dealing with extra local problems beyond the scope and capability of existing institutions. A few historians like Ellis suggested that the basic factor for the dispute were the age-long rivalry between them. But, it is a well known fact that most of agriculturists were included in the right hand faction.  

An inscription at Srirangam dated 1184 C.E. records the assignment of the taxes an entire village in *Valluvappadai nadu* to Srirangam temple. The signatories included landholders of left hand division. An inscription refers to Surutiman were the members of the left hand division. The division of *Valangai* and *Idaingai* was frequently appeared in the inscription of Medieval Tamil country. This social organization arose in the medieval period.

Furthermore, this parallel helps to substantiate the argument that it was essentially the economic changes in South India, traceable to the period of British administration, which led to the decline of overt interest in the right-left division. Nonetheless, social customs and patterns of prestige change more slowly than economic realities. Thus, in some areas of South India many of the traditions associated with this earlier dual organization still endure. The medieval society was feudal in character and structure. Monarchy was the system of the day. The Tamil society especially 9th century onwards ruled by monarchy with imperialist design. Generally the society was broadly composed of various castes. Such as Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras as also number of sub-castes among them. It was status of the society, for it had other divisions as its cardinal features.

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261 *A.R.E.* 515 of 1912.