ORIGIN AND SPREAD OF COMMUNAL RIOTS IN TAMILNADU

“Communalism” in recent Indian usage is used to refer to the section of people in society differentiated by religion or caste or ideas. The ultimate expression of communalism has been the ‘riots’. For an average intellectual, communalism and communal riots are synonymous. The scholars of history, on the other hand, distinguish clearly both the categories. Communalism for them, has been a long-term evolutionary process which at first assumed an ideological formulation; the ideological formulation created the social class, necessary for its ‘reproduction’; the social class, in its turn, found its expression in the contemporary political behaviour; the so evolved political behaviour culminated in the form of political organizations; these political organizations became the radiating centers that continuously radiated the ‘signs’ and ‘symbols’; these ‘signs’ and ‘symbols’ on their part helped the creation of ‘social cleavages’; the social cleavages meant assertions of communal interests and politics which finally culminated into riots, bloodshed and social fragmentations. The ‘communal violence’ is, however, altogether a different category than ‘criminal violence’, ‘social violence’, and the ‘violent revolution’ of the Marxist Philosophy. ‘Violence’ adopted by criminals is generally on localized scale without any, class or community affiliation; but ‘social violence’ or the Marxist ‘violent revolution’ always identifies itself with the category of class. The only difference between ‘social violence’ and the violence of ‘Marxist Revolution’ is of the degree while the Marxist Revolutions are bloody and happen on a very large scale, the ‘social violence’ is in the nature of ‘everyday forms of resistance’ between different

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43 Marc Galanter, Competing Equalities, Low and other Backwards classes in India, Delhi, 1984, pp.16-17.

44 Bipan Chandra, Communalism in Modern India, Delhi, 1992, pp. 1-3.
classes. The ‘communal riots’, on the other hand, are generally the result of the mobilisation at “community level” on ‘caste and religious issues’ in which economics often plays an important role. This distinction of the categories of violence should always be in the mind while studying the communal riots.\(^{45}\)

**Sangam Period**

In Tamil Nadu, a communal riot is not a new phenomenon. According to some historians untouchability existed even in the *Sangam Period*, but it was not based on birth. Another group argues that such untouchability was based on profession. Both these schools of thoughts base their conclusions on classical literature such as the Eight Anthologies (Ettutthohai) and the Ten Idylls (*Pattuppattu*) believed to have been written between the second century and third century A.D. Many point to a poem in *Purananuru* which has a reference to Parayan, a term that denotes a caste that is classified today as a scheduled caste. It highlighted the difference among the people in *Sangam period*\(^{46}\).

The ancient society of the Tamils of the *Sangam* age was predominantly tribal in character. It was organized to a large extent, by keeping equality and freedom as the guiding principles. The society was divided on the basis of the land that the people occupied and the profession that they followed rigid division based on caste system was a later development, for it came because of the Aryans.\(^{47}\) The geographical features of the country as indicated governed the social divisions. The inhabitants of *Kurinji* or hill tracts were hunters, who made a living by hunting down the wild animals. The people of *Palai* or desert area were robbers, who due to scarcity of resources committed robbery on the

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\(^{45}\) Pravin Kumar, *Communalism and Communal Riots in India – A Historical Perpective*, Delhi, 2009, pp. 93-95.


plains. Those who lived in Mullai or pastoral lands were shepherds and cowherds, whose occupation was to take care of their animals. The inhabitants of Marudam or agricultural lands were peasants, and they earned a living through agriculture. The people of Neithal or coastal area were fishermen who depended upon fishing to make a living. Tolkappuiyar, a Brahmin by caste, mentions the castes as Andanar or priestly community, Arasar or the warrior class, Vaisyas or traders and Vellalas or agriculturists. Thus due to Aryan contacts the priests who exploited the society in the name of religion occupied the first place. Apart from them there were the out-caste communities of fishermen (Paradavar), salt manufactures (Umanar) carpenters (Tatchar) and other groups like black smiths, gold smiths, cobblers, weavers and shepherds.  

**Kalabhra Period**

The Kalabhra period witnessed the popularity of Jainism and Buddhism in the Tamil Country. After the decline of Kalabhras rule in Tamil Nadu, the Bhakti Movement contributed to the revival of Hinduism. Jainism and Buddhism lost their importance and royal patronage. In course of time, these religion were eliminated from the status of popular religious in Tamil Nadu because of the communal riots. Devotionals brought in its wake extreme fanaticism. The Pallavas and the first Pandyan empire rulers jointly turned against the Jains and the Buddhists, and attacked them in public and plundered their places.

**Period of First Pandyan Empire**

Ninra Seer Nedumaran or Arikearsi Maravarman the pandya ruler patronised Jainism. His wife Mangayarkarasi and his minister Kulachirai were devoted Saivas.

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They invited Thirugnanasambandar to Pandyanadu and tried to convert the king to Saivism. His songs with stood against water and fire. Jains songs were burnt and were driven away by flood. Jains were defeated. Nearly 8000 of them were impaled. Later on the Pandya ruler became an ardent dovotee of Saivism and patronised it\(^\text{50}\).

**Pallava Period**

Inter-religious rivalry was on the increace in this period. Periyapuranam speaks of a debate between Dandi Adigal and the Sramanas, who were expelled from the city by royal orders after their defeat. Tirumangai Alwar plundered a Buddhist Vihara and took away the golden image of Buddha. With it, he built the fourth prakara of the Srirangam temple.\(^\text{51}\) Intolerant language was used by the Nayanmars against the Jains and the Buddhists. Periyapuranam narrates the incident of Sambandar cursing a Buddhist leader and the latter dying of a cracked skull consequently. Tondaradipodi Alwar too hated Jains and Buddhists.\(^\text{52}\) In his songs, he preferred to kill them. Commenting on the Udaiyendram Plate, Thomas Foulkes is of the view that Nandivarman II expelled the Jain from the land which was donated to them by his ancestors and endowed it to Brahmins. This reveals prevailing attitude of the period. After the decline of Jainism and Buddhism, rivalry between Saivites and Vaisnavites developed.\(^\text{53}\)

When Mahendravarma I was a Jain he persecuted appear, but after his conversion to Saivism he constructed the Kundareswaram temple with the material got from the destruction of many Jain temples. A sculptural panel in Vaikundaperumal temple at Kanchi indicates the impalement of two monks before the king. This action was in close

\(^{50}\) Ibid., p.198.


\(^{52}\) Manoranjithamani.C, *op.cit.*, p.281

\(^{53}\) Minakshi.C, *op.cit.*, pp.207-209
accordance with the spirit of the age.\textsuperscript{54} Anyhow these instances that show the kings intolerance towards other religions are rare. Generally the rulers were tolerant in religion.\textsuperscript{55}

Navakandam or head-offering was practiced during the period. Especially warriors followed the practice to fulfill their vow for getting victory. The Draupadi ratha panel, the varaha mandapa panel, the lower Trichirapalli cave panel, and the Pullamangai temple panel denote this practice of the age. Besides these references and sculptures of that period, the legend of Siruttonder points out that the head-offering and human sacrifices to Durga and Siva were practiced in the days of the Pallavas. The object of this practice may be to pacify the wrath of the Goddess Durga.\textsuperscript{56}

The Pallavas claiming as Brahmins enforced Varnasharma dharma and upheld a caste based social structure. Four groups of people had status in society and in order of influence they were the Brahmins, the Kshatriyas, the Vaisyas and the Sudars. The Kasakudi copper plates and the Curram plates shed light on nature of such social distinctions and barriers. The local people were untouchable, as they did not come under the four fold system.\textsuperscript{57}

**Cholas Period**

The Chola kings maintained a social system, that was marked by social iniquity and economic inequality. The Brahminical influence, that made a beginning by the fifth century A.D. suffered a setback under the Kalabhras but gained ascendancy under the

\textsuperscript{54} Rajayyan.K, *op.cit.*, p.81  
\textsuperscript{55} Swaminathan.A, *op.cit.*, pp.82-84  
\textsuperscript{56} Manoranjithamani.C, *op.cit.*, p.282  
\textsuperscript{57} Rajayyan.K, *op.cit.*, p.102
Pallavas and entrenched itself in the social life of the Tamils under the Cholas\textsuperscript{58}. Social distinctions assumed so rigid a proportion that privileges came to be associated with the high born. Each caste was sub-divided into numerous groups and the low castes were driven to neglect corners of towns and villages to be subjected to oppression and exaction. There emerged a fourfold division of society, based on \textit{Varnashrama}, sub-divisional grouping and right hand-left hand distinction. \textit{Varnashrama} divided the population into \textit{Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas} and \textit{Sudras} as in Pallava period. In addition there developed numerous sub castes in each of the major castes. Saivites and Vaishnavites were two groups of Hindus. It is not certain how a kind of social division of right-hand and left-hand had originated. According to tradition a dispute arose between two merchant communities, \textit{Balija} and \textit{Nagaratar}, about their precedence at public ceremonies. Before long the \textit{Komaties, Valluvar, Shanar} and \textit{Parayar} joined the \textit{Balijas}, while the \textit{Chettiss, Pallies, Kaikolar} and \textit{Panchalas} supported the \textit{Nagaratars}. There upon Karikala Chola summoned the two groups to the Kamakshi Temple at Kanchi, listened to their viewpoint and declared them as of equal status. Those who stood on the right hand side of goddess were called Right Hand Castes (\textit{Balijas group}), and others who stood on left hand side were called Left Hand Castes (\textit{Nagaratar group}). The \textit{Vellalas, Nayakkar, Reddis} and \textit{Brahmins} formed the neutral group\textsuperscript{59}. The attempt at settlement did not end the dispute. On the other hand it gave convenient labels for more of disputes. The right hand groups looked at the left hand groups as low. The warring functions made Kanchi the centre of their of controversy, marked by clashes, plunder and destruction. Some iniquities created social unrest, leading to setting fire to restore social

\textsuperscript{58} Minakshi.C, \textit{Administration and Social life among the Pallavas}, University of Madras, 1997, p.22.

\textsuperscript{59} Manoranjithamani.C, \textit{op.cit.}, pp.281.
harmony, king Kulothunga III made a review of the privileges and liabilities of different groups made concessions to the low. Yet order could not be restored. A popular riot described in a record of the second year of Rajaraja III as Guhai-idi-kalaham, a revolt in which monasteries were demolished. This occurred in the twenty second regnal year of Kulotunga III in 1200 A.D. and in it the property suffered badly. The causes of this demonstration are not stated and we cannot even say whether it was directed against this particular guhai or guhais in general on the later assumption.

The leading instance of religious intolerance in the period of Chola rule is that of the persecution of Ramanuja and his followers by a Chola monarch whose identity is not altogether free from doubt. There is reason to believe that his persecution led to a popular revolt in which Adhirajendra, (1070 – 1071 A.D) the last ruler in the male line descending from Vijayalaya (850 – 871 A.D) lost his life. If this is a correct view of the course of events, two inferences may be drawn. First that far from being part of a definite policy of the Chola monarchy to root out Vaishavism, the persecution of Ramanuja was only the freak of an individual ruler. Secondly, the general atmosphere was so unfavourable to a narrow religious policy, that the monarch who attempted it lost his life in a popular revolt and has ever since been universally abhorred as the Kirimikanda (the putrid neck) Cholan. No persecution has ever failed to turn out ultimately to the profit of the persecuted faith and there is no doubt that the creed of Ramanuja, was Acharyas drew fresh strength from the foolish and short-lived attempt to crush it out of existence. The fact remains, however, that from this period, the Saivite and the

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Vaishnavite of south India became strangers to that friendly feeling which subsisted between them in an earlier age when they waged a common war against Buddhist and Jains\(^6^4\).

Another spasmodic outburst of anti-Vaisnava feeling is much better attested than the persecution of Ramanuja, which is so overgrown with legend that the real course of events seem to be lost beyond recovery. That Kulottunga II (1135 – 1150 A.D) was a fanatic Saivite who wanted to upset the time-honoured disposition of the images of Siva and Vishnu in the great temple or the holiest centre of South Indian Saivism. The balance of the two faiths, thus rudely upset by Vijayanagar rulers, but once again the old harmony has gone and the attitude of the two groups of devotees that have to jostle in the premises of the temple is hardly as friendly as the relative positions of the deities they worship would seem to require.\(^6^5\)

**Vijayanagar Period**

In view of the challenges that Muslim militarism and religious fanaticism presented to Hindu culture, the Rayas of Vijayanagar, as the defenders of the Brahminical order, endeavoured to preserve and protect the traditional values and practices. As a result the social iniquities that were getting accumulated over the centuries found a new source of strength under the Vijayanagar regime\(^6^6\). Because of the policy of the rulers social rigidity that was based on the Brahminical doctrine of *Varnasrama Dharma* assumed rigorous proportions. Caste titles were attached to personal names to indicate internal solidarity of particular communities. As in the past the Hindu priests presided over a vast system of mutual hatred and untouchability,


generated through caste distinctions. The Telugu Brahmins by virtue of their religious hold and linguistic affinity exercised on overwhelming influence over the rulers. However the Vijayanagar period witnessed a revival and growth of Hinduism, for it is in the hour of gloom religion flourished most and at the same time widening rift among rival sects came to prevail. The Rayas rebuilt the religious, establishment, restored the idols that were removed for safety during Muslim invasions, provided for regular worship and enriched them with gifts of land, jewels and money. With the ascendancy of Hinduism under royal patronage it faced no serious challenge from Islam. As a result there developed splits and counter splits. Most of the Hindu were Saivites, while the rulers and others were Vaishnavites. The Saivites were divided into Advaitins, Pasupatas and Vira Saivas. Their differences were centers on the use of Sanskrit and the Vedas and the interpretation of the dogmas. The Vaishnavites were divided into Vadakalai and Thenkalai. The Vadakalai sect used the Sanskrit Vedas as religious texts and upheld caste differences. The Thenkalai sect followed the Tamil Prabandhas as their religious texts and indifferent to Caste system. Vedanta Desikar was a great scholar of the Vadakalai sect. Jainism and Buddhism continued to exist in the Tamil Country but their following dwindled greatly due to continued persecution and over taxation by the Hindu rulers.

While there were grave circumstances of social and religious unrest, the Vijayanagar rulers examined the problem and decided the issue by taking due care to

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68 Nilakanta Sastri, op.cit., p.652.
69 Subrahmanian.N, op.cit., p.56
70 Rajayyan.K, op.cit., pp.170-171
consider the *Sastraic* basis of doubtful cases demanding settlement\(^71\). In Madurai for instance, the *Sourashtras*, who had settled there in large numbers, attempted to raise themselves in the social scale by assuming *Brahmin* caste names and performing the Brahminical ceremony of “*Upakarma*”, or the annual renewal of the sacred thread. There was a great agitation over this practice and the Governor of Madurai arrested 18 members of the of the *Sourashtra* community for performing such acts\(^72\). Managammal (1689 to 1706 A.D) the ruler of Madurai, took cognizance of the situation and convened a meeting of men learned in the Sastras to investigate into the question of the right of the *Pattunulkarans* to perform this ceremony. This assembly, after going into the details of the subject, declared in favour of the practice, and on their advice Queen Mangammal granted a Sasanam authorizing the *Pattunulkarans* to follow the rights prescribed for *Brahmins* in regard to “*Upkarma*”\(^73\). A few years earlier Virappa Nayakka (1609 – 1621) of Madurai proclaimed that the five divisions of the *Kammalans* (artisans) should not intermingle. This order was issued by the ruler to facilitate the separation of the communities from one another in their own interests and because a regulation was needed from the Government. In all these cases the *sastraic* sanctions were examined in all their details and only if there was sufficient sanction for legislation in social and religious matters and the people were prepared to receive the slight innovations cheerfully and allowed the state interfere in such matters\(^74\).

On questions, which demanded fact and diplomacy on the part of the rulers for effecting compromises between rival creeds or religious, the Vijayanagar sovereigns took personal interest and solved them successfully. In 1368, a great-dispute arose between

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\(^71\) Swaminathan.A, *op.cit*.,p.227  
\(^72\) Manoranjithamani.C, *op.cit*.,p.573  
\(^73\) Rajayyan.K, *op.cit*.,p.178  
\(^74\) Ibid.,p.180
the *Vaishnavas* and the Jains were emerged with regard to the use of the five great musical instruments and the *Kalasa* (holy water pot) on ceremonial occasions and processions. The question went up to the head quarters where Bukkai (1356 – 1377 A.D)\(^{75}\) was ruling. He called the leaders of both the sects, investigated the question with their help and issued a proclamation to the effect that there was no difference between the *Darsana* of both of them and taking the land of the Jains placed them under the protection of the latter. He declared that the Jains were entitled to use the five great drums and that they should not consider each other as different. He also appointed a special officer to carry out this order and made him responsible for it. Thus such communal and religious questions which were the cause of much disorder in the empire were decided amicably.\(^{76}\)

**Nayaks Period**

Muslim expansions to the south had its reaction in the rise of a Hindu empire in Vijayanagar. The whole of southern India was under the sway of Vijayanagar prior to 15\(^{th}\) century. At that time Telugu Nayaks were the real rulers of Tamil Nadu from the second half of the 16\(^{th}\) century until the middle of the 18\(^{th}\) century. During this period communal conflict occurred in Tamil Nadu for the establishment of social and religious justice\(^{77}\).

The arrival of Portuguese into Tamil Nadu offered a death blow to the appearance of the Danish, Dutch, French and English traders in the southern seas. It led to the increase of the Christian population in Vijayanagar Empire\(^{78}\). St.Thomas one of the

\(^{75}\) Subrahmanian.N, *op.cit* ., p.57  
\(^{77}\) Subrahmanian.N, *op.cit* .,p.33  
\(^{78}\) Rajayyan.K, *op.cit* .,p.179
disciples of Jesus Christ had already reached the Malabar coast and then proceeded to the east and preached Christianity at Mylapore by mid first century A.D. But he was killed by the local people\textsuperscript{79}. But after a lapse of nearly fifteen centuries the portion had changed.

The Hindus of the south resolved to make the endeavour to put an end to the Muslim atrocities and save their indigenous religion and culture. Kapaya Nayaka was the leader of the war of Liberation\textsuperscript{80}. The arrival of Portuguese on the west coast of India in 1948 A.D. was an important event in the history of Tamil Nadu. They directly professed friendship with the emperor of Vijayanagar. But they indirectly professed enormity with them. The Vijayanagar rulers patronised Hinduism because they followed the policy of revival of Hinduism in Tamil Nadu. The Muslim onslaught was heavy. Christian missionaries had done their Evangelical works rapidly. During that period Vaishnavism was formally established in the south as a result of the onslaughts on Jainism and Saivism. Sometimes Christians were protected by the rulers while occasionally some of the Christians were persecuted by them\textsuperscript{81}

Vijayaraghunatha’s (1689-1730 A.D) attitude towards Christianity was very favourable in the beginning. But soon the Sethupathi seems to have changes in his policy, as the Jesuits complained of bad treatment from him. He gave orders to his soliders to enter the houses of Christians and destroy all traces of their faith\textsuperscript{82}. The missionary activities of the Portuguese on the pearl fishery coast of Tuticorin was also one of the causes of the expedition. They not only converted a large number of Paravas

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{79} Swaminathan.A, \textit{op.cit.}, p.245
  \item \textsuperscript{80} Gupta.S.P, \textit{op.cit.}, p.164
  \item \textsuperscript{81} Heras.H, \textit{South India Under the Vijayanagar Empire}, Cosmo publications, New Delhi, 1980, p.XIV.
  \item \textsuperscript{82} Sathiyanatha Aiyer.R, \textit{History of the Nayaks of Madura}, Madaras, 1980, p.171
\end{itemize}
but also induced them to transfer their allegiance to the king of Portugal. The Franciscan
Fraiars and the Jesuits demolished temples and constructed churches in the coastal areas.
The Portuguese Governor of Goa was also organizing a plundering raid on the rich Hindu
temples of Kanchi. Vittala took severe action against the Portuguese and brought them
under the control of Vijayanagar\(^3\). Rama Raya received complaints about the Christians
of Mylapore who destroyed the temples and he also heard of the vast riches of the area.
In order to defend his religion and to prevent the plunder of the wealth Rama Raya
undertook an expedition to St. Thome in A.D.1535. He also ordered to his cousin Vittala
to make simultaneous attack on Goa to prevent help reaching St.Thome. The expedition
was a success and Rama Raya was able to get 1,00,000 (one lakh) pagodas as tribute.\(^4\)

In their attempt to discover his tomb the Portuguese Jesuits reached Santhome.
The Jesuits preached Christianity and gained converts. However it was the conversion of
the Paravas of the Fishery Coast that swelled the Christian population. To the
conservative Hindus the Paravas were among the most wretched, yet the rulers of
Vijayanagar considered them useful as a source of revenue. After the fall of the Madurai
sultanate (1371 A.D), many of the Muslims moved to the Coast and gained control of the
fisheries. They imposed restrictions on fishing, gained a monopoly in the sale of pearls,
made exactions and oppressed the Paravas\(^5\). In 1532 there broke out clashes and the
Muslims massacred the fishermen. Yet the rulers of Vijayanagar extended no aid or
relief to the suffering Paravas. Thereupon, on a suggestion made by Christian from
Malabar fifteen Pattangaltis, as the Parava head men were called, went on a mission to
the Portuguese at Kochi, sought their aid and agreed to become Christians. Accordingly

\(^3\) Ibid.,p.175  
\(^4\) Thangasamy.S.A, Vijayanagar Empire : A Brief History (A.D 1336-1565), Pannai Pathippagam,
\(^5\) Ibid.,p.85
20,000 Paravas embraced the catholic religion\textsuperscript{86}. Now a Portuguese fleet appeared off the Fishery Coast, destroyed the Muslim ships, and drove out the Muslims from the Coast. As a result the Portuguese established their authority in the Coast and claimed the Paravas as their own subjects. From the Fishery Coast Christianity spread to Thanjavur and to Travancore. Francis Xavier and other missionaries made a significant contribution in this regard. Alarmed at the spread of this religion, the Brahmans of Trichy\textsuperscript{87} appealed to the Emperor for intervention. Thereupon, Vithala led a series of expeditions to the Fishery Coast\textsuperscript{87}. Gaining the co-operation of the Muslims, he suppressed the Christians. After the decline of Empire, the Nayaks launched persecution against the Christians. Despite the fall of the Madurai Sultanate and rise of a Hindu Empire in Vijayanagar, Islam survived in the Country. The rulers of Vijayanagar needed their support not only for the import of horses but also of their sea power for the persecution of the Christians. This enabled the Muslims to settle down as traders, sailors and army men\textsuperscript{88}.

**Communal Riots in Tamilnadu (16\textsuperscript{th} Century – 18\textsuperscript{th} Century)**

Tamilagam was open for missionary activities on a large scale in the sixteenth century by the Jesuits father of the Padroado or Patronage system. The decline of the Portuguese and their defeat by the Dutch in 1658 was followed by period of troubles for the Jesuits. The fathers were arrested and imprisoned. Even in Madurai in 1677 A.D. Fr. Boniface was ill-treated and arrested by the men of Chokanatha Nayak (1659-1682 A.D). When the Nayak came to know of it, he punished the officers responsible for it. But outside the Nayak country of Madurai, the kings also joined with the persecutors. The

\textsuperscript{86} Rajayyan.K, \textit{op.cit.}, p.180
\textsuperscript{87} Rajayyan, \textit{op.cit.}, p.183
king of Thanjavur was greedy for money and never spared the foreign Sanyasis\(^{89}\). The Jesuit letters adduce plenty of evidences regarding the vindictive measures of the Tanjavur Nayak and Maratha Kings\(^{90}\). Yet the untiring missionaries founded Christian settlements in many parts of Tanjavur. The base of operation of the Jesuits in Thanjavur was Madurai Country. The condition became worse during the reign of the Maratha King Shahji (1684-1712). He was the bitter enemy of Christians. He ordered the arrest of Christian women and sold them as prostitutes. It was considered that attitude most unbecoming of a king. On a feast day, in 1702, Shahji arrested 10,000 Christians along with two Fathers, namely, Joseph Carvelho and Michael\(^{91}\). The Marava ruler Ragunatha Sethupathi (1645-1670 A.D) wanted to root out Christianity from his soil. It was in this country John De Britto opted for missionary work. In the words of Fernado, “Ragunatha Sethupathi was a most cruel tyrant, a relentless persecutor of the Christians and ordered John De Britto not to preach the gospel in his country. A conversion of a Marava Prince aroused the anger of Sethupati and his order to fetch De Britto was instantly executed with all vigour. The Jesuits wanted to stop the execution of Britto through Queen Mangammal (1689-1706 A.D) But the representation of Queen Mangammal and other chiefs were over looked and Britto was executed on 4\(^{th}\) February 1693\(^{92}\). Thus it was a period of storm and stress with regard to religion.

**Communal Riots In Tamil Nadu (19\(^{th}\) Century)**

Temple entry movement was the major communal problem during this period. Certain sections in the society such as the *Nadars, the Komutti Chetties* and the

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\(^{89}\) Ibid., p.64-65

\(^{90}\) Swaminathan.A, *op.cit.*, p.246

\(^{91}\) Ibid., p.248

\(^{92}\) Sundararaj.T, *opcit.*, pp.64-65
untouchables were not allowed to enter the temples to worship Gods and Goddesses. But the Nadars got economic growth in due course of time; they asserted their rights to temple entry which was denied to them on the ground that they were socially low. The Nadars in the 19th century agitated for temple entry at Aruppukottai (1860), Tiruchendur (1872), Madurai (1874), Tiruthangal (1876-1878), Gollapatti (1885), Madurai (1890), Kalugumalai (1895), Kamuthi (1897), and Sivakasi (1899). Among the communal riots Aruppukottai and Sivakasi riots were the major communal problems during the 19th century.93

The Aruppukottai Case: (1860)

Aruppukottai town, thirty miles south of Madurai occupies an area of 60 square miles. At present it is one of the Taluks of Virudhunagar district. Accounts of conflicts between Aruppukottai Nadars and members of other Jaus date back to the last decade of the 19th century described by modern day Nadars as "the worst period" for the Nadars.94

Causes

As mentioned by of V. H. Levinge, the Magistrate of Madurai "the cause of the outrage is owing to the answer given by government to the petitioners who complained of Mr.Clarke having permitted the Shanars to go in disturbance the Vakils of the petitioners wrote down here. He was credibly informed, that the petitioners would get no good in Madras and their only chance was to prove that

his report was false and to make such a disturbance as would terrify the Government, and cause the issuing of an order forbidding Shanars to go in a palanquin.95

Conflicts between Aruppukottai Nadars and other jati groups also arose in connection with religious processions. It was told that a ritually inferior deity cannot enter the territory of a superior deity without polluting it, just as people of low caste cannot, according to the rules of Varnashrama dharma enter the temples of ritually pure jatis without polluting them. When a case seeks to bear one of its deities through the streets of other castes, the farmer is expressing a claim to equal status.96

Course

The riot was started on 7th September 1860. Some of the Nadars came to Madurai and represented to the District Magistrate that they anticipated some disturbance during a marriage procession. He issued a warrant for the apprehension of leaders who were suspected of creating disturbances and sent orders to the Zamindar for giving assistance. Further, he directed the police Amin to be proceed at Aruppukkottai and prevent the outbreak of disturbances. But the officers who hailed from higher castes ignored the order of the Magistrate. He stated that there could be no doubt that this outrage occurred with the connivance and assistance of the police authorities. Some days before 10th September, a crowd destroyed the gardens and wells of the Nadars, surrounding the town. Yet the police Amin took no notice of this and made no inquiries nor did

95 G.O.No.1232, Judicial Department, Letter No.251, 1860.
96 Dennis Templeman, The Northern Nadars of Tamilnadu, Delhi, 1996, p.96.
he report the circumstance to the Magistrate. The outbreak of the 10th September 1860 was also known to be the Amin quite in advance but the kept silence and went to the town only after 12th September.97

In the afternoon of 10th September, two of the constables from Kamudi who went to Aruppukottai reported that they saw the village Munsif and Mettupeon were sitting in the Tana, looking at the crowds of man and women running away to their houses with the plunder on their heads. At the commencement of the plundering the Muhammadans hoisted a flag which they called the Nawab’s flag. The plundering commenced at a signal made by beating a drum and it ceased on the same signal being made. Property of the value of at least 30,000 rupees was taken off and the number of shops plundered was 110. But no person was beaten or hurt. The Nadars being overpowered, prudently offered no resistance.98

The Magistrate reported after a detailed inquiry that there is ample evidence to the fact that this daring robbery was not been by mere caste prejudices, but had originated in a long smothered and still growing animosity against the Nadars and was carried out in an open defiant spirit which, coupled with the reported tenor of their correspondence at Madras, plainly led them to withdraw the protection hitherto afforded to the Nadars.99 The head and wealthy men carefully avoided taking any conspicuous part in the plunder, but to make their vengeance more certain they let loose in the town all the reactionary that it was a deliberate and deeply laid scheme to annihilate all the Nadars hopes of

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97 G.O.No.1232, Judicial Department, Letter NO.252, 1860.
98 G.O.No.1283, Judicial Department, 1860.
99 G.O.No.1232, Judicial Department, Letter No. 166. 1860.
Before the Sivakasi riots in 1899, the Aruppukottai Nadars got into a dispute with the Pandarams over the ownership and proper deity of a temple. The facts of dispute are rather vague. It is not clear whether the Pandarams instigated it by refusing to serve as temple priests. Unless the temple was made entirely occupied by them, the Nadar instigated it by trying to remove the Dravidian Goddess, Varathamman and replace her with Balasubramanian, an Aryan deity. The most important point about this case from Nadar point of view is that it was taken to the official judicial system. The Pandarams are said to have filed a suit claiming sole ownership of the temple on the basis of their being the deity's rightful priests. The Nadars countered this claiming that since the building was theirs they could use it as they pleased. Faced with such a conflict between religious rights and property rights, the court came up with an interesting solution: it closed the temple. The temple remained closed for almost seventy years, till it was finally reopened in the mid-1960s.

S.A. Muthu Nadar, a leader of Aruppukottai Nadars, decided to send a body of fighting men to the village of Chinnaiapuram about fifteen miles south west of Aruppukottai to defend it from attack by hostile castes. At that time that a body of Aruppukottai Nadars was on its way to Chinnaiapuram the village of Ramanaikanpatti Nadars vacated their village and sought shelter in Aruppukottai. Among the pillars numbered about 100, some of them were attacked with weapons. The Nadars retreated and he found himself cut off from

100 Ibid., Letter No. 167. 1860.
101 Sarada Devi.c, The History of the Nadars, Coimbatore, 2010, pp. 130-131
102 Dennis. Templeman. op.cit., Delhi. 1996. p.95
the rest when Ayyanadar was wounded. The Aruppukottai *Nadars* were armed with long sticks and marched on however, intent on helping the *Nadars* of Chinnaipuram. The opponents sensed the latest decision taken at Aruppukottai they hastened to Chinnaipuram surrounded the place, looted, and set fire to the houses. If the *Nadars* of Aruppukottai had gone there Chinnaipuram would have been saved from such a fate.103

**Results**

A few days later reserve police came from Tiruchi to guard Nadar settlement. Most were withdrawn after a period of three years. Then the reserve police were sent to Sivakasi. As a result of the riots of 1860, further riots were spread in Aruppukottai in the 1920s, 1950s and in Sivakasi riot was started with the help of Aruppukottai *Nadars*. In 1920s serious clash between Muslim weavers and *Nadars* emerged relating to a religious procession. The Muslims regarded the street as their own and objected to a Hindu deity being brought in procession along it. At one point in the mid 1920s, a violent clash ensured. This clash resulted in both Muslims and *Nadars* having a punitive tax imposed on them to support the reserve police station established at Aruppukottai to keep the peace.104

Yet another clash in the early 1950s resulted from a *Nadar* Religious procession, such a conflict with the *Devangar Chettiars* arose after the inauguration of the *Nadars* new Siva temple in 1906. For over 20 years thereafter the *Nadars* conducted an annual procession from their Siva temple to

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104 Hardgrave L., op. cit., p.118
a small Nadar temple outside of town on the road to Kamudi. The Nadar religious procession was affected by heavy rain falling. The Nadars stopped the procession and to return the deity (Siva) to the temple. As soon as possible, the people decided that it would be quicker to take the road which constituted the border between the Saliyar and Nadar sectors rather than the usual route through the Nadar sector. On this occasion, however a solution was out without recourse to the courts. As the Nadars owned the street between their sector and that of the Saliyars they therefore erected what one Nadar respondent has called Aruppukkottai’s own Berlin wall. As of 1960 this wall ran the entire length of the border between the Saliyar sector and the rest of Aruppukkottai making it difficult for Saliyars to enter the main body of the town. The representatives of certain jatis on the municipal board threatened to relocate the bus depot if the wall were not removed. However the feeling still prevailed in 1970 that removing the wall would show weakness. 105

Government Response

The village of Aruppukkottai in Madurai district is a very populous place and a great Shanar centre. It is 10 miles from Virudhupatti. For the proper performance of the police work and the patrol of the road between Virudhupatti and Aruppukkottai an increase of two Constables was recommended. Virudhupatti is included in Sattur taluk which forms part of the area in which additional police is quartered. A good building may be constructed as a tana on the road from Virudhupatti to Aruppukkottai at the extreme limits of Virudhupatti Police station. All the cases connected with the anti-Shanar quarrel should in

future be tried by a European Magistrate. The location of sub-Magistrate of Sivakasi and Tahsildar Magistrates at Sattur, Srivilliputtur, Tenkasi and Tirumangalam being empowered to investigate grave crimes are important.\textsuperscript{106}

With reference to the anti-Shanar movement Stevenson Inspector General of Police had the honour to make the following suggestions\textsuperscript{107}:

a. That certain village be transferred from the Madura district to Tinnelvelly.

b. That the sanctioned strength of certain stations be increased.

c. That Aruppukkottai be made a Municipality.

Aruppukkottai is the most important village in the Madurai district. It is really the centre of its Shanar community. The shanars of Aruppukkottai, Virudhupatti and Sivakasi are closely related to one another by birth and trade. Virudhupatti is between the two places and is really the centre of the Shanar community of Madura and Tinnevelly. A Shanar college which glories in the name of Kshatrya patasala was opened in Virudhupatti in 1895. Virudhupatti saved from fire and loot by the early arrival of the troops\textsuperscript{108}.

The hatred that exists at present and which will exist for many years to come unless the Shanars give up all hope of obtaining the rights and privileges which they have been fighting from generations will be a cause of anxiety and trouble to the local officials. The anti-Shanars will not give into the Shanars

\textsuperscript{106} G.O.No.704. Judicial Department. 18\textsuperscript{th} May 1900.

\textsuperscript{107} Patc.H.R,\textbf{Madras District Gazzetteers: Tinnevelly}, Madras, 1917, p. 125

\textsuperscript{108} Vanamalai.N, (ed.), Sivakasi Kalagam(T), pp. 418-419
without a desperate struggle, after all they have undergone and are undergoing in the criminal courts. It must be clearly borne in mind that the Shanars were unmerciful. The anti-Shanars particularly the Maravars, with their pernicious Kudikaval system, will persecute the Shanars in every possible occasion. They will adopt the same tactics as they have done in extorting their kudikaval fees in trying to ruin the Shanar trade, which then will be able to do with impunity as they will be assisted indirectly and have the sympathy of the anti-Shanars. This being the case Shanar merchants will be attached by these hereditary dacoits on every possible occasion. So that 1, 2 or even 3 Shanars will not dare for some time to move freely about the country with their merchandise and the Government is bound Stevenson thought, to protect them under these circumstances.

Special measures recommended by the Government:

1. The transfer of the villages recommended above, that the sanctioned strength of the Arupukkottai, Virudhupatti, Kalpatti, Saptur and Nathampatti stations be increased, or if the latter two stations be not increased, that a new station should be opened at Santhyur, where there was one formerly.

2. That the headquarters of the Sub-Magistrate and the Inspector be transferred from Tiruchchuli to Arupukkottai.

3. That Arupukkottai be made a Municipality

4. That the present punitive force be increased by 50 men, with the required number of officers and stationed at Virudhupatti.

5. As regards Arupukkottai, Stevenson pointed out the above how closely
this village and consequently those surrounding it is connected with Virudhupatti and Sivakasi.\textsuperscript{109}

Inspector immediately arrested nine Maravars and the rest escaped\textsuperscript{110}.

In 1899, Sivakasi, Srivilliputtur and Sattur were the sites of major rioting between the Nadars and other communities, particularly the Maravars. It was the apogee of the Nadars conflict with the Maravars and for the older generation of these place even today the riot is the event by which time is reckoned.\textsuperscript{111}

Causes: towards the close of 1895 the Shanars at Sivakasi appeared to have submitted a petition to the President of the Devastanam committee in Tinnelvelly praying for the appointment of a shanan as trustee of the Viswanathaswamy temple at Sivakasi. The committee then declined to appoint the trustee and rumour points to the subsequent death of the two Shanar candidates for the appointment as an illustration of divine retributive. It is not clear at present why the Shanars made this move in 1895, but it seems to have been long a wish of the principal Shanars in Sivakasi that they should make Sivakasi an exclusively Shanar village and probably this attempt to get a footing in the management of the temple was part of the scheme.\textsuperscript{112}

In 1896 the ani-Shanar party complained that the Shanars were likely to create disturbance at the Kirthigai festival. The Deputy Collector on that occasion appears to have accompanied the procession himself and there was

\textsuperscript{109} G.O. No. 1123, Judicial Department, 4\textsuperscript{th} September 1899.

\textsuperscript{110} G.O.No.2017-18, Judicial Department, 12th December 1899.


\textsuperscript{112} G.O.No.2017-18, Judicial Department, Vol.II, 12\textsuperscript{th} December 1899,p.7,
no disturbance. Since then the Shanars seem to have more or less persistently claimed entrance into the temple and the anti-Shanars have as persistently opposed it on the economic background Shanars developed their position in the commercial field.\textsuperscript{113}

In 1897 the Shanars, with a view apparently to push their claims, removed the pujari or priest of the worship at the Mariamman temple, a small temple in Sivakasi, and appointed for the worship there a Brahman who was brought down from the Coimbatore district through the influence of the Shanar priest there. This man on arrival at Sivakasi struck up a friendship with the pujari of the big Siva temple (The Viswanathaswamy temple) and fed with him. This gave the trustee of that temple, a Vellala apparently by caste, the opportunity desired for fomenting trouble and he reported that the Brahman brought down by the Shanars brought food which had been polluted by the Shanars in to the Siva Brahman house. Disputes resulted and the cook of the Siva temple was beaten. The Shanar Brahman was refused food in the Siva Brahmins house and the temple was actually shut to prevent any of the Shanars from entering it.

Beginning from the middle of 1898, the disputes in the Tinnevelly district arrived at an acute stage. The police reports connected with the Shanars dispute from August, 1898 down to the riots and the action of the magistracy of the district in the same matter. It will then be possible to see how far the police failed in keeping the Magistrates informed of what was going on and how for

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., p.8.
the Magistrates failed to grasp the situation and to deal with it.\textsuperscript{114}

Some Shanars attempted to enter the temple clandestinely and the house of a dancing-girl (Sornam) belonging to the Siva temple was set on fire on the 14\textsuperscript{th} July and on the 16\textsuperscript{th} July. There had been an alarm that the temple had been fallen by some Shanars. On the same night some mischief was done in a garden belonging to the smaller Shanar temple in the village. Then on the night of the 17\textsuperscript{th} July 1898 some Shanar houses were found to be on fire. The Deputy Magistrate at the same time addressed the superintendent of police and ordered ten constables to go to for duty. In all the cases the Police was unable to detect the offenders and the cases might stop.\textsuperscript{115}

In 1878 the Srivilliputtur District Munsif passed an order forbidding the Shanars of Tirutangal a village in that Taluk, from entering, the temple there and offering coconuts while at the same time they were allowed to take their own procession round the streets\textsuperscript{116}.

In 1885 some Shanars of Gollapatti village in the Sattur Taluk of Tinnevelly put in a petition that they might carry their procession through the village against the wish of the local Zamindar and the people in the village of other castes than their own. It was then ruled that this procession was to go only through the Shanar quarter of the village.\textsuperscript{117}

On 3\textsuperscript{rd} October 1898 the District Magistrate received a petition from the Trustees of the Viswanathaswamy temple of Sivakasi, alleging among other

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., pp.8-9.
\textsuperscript{115} G.O.No.2017-18, Judicial Department, Vol.II. 12\textsuperscript{th} December 1899, p.130.
\textsuperscript{116} Madras Mail,29\textsuperscript{th} June 1899
\textsuperscript{117} G.O.No.2017-18, Judicial Department, Vol.II. 12\textsuperscript{th} December 1899, p.131.
things.

a) That the Shanars had no right of entry into the temple.

b) That the Shanars had assumed an aggressive attitude at Sivakasi

c) That the Shanars had in 1895 tried to get the appointment of Trustee of the temple into their hands and that action was stopped by the order of the Guru of the Sri Singeri mutt.

d) That the Shanars in consequence determined in any case to force an entry into the temple on the 16th July and on the 28th July.

e) That no effectual assistance had been given to the temple authorities to permit worship in the temple.

f) That the police were partial owing to the amount of money which the Shanars were spending in the town.

g) That the Shanars were enraged owing to their failure to obtain conviction against the Maravars in a case of mischief.

h) That on the 7th September when the Shanars forced an entry into the temple the police charged them.

Sivakasi Temple Closed

a) On the night of the 16th July after the Shanars were alleged to have broken into it.

b) On the 28th July the second alleged trespass into the temple occurred.
c) On the 7th September two Shanars are alleged to have entered the temple in the day time. On the occasion the temple was finally shut and remained so up to the riots of the 6th June 1899.\textsuperscript{118}

Communal Conflict In Sivakasi

On 20th April 1899, the local Inspector of police reported that the Maravars near Sivakasi were urging the chuckliers there to put on the sacred thread and go to the temple of the Nadars and defile it. It marked the beginning of more organised attacks. A major encounter took place on 26th April 1899. The Marava quarters to the north of the town were in flames and the Maravars and the Nadars were having a free fight in front of the burning houses. The police Inspector who went there with the constables found the Marava quarters in flames and the fight going on between about 400 Nadars and half as many Maravars. Sticks and knives were being freely used and big stones and bricks were hustling through the air in directions.\textsuperscript{119}

The Inspector ordered the crowd to disperse but the mob fired at him. He continued to warn them of the consequences if they refused to go. The Inspector did not wait for the Deputy Magistrate but ran back to his men as they were getting excited and wanted to fire on the mob. He ordered some shots to be fired into the air. About fifteen rounds were fired and as the Maravars had the worst of the fight they left the place. The Deputy Magistrate arrived at the

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., p.20.
\textsuperscript{119} G.O.No.2017-18, Judicial Department, 12th December 1899.
spot about 5 p.m. or three hours after the riot began. At the time of rioting was going on Sivakasi, Deputy Magistrate saw three Nadars shooting with guns from the roof of a house. It was reported by the constables and the Inspector. One of the Maravars was hit with small shot and was admitted in the hospital. The damage done to the Maravars was great. Forty-five houses were being burnt to the ground and as many families rendered homeless and practically destitute. Nadars were affected slightly. On the same evening Maravars had entered the pettai, burnt the sheds and looted three small go downs. Suddenly the Deputy Magistrate ordered to the Inspector to arrest the rioters. The Inspector immediately arrested nine Maravars and the rest escaped.

On 18th May 1899 a petition reached the Deputy Magistrate by post to the effect that the Maravars and Pillais of Sivakasi had collected some 20000 men to loot the Nadars houses.

The Anti-Nadars made vast preparations for the mal encounter. They openly declared the date for the sacking of the town. A notice was pasted in front of the main door of the temple. Tuesday was the weekly fair day at Sivakasi and the place being an important centre of trade. The weekly fairs held there was usually attended by a large concourse of people. The Sub-Magistrate of Sattur reported on 1st June 1899 that there was a general panic at Sivakasi and some people were vacating the place in fear of a general commotion. The bazaar street of Sivakasi was not very lively, but no specific complaints came

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121 Ibid., p.133.
122 G.O. No. 2017-18, Judicial Department, 12th December 1899.
123 Sobhanan. B, Temple Entry Movement and Sivakasi Riots, Madurai, 1985, p.71
forth and no unlawful assemblies were held\(^{124}\).

On 5\(^{th}\) June 1899 District Magistrate referred to the bands of looters, which he stated were wandering in the Taluk as 'under a religious frenzy' and carrying on a religious crusade against the *Nadars* for their success in the matter of entering the Sivakasi temple.\(^{125}\) On 6\(^{th}\) Tuesday 1899 Pathamuthu Nadan of Sivakasi gave a telegram stating that the non-*Nadars* with Vendor Arumugam Pillai etc., as ring leaders who had collected 1000 of men and were making all arrangements to deprive them of everything and plunder their houses. He had prayed that the Superintendent of Police should be addressed to send one hundred constables with guns to Sivakasi\(^{126}\).

As per the arrangements made by the *Maravars* and their allied groups they began to rush to the Sivakasi town in huge numbers. At that time police Inspector, Sub-Magistrate and twenty constables were present there in the station. When they were in the western part of the town they were informed that large crowds of people were coming from the west. They then moved westward. When they reached the bridge on the road between the union office and the Police station about 4000 men came in front of them on the road side. Those people who gathered in the open space in front of the union office were all armed. Madar Hussain saw some 30 or 40 guns among them along with sticks and sickles. They were desperate and came within a distance of about 25 or 30 yards from the police force. The policemen asked them to disperse and pointed out that if they did not retreat firing would be followed. They

\(^{124}\) Hardgrave.L., *op.cit.*., p.118

\(^{125}\) *Ibid.*., p.120

refused to disperse at any risk and pointed out that even if a thousand of them were to die they would not retreat. The Deputy Magistrate of Srivilliputtur arrived there at about 9:00 a.m. About noon or 1 p.m. he received a reply from the District Magistrate that he would reach Sivakasi in two hours and ask the Sub-Magistrate to keep cool. The policemen stationed themselves at the bridge could not go either forward or backward. After the rioters entered the town, they heard the sound of buildings fall, roars of the people and several reports of gun. They saw the buildings in fire. Later on they came across people carrying away wounded men on tactics through the Muhammadan quarters. The Inspector watched the females carrying water to the looters from the western end of the Muhammadan quarters. Between 3.30 p.m. and 4.00 p.m. the rioters began to clear out. The District Magistrate and the District Superintendent of Police arrived at about 4.00 p.m. Along with them the police men also followed them. The bazaar street had been already plundered and reduced to ashes. Before the arrival of the District Magistrate and the mobilization of the police forces the anti-Nadars murdered twenty five Nadars, destroyed several houses and caused immense loss to their wealth.\textsuperscript{127} As per the local tradition more than two hundred people lost their lives. The corpses were buried near Periyakulam, in the eastern part of the present Sivakasi Municipal office. That area is still inhabited by people.\textsuperscript{128}

\textsuperscript{127} G.O.No.596, Judicial Department, Ordinary, M.S. 26\textsuperscript{th} April 1900.
\textsuperscript{128} G.O.No.2017-18, Judicial Department, Vol.II, 12th December 1899, p.98,
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Station</th>
<th>Indian Penal</th>
<th>Date of offence</th>
<th>Amount and nature of damage done</th>
<th>Caste of persons concerned</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Sivakasi |             | 26<sup>th</sup> April 899 | 45 *Maravar* houses burnt - Rs.1590  
6 *Shanars* houses burnt - 270  
1 *Maravar* gun-shot wound  
3 *Maravars* and 2 *Shanars* wound | *Maravars* |

| Sivakasi | 148  
302  
395  
436 | 6<sup>th</sup> June 1899 | 886 houses burnt  
Rs.48,136  
16 *Shanars* killed  
4 women  
1 child  
11 male adults  
2 by gun shot  
2 from burns  
7 decapitated  
4 from cut wounds and 1 by being dashed to the ground.  
Besides the 16 there were 9 un identified bodies, of those arrested  
7 have wounds (5 gunshot)  
1 since died in hospital  
property looted -43,000 | *Maravars* |

Thus the communal riots in Sivakasi caused lives and properties and they encouraged further aggravations.
Communal Conflict In Srivilliputture

Communal conflict started in Sivakasi soon began to spread to other parts of the district and also to the neighbouring areas. The anti-Nadar party changed it into a communal fight. The Maravars took the leadership. They indulged in active violent deeds on behalf of other high caste communities. The feeling of hatred between the Shanars and non-Shanars of Sivakasi has not yet subsided to any extent. The differences that had their origin in Sivakasi between the two communities have developed into a general caste dispute. The effects of those disputes are being felt even in remote villages of the Srivilliputtur Taluk”.  

Katnarpatti

On 16th May 1899, a letter received by the District Magistrate mentioned that in two villages, Katnarpatti and Sangaralingapuram 17 Anti-Nadars had prepared to loot the Nadar houses and had refused to allow the village washermen to do work for them. The riots thus became a pre-planned one.

Nathampatti

On 23rd May 1899 the Thevars, Pallars and Asaries of Nathampatti looted twenty-five houses of the Nadars and caused a loss of Rs.5,014 at the midnight. Thus the revenge of the anti-Nadar communities were effective.

Partikolam

129 Dennis Templeman, The Nothern Nadars of TamilNadu, New Delhi,1966, p.118

130 Ibid., p. 120.

131 Ibid.,p . 127
On 25\textsuperscript{th} May, \textit{Shanars} produced pots of grain as if found in \textit{cholum} fields etc. There were people who took a prominent part against the Shanars in palanquin processions four years ago. A \textit{Shanar} Chinnanadan wanted to go in a palanquin for his marriage. This was stopped by the authorities pending production of a civil court decree—nothing was done.\textsuperscript{132} Such aspects added full to the fire and the tension mounted.

\textbf{Krishnaperi}

The \textit{Nadars} of Krishnaperi village in Srivilliputtur Taluk, petitioned alleging that on account of Sivakasi faction, the \textit{Maravars} of Injar, Managaseri and other villages near Sivakasi about 2000 in number had resolved to harass \textit{Nadars}. They had plundered Pattakulam on 23\textsuperscript{rd} May 1899 and committed other minor crimes. They prayed for \textit{bandobust}.\textsuperscript{133} The two groups were always at logger heads with each other.

\textbf{Pudupatti}

On 26\textsuperscript{th} May 1899, the \textit{Thevars}, \textit{Barbers}, \textit{Pallars}, \textit{Naicks}, \textit{Koravars}, \textit{Chettis} and \textit{Panikkars} of Pattakulammanagalam Pudupatti tried to plunder the \textit{Nadar} houses of that locality. On 27\textsuperscript{th} May 1899 \textit{Gurusamy Nadar} of Pudupatti Srivilliputtur Taluk telegraphed that some \textit{Maravars}, \textit{Pillais}, \textit{Naicks} and \textit{Pallars} of Anaikkuttam and Nameskarithanpatti broke open six houses and plundered the bazaars of their village.\textsuperscript{134} The fight, thus, became a constant one.

\textsuperscript{132} Hardgrave. L., \textit{op.cit.}, p. 119

\textsuperscript{133} \textit{Ibid.}, 123

\textsuperscript{134} Sarada Devi. C, \textit{op.cit.}, p. 133
Pondithampatti

That 20 Maravars visited the Shanar houses, scattered grain knocked down their doors, broke pots at Pondithampatti. Shanars ran away and concealed their valuables. On 29th May 1899 the Inspector of Srivilliputtur Police station reported that, as informed by Kavalgar Sholai Thevan, that 614 Maravars intended to attack Sivakasi in person. The persons engaged in these cases were advance guards. They were bent on attacking Shanars of Sivakasi owing to the temple dispute. The riot was gradually spreading

Lakshmi Narayanapuram

On June 2nd 1899. Friday at 6.00 p.m. the village Lakshminarayanapuram was looted and 36 thatched houses in that village were burnt and a dozen Shanars were wounded. This was the first case of injury to person, that the Shanars would not freely give out the names of the dacoits out of fear. The Maravars of Srivilliputtur had also made it a point to pillage Shanar villages. So that the police force had to be strengthened.

Kunur

The house of one Velappa Mudaliar and the Shanar quarters of Kunur village in Srivilliputtur Taluk were plundered on 2nd June 1899. But the Shanars completely denied the plunder, on the ground that Velappa Mudaliars allegations seemed to be the outcome of faction between him and his fellow villagers. A dozen picottahs of Shanars were found damaged and that on the evening of 1st June 1899 twenty non-Shanars of Melagopalapuram attempted to join a gang

Ibid., p.135
which they expected would attack the Shanar quarters of their village. Additional police force should be sent for. Five of the men of Melagopalapuram were at once arrested. The Sub-Magistrate of Watrap pointed out that the faction between Shanars and non-Shanars was spreading rapidly, that numerous rioting had been reported that local police was utterly inadequate.  

Vachakarapatti

At Vachakarapatti, Maramuthunadan let out a cow on varam and while driving it home it ran away. On 30th May 1899 at Vachakarapatti search was made for it. At that time 15 Maravars in a temple, ensured a fight with Shanars and some of the Shanars were cut with knives. Thus communal rivalry was bulging in different areas.

Nathampatti

At Nathampatti in the Srivilliputtur Taluk Thevars, Pallars, Naicks, Vellala, Konars and Asari were against the Shanars. On 2nd June 1899. Some 1000 persons attacked, nine Shanars houses were looted, some women were stripped and left naked. Several of the looters were badly wounded. Two looters were killed. Looters came at 10.00 a.m. demanded Rs.150/-, but Rs.70/- were paid. Not being satisfied they looted some more houses. Karisalkulam policemen fired 20 rounds one in the air, rest at the crowd and the looters were dispersed from the place. Two looters were killed and District Magistrate found fault for firing. The communal riots caused heavy casualties and the conditions of the

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137 Sarada Devi. C, op.cit., p.136
138 Ibid., p.139
Government agencies were standard. The communal functions spread like wild fire.

**Sattur**

The village Tirutangal in the Sattur taluk is situated about two miles to the north of Sivakasi. There were several temples on a rock in the north eastern part of the village and three of them are dedicated to the God Subramanya. The *Shanar* community had been interdicted from giving to and breaking coconuts in the Subramanyaswami temples.\(^{139}\)

In 1885, the *Nadars* of Sattur Taluk petitioned for the privilege to conduct a procession through the streets of the Tiruttangal village. The local *Zamindar* and the people of higher caste in the village opposed the petition and it was ruled that the procession should go only through the streets of the *Nadar* quarter of the village. It went on.

Towards the end of 1899 certain *Shanars* of Tirutangal entertained the idea of going to the temple and making offerings on the occasion of the *Taipusam* festival which was to be celebrated on 16\(^{th}\) January 1900. The Trustee of the Tirutangal temples submitted a petition to this office on 29.12.1899 requesting that step should be taken to prevent *Shanars* from entering the temples in pursuance of the order of the District Munsif of Srivilliputtur and from causing any disturbance on the occasion of the festival. The feeling between *Shanars* and non-*Shanars* in and around Sivakasi continued to be as bitter as ever. The order of the Deputy Magistrate was renewed on 12\(^{th}\) March 1900 to 23\(^{rd}\) May 1901. The Special Assistant Magistrate reported that the feelings of

\(^{139}\) G.O.No.985, Judicial Department, 4th July 1901,p.10
Shanars and non-Shanars were still strained and requested that in the interests of public peace and tranquility the order must be made permanent.  

On 7th June 1899 in Virudhupatti Shona Karuppa Nadar reported that he saw two or three Kallars driving away Idumba Nadar's bullock. On 8th June Thevars and Vellalas in Koilpatti were looted and they lost Jewels, cotton, grain and cloths.

On 8th June 1899 in Chinnaiapuram the majority of the females took refuge in the Lutheran church. The gang broke that and robbed the females of the jewels. Many placed them in their cloths having removed them from their ears. In Tulukkapatti, on 8th June 1899, rice bags were taken from the three Shanars houses by all castes and strangers. Muthulapuram Village Munsif reported to the Deputy Inspector General, that Thevars and Vellalas were looted including bazaar and houses. But they never touched other poor Shanar houses.

On 8th June 1899 two Nadars complained that some 150 persons intended looting the Shanar houses, because they refused to pay a demand of Rs.2000 made by them. A gang of some 40 persons when entered to the Sentateyapuram village Shanars ran away. Only one Shanar house and bazaar in the village, were looted. It was done by Thevars and pariahs. Thus out of equity communal riots among Nadars and Thevars continued and caused damages and loss of properties on both sides. It was rather a perennial affair.

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140 Ibid., p.55
141 Sarada Devi. C, op.cit., p.140
142 Sobhanan.B, op.cit.,p.72
143 G.O.No.2017-18, Judicial Department, 12th December 1899, p.160.
Results

The results of the communal riots were precausing and damaging. Eight hundred and eighty six houses were destroyed. Besides that the amount of property looted as mentioned by the Shanars was Rs.43,000. This amount was probably exaggerated. None of the rioters were seen carrying away any loot. The education of the Christians and their increasing power were factors emerged as the production of those troubles. The local politics at Sivakasi in the past year showed clearly that the Shanars themselves to some extent have brought those disturbances.

a) Due to the incapacity of the Deputy Magistrate who had charge of the Srivilliputtur Division during 1898 and the early months of 1899 the troubles emerged and continued. He delayed the disposal of the cases put up before him. He distrusted the Police reports as regards the gravity of the situation. He failed to pass any definite orders on the important question of the entry of the Shanars into the temple and he finally showed the grossest cowardice in the riot of the 26th April 1899.

b) To the fact that neither the Police nor the Village Magistrates in Srivilliputtur and Sattur Taluks gave at any time any accurate information as to the intended attack on the town of Sivakasi.

c) The District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police to realise the failed to estimate gravity of the state of affairs in the Sattur and Srivilliputtur Taluks in April and May 1899. The failure of the District Magistrate to make any proper investigation into the riot of the 26th April 1899 at Sivakasi and the insufficient time spent by him in the town were
the chief causes of his inability to understand the position as it stood at the beginning of June. The Superintendent of Police had not sufficient autonomy to take a line different from that adopted by Scott, the District Magistrate. The District Magistrate was convinced that all the rumours of trouble were enormously exaggerated, followed suit and adopted the same line.

As the officials were unaware of the trends of the communal oriental social set up there was no possibility for any precautionary measures. It also had its own-echo over the riot. It cautioned them to be alert in future.

**Measures Recommended By The Government**

After witnessing the unwanted occurrences. As regards the future measures recommended by Hammick the Inspector General of were the following

a) No exemption should be made as regards, the classes or persons liable to pay the tax levied for the payment of the force.

b) The Special Police force already sanctioned should be maintained in the district for at least five years.

c) If possible an European Divisional Officer should be posted for the Srivilliputtur Division, with his headquarters at Virudhupatti on the railway line instead of at Srivilliputtur. A native officer of whatever creed or caste was expected to be distrusted by the *Shanars* for a long time to come.

\[144\] *Ibid*. p.165
d) The Sheranmadevi division should also be held in future by an European officer, as for many years to come the management of that division. The feeling between the *Shanars* and other castes was bitter, and that required a decision and firmness and complete impartiality. This is applicable division which contains all the worst characters of the district, which consists viz., three Taluks of Nanguneri, Ambasamudram and Tenkasi.

e) The District Magistrate's special attention should be given to watch the work of the police and subordinate Magistrates, specially with regard to disputes between *Shanars* and non-*Shanars*. The work of the District Magistrate of Tinnelvelly was peculiarly heavy, the district was full of factions of every kind and sort, while such a large proportion of the inhabitants were lawless by disposition that any dispute was liable to grow into a serious cause for rioting. The District Magistrate of Tinnevelly required European assistance.

f) Special punitive police force was given to the Taluks of Sattur and Srivilliputur.\(^{145}\)

The Government drafted the service of the sepoys from Trichinopoly as well as extra police force from the neighbouring districts to quell the disturbances. Inspite of the precautionary measures and also the court procedures the situation continued to be tense. In anticipation of the arrival of the hostilities the Muhammadans of Kamudi telegraphed to prevent the procession of

\(^{145}\) G.O.No.1227, Judicial Department, 8 August 1899.
the Nadars through their street.\textsuperscript{146}

The Government of Madras informed the Government of India that the faction feeling in Tinnevelly and neighbouring district was so strong and the effect of intimation. The new natural natives were subjected to intimidation. The European Jurors were not available in sufficient numbers and their employment was open to objection. Fair trial by common or special Jury was very difficult in the districts of Tinnevelly, Madurai, Trichinopoly, Tanjore or even South Arcot. Great inconvenience would be caused if venue was changed to a more distant district. The Government of Madras was therefore constrained procedure code to sanction suspension of trial by Jury in cases connected with the anti-Nadar riots.\textsuperscript{147}

After Hammick order was passed under section 144, c.p.c. the Dharmarkarthas reopened the temple and worship was recommended. It also stated the Shanars should not be allowed to obtain entrance into any Hindu temple in Tinnevelly unless a decree of the Civil Courts is obtained giving them the rights they are now claiming.\textsuperscript{148}

\textbf{Weakness and Inexperience of the Local Executive}

It should be noticed that is worth noticing in connection with the district Magistrate was not well informed regarding what was going on at Sivakasi. It was the cause of ignorance of the stationary Sub-Magistrate on the matter. The change of Deputy Magistrates and stationary sub-Magistrate immediately before

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\textsuperscript{146} Sobhanan.B, \textit{op.cit.}, p.75.

\textsuperscript{147} G.O.No.1334, Judicial Department, 19\textsuperscript{th} August 1899.

\textsuperscript{148} Sobhanan.B,\textit{op.cit.},p.77
the disturbances was unfortunate and ill-judged\textsuperscript{149}. The posting of a Stationary Magistrate without any experience as in charge of this difficult division was another error. The authorities misapprehended the situation and careless in his appointments. If the Taluk Tahsildar had been the local Magistrate, the Tahsildar would have been held responsible for not warning the authorities. The village Magistrates being deprived of his magisterial matters, and powers he lost a good deal of touch with the Taluk. The Stationary Sub-Magistrate had no opportunities in having local information. Information came to him solely through the cases which he tried and the information given to him by the local police occurrence reports. The Tahsildar had no full Magisterial authority and he tried cases in his tours, on the basis of local information\textsuperscript{150}.

**The Insufficient Inspection of Sivakasi by the District Magistrate**

Hammick was of the opinion that if Scott, had camped at Sivakasi, he would have realized the danger of the situation. The forty-five deserted Maravar houses, the absence of all Maravars from the village, the persistent panic among the Shanars and perhaps the information which the Christians of Sachyapuram might had given him, would have made him to realize that Sivakasi was in actual danger. He had vague assertions of danger from the police, untrustworthy reports from the Muhammadan Deputy Magistrate and alarmist telegrams from the Shanars did not about him to learn to the realities. He never suspected before the outbreak, when large gangs were encamping in the neighbourhood of Sivakasi, which was in danger. Scott was specially asked by the police Inspector and others in Sivakasi on the 5\textsuperscript{th} to remain there. But he did not either remain

\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., p. 80

\textsuperscript{150} G.O. No: 1334, Judicial Department, 19\textsuperscript{th} August 1899