CHAPTER - 4

KUNRAKUDI VILLAGE
CHAPTER - 4

KUNRAKUDI VILLAGE

Introduction

Kunrakudi was a small village in Tiruppathur Taluk in Sivaganga District in Tamil Nadu.¹

In the early days of empire building in India by the British, this region was in the Ramnad District and that continued to be current for sometime even after the exit of the British rule from India. This anglicized name, ‘Ramnad’ was however, later changed as Ramanathapuram to be more in conformity with the Tamil name for the region².

Kunrakudi in Sivaganga District is bounded by five districts on the North East by Pudukkottai District, on the South East and

¹ Sivaganga is a town in Tamil Nadu State of Southern India. It is the administrative headquarters of Sivaganga District. The District occupies an area of 4086 Km and has a population of 1,150753 (as per 2001 census). It is bounded on North and North east by Pudukkottai District, on the Southeast and South by Ramanathapuram District, on the South West by Virudunagar District, and on the West by Madurai District and on the North West by Tiruchirappalli District, source from Wikipedia, the free encylopedia.

South by Ramanathpuram District, on the Southwest by Virudhunagar District and West by Madurai District, and on the Northwest by Tiruchirappali District.

The total population of Kunrakudi is 3901. It is 12 km east of Tiruppatur and 7 km west of Karaikudi railway station. It is 75 km west of Madurai Airport. Kunrakudi village is accessible by land. Kunrakudi like many of the villages in Tamil Nadu is the centre of many temples.

The Name and Location

The Tamil word “Kunrakudi” could split into two i.e Kunrakudi. The word “Kunram” means hillock and “kudi” means settlement. As the village Kunrakudi is situated around the hillock, it is called Kunrakudi. Kunrakudi is also known by names such as Mayuranagaram (peacock Town) Mayuragiri and Mayilmalai (Peacock hill) Arasavanam (Forest of peepal trees). The word ‘Arasavanam’ refers to the existence of many Peepal trees. The word ‘Mayilmalai’ denotes the peacock shape of the hill. The word ‘Mayuranagaram’ was also derived in the similar line, based on the shape of the hill.

Kunrakudi is situated between 10°7 mts 30 seconds North and 10.7 minutes south latitudes and between 78°42 minutes 30 seconds East and 78°42 minutes West Longitudes\(^4\). Kunrakudi is a beautiful village surrounded by a number of tanks, fields, vast stretches of red soil. There are green vegetations all around the village with many useful fruit- bearing trees and herbal plants.\(^5\) These varied plants and trees help in preserving the ecological balance of Kunrakudi. It is a plain hill place\(^6\).

**Boundaries**

Kunrakudi was the centre of Chettinadu.\(^7\) There are 76 villages in Chettinadu. Kunrakudi is bounded on the North by the Nemam Village, in the north west. A small village named Thulavur, in the south, Patharakkudi, in the south east, Kovilur, village

---

\(^4\) Institute of Remote sensing, Anna University, Chennai.

\(^5\) See Appendix No...

\(^6\) Ramanathapuram Gazetteer, 1969, p.21.

\(^7\) NILKAN PERUMAL in Glimspes of Chettinadu, 1937, P.P.23., From my own personal observation and study of the chettiar character, I have come to the conclusion that they are one hundred percent Dravidians today living in South India. These people had the least to do with Aryan races which came south from the North. Their individuality, the bond of brotherhood among them, their spirit of adventure their reverence for the elders of community, their devotion to idol worship and ancestral religion, all these seem to establish that Dravidian blood in them is strong.
Siruvayal in the east and Pillayarpatti\(^8\) and Vairavanpatti villages in the west.

**Area and Population**

Total land area of Kunrakudi Village is 1009.89 hectare. The total number of families residing is 544 in Kunrakudi with the total population of 3091, of which male members are 1539, female members are 1552\(^9\). Based on the data available between 1.1.93 and 30-8-1993 the number of births and deaths has been given below:

---

\(^8\) Pillayarpatti is small village in Sivaganga District, 2 km from Kunrakudi Village. It has a famous vinayagar Temple. Vinayagar was son of Sivan, elder brother of Muruga. This is the biggest, ancient well built temple, enshrining a big sized black granite Vinayagar Vigara of about twenty feet in height. Built in the Dravidian architectural style, the temple possesses vast courtyards, Spacious mandaps, imposing towers and super sculptural Temple tank lying outside the compound is quiet entrance and with its clear water it is serving the temple and the visitors to a commendable degree. The garbha graha (the place where the consecrated idol is placed) is very big and the masterly sculptured Vinayaka with its fine Polish and excellent finish raises the hands of the devotees at first sight itself. The agamic worship is offered with utmost devotion. Several mandaps are installed with most adorable deities like Muruga, Parathi etc., Though lying in a remote village, the temple has the biggest vinayaka of the entire state and luring devotees round the year. Several devotional activities are conducted throughout the year. This is preferred for the celebration of auspicious events like marriage birthdays etc.

\(^9\) Vairampatti is a small village of Tiruppathur Taluk, Sivaganga District, It has an architectural and wonderful Siva Temple. It is 5 kms from Kunrakudi.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Caste and Religion

Caste and religion play an important role in Indian Society. The 544 families that took domicile in Kunrakudi are classified on the basis of caste and religion as follows: At present there are 513 Hindu families, 26 Christian families, 5 Muslim families. Adi Dravidar (Schedule caste) were 51 families Backward class community were 454 families, Other community 39 families. The ‘Mukkulathore’ caste formed majority caste as well as the powerful caste of the village. The Vellalars were the next to the ‘Mukkulathore’ Caste.\(^{10}\)

Soil

Out of the natural resources of the earth, the most important is the soil. It is the layer of the earth’s surface made up of tiny rock debris and it is called ‘soil’. In the soil, there are minerals,

---

\(^{10}\) Interview with Village Administrative Officer, Kunrakudi, 24\(^{th}\) May, 2000.
decomposed vegetation and bacteria. Soil is the base in which the plants take root and grow. The heat, moisture and mineral salts received from the soils significantly help the vegetation to grow well. The dead animals also add to the nutrients of the soil which is a result of the weathered rocks. In Kunrakudi, the cattle farm provided the field with manure.

Red Laterite soil and Red loamy soil (PH=7-7.25)\textsuperscript{11} is found widely in Kunrakudi, the soil is reddish in colour\textsuperscript{12}. Red soil is made of rock particles midway between those of the alluvial soil and sand.

It is capable of absorbing water but the capacity to retain moisture is limited. Red soil is moderately fertile. The pulses such as the beans and red grams and the oil seeds such as those of groundnut and castor are the appropriate crops for this soil. Groundnut is the main crop of red soil in Kunrakudi. Groundnut is a dry crop. Dry crops do not need much water. They are resistant to drought, they grow also in infertile soils. They are suitable for climate prevalent in Kunrakudi. As a prelude to study the economic conditions of Kunrakudi village, it is very essential to know about various economic activities undertaken in Kunrakudi Village. They


\textsuperscript{12} Ramanathapuram, Gazetteer, 1969, p.17.
include agricultural production, agricultural reforms and the planning forums, cropping pattern, co-operatives etc.

Climate

Kunrakudi has a tropical monsoon climate. In India, the educational institutions declare summer holidays during the month of April and May. The Kunrakudi educational institutions also declare summer holidays during April and May. Because, it would be difficult to do work for long hours at high temperatures. The temperature starts to decline, after the summer. During December and January and in these months, the weather is cold. There occur changes in pressure, wind, cloud cover and precipitation depending upon the atmospheric temperatures in summer and winter. Average temperature is about 25\(^0\)C.

Summer Season in Kunrakudi occurs during the months from March to May. The sun overhead over the equator in March reaches the tropic of cancer in June. Thus the sun’s rays are more or less vertical over Tamil Nadu during these months. Summer temperature
persists in Kunrakudi between March and June. At that time the high temperature is $41^0$ Celsius in summer.$^{13}$

The Winter temperature prevails in Kunrakudi from September to February. There is a reversal of temperature distribution in winter. It is lowest temperature in the whole of this district.

Rainfall

The period from June to November marks the rainy season for Kunrakudi. Kunrakudi gets rainfall from the two monsoons - the southwest monsoon and the north east monsoon. Monsoon winds prevail in Kunrakudi depending upon the differences in pressures between summer and winter. 80% of annual rainfall with the north east monsoon making the larger contribution 48% South west monsoon rainfall 50cm annually. Kunrakudi is a low rainfall region (500 – 750 mm).

Table 2

Model Chart of Rainfall\textsuperscript{14}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>January to February</td>
<td>41 mm</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>23 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>March to May</td>
<td>44 mm</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>36 mm</td>
<td>133 mm</td>
<td>273 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>South west monsoon</td>
<td>294 mm</td>
<td>7 mm</td>
<td>363 mm</td>
<td>285 mm</td>
<td>251 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>South west monsoon</td>
<td>632 mm</td>
<td>449 mm</td>
<td>1024 mm</td>
<td>819 mm</td>
<td>887 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June to September</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>North East monsoon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October to December</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Temperature

Tamil Nadu is located in the northern hemisphere. In January the winter season sets in. The sun is overhead in the southern hemisphere. The sun rays fall vertically over Tamil Nadu during March, April and May. Temperature increases from March. The highest temperature is recovered in the month of May. Average temperature is about 35\textdegree C. Temperature decreases from June, when southwest monsoon winds blow. Due to its proximity to the sea, the summer is less hot and the winter is less cold. Kunrakudi's average temperature is 36\textdegree C.

The Flora and Fauna

There are hundreds of species of animals, insects and birds in Tamil Nadu. Of these, a few varieties such as bullocks, cows, goats, lambs, buffaloes and dogs are found in Kunrakudi village.

The hillock around which Kunrakudi Village itself is situated in a natural sanctuary of certain varieties of wild animals like fox, deer, hare and jackal.

Apart from these some varieties of perching, high flying nocturnal, diurnal birds, pretty birds, singing birds, helpful birds and birds of prey are found here.

Various plants and trees are in Kunrakudi village (See Appendix -2).

Irrigation

Rainfall in Kunrakudi is characterized by uncertainty and spatial and seasonable variations. So, water required for agriculture may not be available in time and in right quantity. Therefore regulated irrigation becomes essential for carrying out agriculture.
Controlled supply of water for agriculture is known as irrigation. Irrigation increases agricultural yield and production.

The lack of perpetual snow-fed rivers in South India led to the system of water harvesting with the aid of tanks. The tanks were available for drinking and domestic use. But these tanks also irrigated large tracts of land. There were different types of tanks: percolation ponds, natural lakes, artificial reservoirs and temple tanks.

Tanks are found from the Indus period onwards. We do not know the use of these large brick-lined water storage facilities, whether they were used for bathing or for storing water, etc. In Mohenjodaro and Harappa, major sites of the Indus Valley civilization (3000 to 1500 B.C.)\textsuperscript{15} there were several reservoirs and tanks, excavated by the Department of Archeology.

There are two types of irrigation in Kunrakudi. They are: (a) Tank irrigation and (b) Well Irrigation.

\textsuperscript{15} Sacred Tanks of South India, C.P.R. Environmental Education Centre, Chennai, Unasco, New Delhi, 2002, p.13.
Tank Irrigation

Tank irrigation has been traditionally prominent in Tamil Nadu and they had been constructed by the kings, regional chieftains and local benefactors. The State has 39,000 irrigation tanks. About 22% irrigated lands are under tank irrigation. In Kunrakudi village there are 17 irrigation tanks.

They are Kunrakudi Periya Kanmai (Tank), Kodikittan Kanmai, Maniputhiri Kanmai, Sirumangudi Kanmai, Vaduthadi Kanmai, Devanendal Kanmai, Thamarai Kanmai, Arumuga Kanmai, Valayan Kanmai, Peppan Kanmai, Valadi Kanmai, Melapidari Kanmai, Keelapidari Kanmai, Viriyan Kanmai, Kurumban Kanmai, Valluvan Kundu, Kumarananthal. These tanks are solely rain fed\(^\text{16}\)

Drawbacks of tank irrigation are 1. Tanks cover large areas of cultivatable lands, 2. Evaporation is high and rapid. They dry up in summer when there is a need for water and gradually they get filled up with silt and depth decreases. So, the Kunrakudi farmers have dug the open well and made electric pump sets and bore-wells for irrigation.

Interview with village administrative officer, Kunrakudi village, 24\(^\text{th}\) May 2000.
Well Irrigation

This is a very old and simplest method. Wells can be dug in the fields. They can be used exactly when needed. Well irrigation has become the dominant type in Kunrakudi. About 30\% of irrigated land is under the scheme of well irrigation. The following irrigation schemes are in Kunrakudi. They are Kanmai (Tanks) 17 nos ,Open wells (Electrified) 29 Nos

Land Area

Lands in Tamil Nadu, particularly, Kunrakudi village were surveyed, assessed and classified as wetland, dry land and waste land. 146.53 hectare classified as wet lands, 272.88 hectares of land have been as dry lands and 26.53\(^{17}\) hectares as waste lands. Over 70\% of people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. Agriculture meets the food requirements of the people.

Agriculture and Main Crops

Agriculture is the systematic raising of useful plants by human management. Food production is the main purpose of agriculture,

but cultivated plants also furnish substances useful as textile fibers, dyestuffs, medicines and ornaments. Cultivation and harvesting are the part and parcel of Agriculture. Humans need food to survive. There is need for conductive environment for the growth of food crops. Types of crops differ with differing environments. Food habits of the people everywhere depend on the types of crops grown in their localities. Paddy is the main crop and main food in Kunrakudi. Groundnut and sugarcane are the side crops in Kunrakudi. The cashew nut crop was cultivated in nearly 10000 acres in and around Kunrakudi Village. 18

Crop

The main crop in Kunrakudi is paddy, sugarcane, dry crops and groundnut are also cultivated in a very small way. Paddy is a wet crop. It requires, high temperature, high rainfall and fertile soil. Paddy is a tropical crop, it is grown in temperate areas primarily due to heavy rainfall. It is absolutely essential for water to be stagnating while the paddy crop begins to bear fruit. Similarly, until the crop is ripe enough for harvest, there should be moist soil and dry climate. The summer temperatures prevalent here during the months of

March to September provides the high temperatures required for paddy growth. In Kunrakudi the paddy crops such as Samba, Kuruvai, Thaladi are being grown. Samba is a long term crop. It is harvested in about five to six months. Kuruvai is a crop harvested within three or four months. The paddy grown in the field ploughed with the stumps of the previous harvest is known as colloquially or the Thaladi'. After the harvest of the Thaladi and Samba, the harvested field is planted with black gram and red gram. After this the land is left one or two months. Immediately after the harvest the harvest festival called “Pongal” is also celebrated as thanks giving for the sun, oxen and workers. Though age old this tradition is in practice, modern cropping and technology could be seen in Kunrakudi village. The people and peasants of Kunrakudi are not averse to modern methods of cultivation. Millets, pulses and oil seeds are dry crops. Dry crops do not need much water. They are resistant to drought; they grow also in less fertile soils. They are suitable for the climate prevalent in Kunrakudi. The drought resistant crops such as ragi, maize are grown. Red gram, black gram and green gram are the pulses also grown in Kunrakudi. Paddy production in Kunrakudi village had increased from 1.6 ton per acre in 1981-82 to 2 tons per acre in 1988-89. It is shown in the given
table. The increase in paddy production per acre was more due to the introduction of new scientific methods in cultivation.

**Paddy production (1981 to 1992)**

Agriculture Schemes have been implemented in this village to help and increase the paddy production. Details of the year and procurement are tabled below.

**Table 3**

**Procurement of Paddy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Procurement Per Acre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1981-1982</td>
<td>1.600 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1983-1984</td>
<td>1.800 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1985-1986</td>
<td>1.900 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1987-1988</td>
<td>1.900 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1989-1990</td>
<td>2.000 tons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>2.000 tons&lt;sup&gt;19&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sugarcane: Sugarcane is also a wet crop and it is cultivated in small area in Kunrakudi. It will be ready for harvest in 10 to 11 months.

Transport

Transport plays a vital role in production and distribution of goods and services. Cheap, speedy and efficient transport of people, freight and mail is necessary for the rapid development of the economy. In the growth and development of a village, transport plays an important role. For the passangers to travel on roads, the state government transport and private transport ply buses and connect most of the villages. The district highway roads connect Kuntrakudi and the Karaikudi railway station which is 8 Km from Kuntrakudi and Madurai Airport is 78 km from Kuntrakudi. Tiruppathur and Madurai on the western side of Kuntrakudi are about 8 km and 70 km from Kuntrakudi. Devakottai is 28 km from Kuntrakudi and Pudukkottai 41 km from Kuntrakudi on the north of Kuntrakudi\(^{20}\). Roads ranging from cart tracts to modern highways are the most common form of transport. Local travel is normally made by roadways. Kuntrakudi is accessible by road which are fairly developed. Various transport vehicles like State government transport buses and private transport buses made Kuntrakudi accessible to other areas in the districts as well as places of thier districts in Tamil Nadu.

Village Customs

In former days, life in Tamil Nadu centred around the village. Even when towns arose, they retained their rural character, for they were simple in structure and inhabited by rural people. Families lived on their properties or on small holdings of land. When they increased in size, kin members broke away to form new units. It was a self-contained and self-sufficient life. And social contacts were usually confined to blood relations. The traditional large joint family household was composed of a number of separate family units living under one roof, sometimes called the ‘Great House’. Each family unit might have one or two rooms for worship, a common kitchen and meals were eaten together in a common dining hall. When the large house became overcrowded, a son and his family or two brothers with their families, might setup separate establishments thus forming the nucleus of new joint families. These offshoots would generally locate as near the former house hold as possible, sometimes their house within the family compound. Family members would often feel so attached to this locality that even after living away from it for many years they would return to visit the elder family members or to keep vows made to the local gods which they still

\[21\] Interview with Village Administrator Officer, Kunrakudi, on May 1, 2000.
worshipped or to live there in old age. This ancestral village would be referred to by them as home.

**Joint Family System**

The senior male member of the traditional joint family usually manages the family's finances, such is the respect commonly paid to the peasant that his decisions are seldom countermanded by the will of his sons. Legally, however, he acts only as a representative of the males of the family in the administrations of the family property, and his responsibility is that of a trustee. The sons may all help to look after the lands and estates if they are extensive, otherwise one son, generally the eldest may be the manager while the other sons earn additional incomes in other occupations. Sometimes the eldest son who takes over the management of the property on his father's death will be assisted by his mother. The property of the family was passed down in a strictly prescribed way from father to sons. Daughters only occasionally shared in this inheritance although they could inherit property owned by the mother. The inheritors received their share of the property in terms of their family responsibility not for their own individual use. The large joint family is family-centered characterized by intimacy, mutuality of interest, strong primary group controls and mutual assistance in time of need. In it
family tradition and pride are strong and individual members are dominated by the opinions of larger group. Such a family can only remain stable when a number of generations succeed each other in the same locality occupation and social class. It is a system which strongly limits social mobility and social change because it binds the individual to others or the basis of birth, forces him to contribute to the support of a large group independently of their ability, introduces nepotism into both business and politics and assures control of the younger generation by the elders.

The nature of the society in which it exists the joint family also carries out welfare functions. It includes so may members that there is always someone to help look after the indigent ones often women, familiar with most of the crises of life will give advice as well as practical aid to the needy. Because of the large number of members, large joint family also serves as a recreational agency.\(^{22}\)

People of Kunrakudi have the habit of burying or cremating the dead according to their beliefs. They conduct ceremonies and rituals on occasions like marriages, deaths etc., the post-death funeral ceremonies are important to them. Samadhi or burial in a sitting posture, in a particular place was reserved for ascetics and a

\(^{22}\) Interview with Village Administrative Officer, Kunrakudi, on May 1, 2000.
structure was often raised over it with a religious symbol atop. Cremation took place on public grounds or burning ghats, and the ashes of the dead were preserved in vessels and latter dissolved by the heirs or kinsman into the river or sea. God worship and temple worship was a common routine convention.

**Status of Women**

The Tamil Society, right from the Sangam age\(^\text{23}\) down to the Modern days had been respecting women. Women had been treated with dignity on par with men. They were educated. They occupied respectable position in the society. Women were highly hospitable irrespective of race or rank. They were god fearing anc virtual. They visit temples. Quail fights, dances, musica entertainments and religious festivals appear to have been the chie sources of amusement to the masses of Kunrakudi Village.

Marriages are mostly arranged and fixed by parents and elderly, experienced relatives. Most of the marriages are endogamic. Some times the marriage was a matter of self choice.\(^\text{24}\) Love

\(^{23}\) The Age of Sangam upto A.D.100.
M.S. Purnalingam Pillai, Tamil India, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai, 1999, p.42

\(^{24}\) M.S. Purnalingam Pillai, Tamil India, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai, 1999, p. 54.
marriages took place sometimes, but rarely without the knowledge and consent of the parents of the lovers. As people of Kuntrakudi are conservative in outlook, intercaste marriages became very rare. They stick to age old customs and conventions. Dowry is in practice. One point in connection with the tying of the string (Tali) deserves scrutiny. Women wear tali and metti (Leg finger ring) as a mark of their married status.\textsuperscript{25}

**Conditions of Widows**

Widows do not prefer second marriage. Widows are discriminated in the society. They are forbidden from participating in auspicious festivals, ceremonies etc., The system of ‘Sati’ was never practised in Kuntrakudi. But, nowadays, the young widows get remarried in the society.\textsuperscript{26}

**Education of Women**

Aged women of Kuntrakudi were not educated. But the attitude towards women education got changed and people educate girl children. The importance and usefulness of women’s education

\textsuperscript{25} K.K. Pillai, History of Tamilo Nadu - Her People and Culture, Tamil Nadu Text Book Society, Chennai, 1972, p.p.130 – 135.

\textsuperscript{26} Interview with Kuntrakudi Ponnambala Adigalar at Kuntrakudi on 15\textsuperscript{th} January, 2004.
has been well understood by the village community of Kunrakudi, thanks to the tireless efforts taken by his Holyness Kunrakudi Adigalar. As a result, almost all girls of Kunrakudi are educated upto the middle school level.27

Entertainments

Entertainments generally are useful as means of relaxation. The people of Kunrakudi village have many Social entertainments such as Kabbadi, Volley ball and cricket etc., These festivals are part of the entertainments of the people. Entertainments are useful in a social sense that people of nearby hamlets gather together. They enjoy common recreational activities.

Festivals

The Hindu society is known for its numerous varieties of festivals. These festivals are nothing but a social get together. They are based on religious obligations. Deepavali, Thirukarthigai, Vinayagar Chadhurthi, Pongal, Mattu Pongal are some of the important festivals celebrated by the people of Kunrakudi village like any other Hindu of Tamil Nadu. Apart from these Hindu Festivals, there are other religious festivals also. For example the Christians

27 Interview with Maru Paramaguru, Personal Assistant to Kunrakudi Adigalar on 15th January 2001
celebrate Christmas, Easter, New year day etc., very jubilantly and joyfully. The Muslims celebrate festivals like Ramzan, Moharam, Miladinabi etc., Since the number of people who belong to other religions is very small their festivals do not make a big show, when compared to the festivals of the majority Hindus.

Food Habits

The food habits of the people are generally uniform. The people of Kunrakudi village are no exception to this. The staple food of the Kunrakudi village is rice. In addition to this people also take ragi and kambu; all kinds of cereals and pulses; various kinds of vegetables are grown here and people use them for their daily dishes. Majority of the people of the Kunrakudi village are accustomed to both vegetarian and non vegetarian food items. Using liquors and chewing betel nuts are the common habits with the villagers. They cook food in earthen pots . Food is served on plantain leaves or plates.

Caste System

Caste system in the Chola and later Pandya periods (10th Century to 15th Century) became very powerful. There is a clear evidence to show that in the age of the imperial Cholas the caste system became rigid. This was primarily so because this age witnessed the prominence given to temples and it is well known that temples and society of the medieval period enforced the caste
regulations rigorously. There are several castes in Kunrakudi village. These castes include Maravas, Vellalars, Yadavs, Kallars, Othuvars, Bhramins, Valayars, Vannan, Pallars, Parayans, Isai Vellaalars, Nadars and Chettians. In addition to these there are traditional village craftsmen like carpenters, blacksmiths, potters, barbers etc., These craftsmen undertake their traditional occupations for which they are paid in cash or in kind in terms of paddy during harvest seasons.

Families

The families of Kunrakudi are based on the traditional family system of the Tamils which has been in vogue ever since the Sangam Age. Family is the basic unit of the society. Parents and children constitute a family. Father is the head of the family in a paternal society. The mother plays a very important role maintaining the family. There are two types of families in the village. The nuclear or small family and the joint family. The joint family is big in size.

28 K.S. Ramasamy, The Tamils, Institute of International Tamil Studies, p. 35.
29 Interview with Village Administrative Officer, Kunrakudi on 13\textsuperscript{th} April, 2003.
30 Sangam Age in Tamil Nadu upto A.D. 100. There existed the Chera, the Chola and the Pandya Kingdoms in ancient Tamil Nadu. The rulers of these Kingdoms were great patrons of art and literature. They developed the Tamil language and literature through an assembly of poets or Sangams. The Sangam literary works constitute main source of information for the history of ancient Tamil Nadu. The people of Sangam Age had a well-organised social life. They lived in both towns and rural areas: Agriculture, pearl fishing and weaving were some of the important occupations of the people. Five arts like music, dance, drama and painting flourished Temple architecture also flourished well during the rule of the ancient Tamil Kings.
Uncles, aunties, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law, grandfather, grandmother and others. Most of the families are joint family in Kunrakudi. Formal kinship gatherings were considered so important. Weddings have always been very important occasions in Kunrakudi.

**Education**

Most of the students come from Kunrakudi village and near by hamlets. Village life is peaceful and free from much disturbance. The students in Kunrakudi Village are involved in agricultural activites apart from their school hours. They are also able to understand the importance of religious faith, simplicity, joint family system and good neighbourly relationship. They should also contribute to keep the village environment clean. They can make a joint effort with co-students to preserve our natural resources. They can educate the illiterates. They can help the aged, physically handicapped and poor. These activities of the students in society will earn them good name. The students are friendly with neighbours.

**Dress**

People of Kunrakudi village use mostly clothes made of cotton. They put on costly dress made of silk and synthetic fibers on occasions of marriage and religious functions. Most of the manual
workers are in the habit of wearing dhotis on their waists; they occasionally put on shirts or small towels on their shoulders. People choose to wear woolen clothes during the rainy seasons and winter season. Women use fragrant flowers for their plaits and other perfumes\textsuperscript{31}. A few people use foot wears.

**Jewelleries**

Affluent people of Kunrakudi village use ornaments made of gold, silver and precious stones. They put on these ornaments during important domestic ceremonies. Jewellery is viewed as the symbol of economic and social status. Both men and women use jewels. At the time of marriage the bride is decorated with golden jewels depending upon the Socio-economic status of the family. Just like any other family in India, marriage is an occasion also for the people of Kunrakudi to exhibit their social position and economic standard. Some times, the people borrow money and conduct the marriage with pomp and pageant.

Old Jewellery too was much sought after. Pure gold ornaments had strange futuristic designs. Heavy ear-rings and huge

\textsuperscript{31} K.K. Pillai, Thamizhaga Varalaru Makkalum Panpadu, (Tamils History the People and Culture), Tamil, International Institute of Tamil Studies, Chennai, 2000, p.349.
pendants were worn by the ladies, in full resplendence. Some rich ladies wear diamond necklace in various patterns.

**Sculptures of Shanmuganathan Temple, Kunrakudi**

There are found very beautiful carved sculptors in the Keezh Koil. (1) Sundareswarar Temple (2) Annamalaiyar Temple Maleechuvaram (3) Malaikolunthunathar Temple (4) Sandeeswarar Temple these are carved type Temples. Three Sivalingams sculptures, pillars, carved type sculptures, sanctum sanctorum, relief sculptures and beautiful sculptures in three temples. Balamurugan, Dwarabalagar, Thirumal, Karudalwar, Nanmugan, Sivaperuman, Mahisasuramarthini, Sankaranarayan, Adal Vallan, Valampuri sculptures are found in the temple.\(^{32}\) These are wonderful and beautiful sculptures.\(^{33}\)

**Kunrakudi in the Freedom Struggle**

The British government treated Indians as conquered people. They introduced new political, legal and economic institution in India and it was completely different from the traditional practices of India.

\(^{32}\) Thirukkuda Nanneratu Vizha (Consecration Function) of Sri Shanmuganathan Temple, Kunrakudi.

\(^{33}\) Ramanathapuram, Gazetteer, p.115.
Many were affected by the said economic and political policies of the British rule. There was discontentment. The grievances of the princes, soldiers and the people added to the growing discontent. It resulted in mutinies and revolts in some parts of India. These sporadic incidences gradually spread through the length and breadth of the country and eventually took the shape as freedom movement. Hundreds and thousands of people – young and old, rich and poor – voluntarily came forward to take part in the struggle for India’s freedom. Thus the freedom movement gathered strength. Many freedom fighters from the Kunrakudi village participated in this movement. They were arrested and imprisoned\textsuperscript{34}.

\textbf{Freedom Fighters of Kunrakudi Village}

1. Thananjeyan S. S/o Chidambaram Pillai\textsuperscript{35}

    Took part in Quit India Movement 1942, arrested and sentenced to 3 months imprisonment under Defence of India Rules and kept in Alipuram jail. His address was, Kunrakudi, Ramanathapuram district at present Sivaganga District.

\textsuperscript{34} Who’s who of Freedom Fighters, Tamil Nadu, Volume III, Director of Stationary and Printing, Madras Year 1973, p.254.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid. p.254.
2. Mani. S/o Neelamegam Servai\textsuperscript{36}

Participated in the Quit India Movement 1942, arrested and sentenced to 3 months imprisonment under defence Of India Rule (DIR) section 38 (1) (a) (b) and kept in Alipuram jail. His address was Kunrakudi village, Ramanathapuram district at present Sivaganga District.

3. Mohammed Ibrahim S/o Masthan Kani Rowthar\textsuperscript{37}

Participated in the Boycott of Foreign clothes in 1931 and Individual Sathyagraha in 1932. His address was Kunrakudi village, Ramanathapuram district at present Sivaganga District.

4. Muthalagu. M.\textsuperscript{38}

He had participated in Swadeshi Movement in 1927, salt Satyagraha (or) Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930. Individual Sathyagraha in 1941, Quit India Movement in 1942. He was arrested and jailed in Central jail of Madurai for 15 days.\textsuperscript{39}

\textsuperscript{36} ibid. p.254

\textsuperscript{37} Tamil Nadu Viduthalai Poratta Veerargal Yar? Yevar? (Vol II) Director of Stationery & Printing, Tamil Nadu, Madras, 1973, p.100.

\textsuperscript{38} Ob. cit. p. 125

\textsuperscript{39} ibid. p. 125
Shanmuganathan temple – Evidences of stone inscription

Abundant evidences are available in many stone inscriptions regarding the Shanmuganathan temple at Kunракudi. These inscriptions speak of the generous gifts of land made to the temple right from Kings, Raja Raja Chola (985-1014 A.D.) Kulothunga Chola I (1070-1120 A.D) Sadayavarman Sri.Pallabadevan(1115-1137 A.D.), Sri. Vikrama Pandia Thevar (1180-1190 A.D.) Kulothunga Chola III (1178-1218 A.D.), Maravarman Sundara Pandian (1216-1238 A.D.), Sadayavarman Sundara Pandian (1251 - 1271 A.D.).

These donors generously donated not only lands but also constructed Mandapams, entrance arches, compound walls, pillars, steps, halls, sanctum sanctorum, etc. particularly, vast structures wet and dry lands were gifted to the temple free of tax. The proceeds of these lands strengthened the revenue and financial sources of the temple. The revenues realised from various wet lands were used for the purpose of conducting poojas etc.

---


Conclusion

This chapter, has dealt with important facts and figures relating to Kunrakudi Village. A detailed account of its name, boundaries, the temples (with their properties and revenue), the population, geography, rainfall, irrigation, soil, climate, the flora and fauna etc. has been given in this chapter. These details help us to understand the different socio-economic dimensions of the village life in Kunrakudi Village.