CHAPTER - III

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DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Title of the Study

“A Study on Inter-Group Relations among the Scheduled Castes in the Selected Villages of Dindigul District”.

Statement of the Problem

India is a land of villages. Caste, untouchability and fixed occupation of each caste group are parts of her social organisation. Of these three facts, the caste system in Tamil Nadu, as in other states of India, has a hierarchical structure. The individuals in Indian society belong to some castes which are homogenous groups. This caste system is a system of complexity. These caste groups maintain some hierarchical system based on which they maintain their relationship with other caste groups. Moreover, Indian society is integrated in terms of social relationships. The term social relationship implies a reciprocal influence, a mutual connection among the elements of society. These different types of relationships among the
individuals facilitate some sort of coordination and mutual cooperation with other individuals. For the smooth existence of human society this type of relationship is essential.

The old untouchables are officially called Scheduled Castes. They are at the bottom of India’s caste hierarchy. These Scheduled Castes formed the lowest strata of India’s caste system. They are equally at the bottom of the economic hierarchy. Thus, the Scheduled Caste people suffer from the dual handicap of social disability arising out of the stigma of untouchability (and polluted job) and economic deprivation arising out of exploitation and below subsistence wages.

These social and economic disabilities of the Scheduled Caste populations have their own implications in their daily life. They are powerless, emboldened by economic and political power. The high caste propertied groups often demonstrate their power over the powerless weaker sections. The caste hierarchy does not end between the caste Hindus and the Scheduled Caste groups. The Scheduled Castes themselves are divided both on caste and class lines and these certainly act as a basis of
exploitation and oppression. Among the Scheduled Caste people, there are a number of groups which follow the stratification system. Prominent among them in Tamil Nadu, more specifically in Dindigul District, are the Pallars, Paraiyars and Sakkiliars. These three groups have their own social status and relationship among them. Among these three groups, the Pallars are placed at the top followed by the Paraiyars and the Sakkiliars. These three groups used to live in separate segments of the village. They never maintained any social relationship. The three castes (groups) do not draw water from the same well. Though these three come under one umbrella of the Scheduled Castes, the Pallars consider the other two groups inferior to them. This reflects the caste hierarchy among the Scheduled Castes.

The situation is changing in contemporary India. Due to many factors and new interests, there are changes in relationships cutting across the boundaries of the old established groups. Increased mobility has led to the physical dispersal of castes, lineages and families. The individual can not any longer afford to confine his relations within his village, his caste or a kin group. He has to develop relations with people who are spread far and wide, who have diverse social, economic and political positions and
interests. At the same time, though the relations between castes are changing rapidly, the traditional hierarchical order has not been eliminated inspite of new legal and political systems. That is why these Dalits have first preferred to get justice within their caste system.

Objectives of the Study

The study has been carried out with the aim of understanding the existing relationships among the three groups of the Scheduled Castes in the selected villages of Dindigul District.

The specific objectives of the study are:

* To study the socio-economic conditions of the Scheduled castes, namely, Pallar, Paraiyar and Salddliar.

* To find out the inter-group relationships existing among them with reference to connubium.

* To find out whether any feeling of superiority or inferiority prevails among the members of these groups and why.
To find out to what extent these people are benefited by the government programmes and the related problems.

To suggest measures to improve the social relationships among these three groups.

Operational Definition of terms and concepts

Inter Group Relation

The oxford dictionary defines the word ‘inter’ as between and the word group as a number of people. Here, for our study, the term inter-group has been used to denote between the members of the selected groups under study. The term relations has been used to mean the reciprocal interaction or the way in which the members of the group under study feel, react and interact with each other at a given situation or on particular aspect.

Scheduled Caste

The term scheduled castes conveys the people belonging to the three groups namely, Pallars, Paraiyars and Sakkiliars.
Methodology

The main purpose of the present study is to study the type of relationship that exists among the members of the three scheduled caste groups, namely, Pallar, Paraiyar and Salddliar. The study tries to examine the socio-economic conditions of the respondent families, the type of marital relationship, their opinion on inter-group marriage, the type of occupational and financial relationship and their participation in each others’ household ceremonies, etc.

Study Population

The study was carried out among the family heads of the families of all the three groups in six selected villages.

Study Area Profile

This section presents a detailed profile of the study area, namely, Dindigul district. Information about the district, the blocks concerned and the study villages are also provided in the following pages.
Dindigul District

The Dindigul district was created by bifurcating the erstwhile Madurai district on 15th September, 1985, with Dindigul as its headquarters. On its bifurcation, this district was named as Dindigul Anna District and recently, it was renamed Dindigul district. The district is located between 77° 30'E and 78° 20'E and 10° 02'E N. Bound by Periyar district on the North, Trichy district on the east, Madurai district on the South and Coimbatore district and Kerala state on the west, it extends over an area of 6058 square kilometers. It has been divided into three revenue divisions, with six taluks, namely, Dindigul, Kodailcanal, Natham, Nilakottai, Palani and Vedasandur. There are 14 blocks, the study area comes under two taluks viz, Dindigul and Vedasandur. In Dindigul taluk, Athoor and Reddiarchatram blocks and in Vedasandur Taluk, Vadadamurai Block have been covered for the study.

Climate

Semi-arid tropical monsoon type of climate prevails in the plains whereas low temperature and fairly heavy rainfall is recorded in the hilly
regions of this district. The north-east monsoon serves as the main source of water in the district.

**Population**

The total population of the district, as per 1991 census is 17,60,601 comprising 8,90,783 males and 8,69,818 females. The sex ratio is 976. The scheduled caste population accounts for 20 percent of the total. The rural population of the district is 13,83,580 with 6,99,122 males and 6,84,458 females which accounts for more than 78 percent of the total population. Similarly, the urban population comes to 3,77,021 persons (1,91,661 males and 1,85,630 females).

About 50 percent of the population are literate. According to the 1991 census, the total literates (excluding the population in the age group of 0-6 years) is 8,73,499 persons. Of these 5,378,829 are males and 3,35,670 are females.
In the rural areas of the district 6,61,480 persons (3,92,930 males and 2,23,550 females) are literates and in the urban areas, 2,57019 persons (1,44,899 males and 1,12,120 females) are literates.

The density of population is 291 per sq.km. The highest density of population (more than 1000) is recorded in and around the municipalities and town Panchayats i.e., Palani, Kodaikanal, Dindigul, Natharn, Chinnalapatti, Vedasandur and Guziliamparai. The northern part of the district has low density of population-less than 250 persons per square kilometer. But most of the villages in the eastern part of the district lie in the category of 250-500 persons per square kilometer. (Ex.Vedasandur, Sanarpatty, Athoor blocks and some parts of Dindigul, Batlagundu, Nilakottai and Natham blocks).

Land Use and Cropping Pattern

The spatial distribution of major land use and land cover includes built-up land, agricultural land, forest land, waste land, water bodies, mining areas and grazing land. Built up lands are found in and around Dindigul, Palani, Kodaikanal, Vedasandur and Natham towns. Area under
forest is found in the southern and north eastern parts of the district. Water lands are available largely in the south western and the eastern parts as well as in some packets in the northern part of the district. Grazing lands are found in a few locations in the south western parts of the district. The rest of the area comes under agricultural land.

The total geographical area of the district is 5,08,016 hectares. Out of the net area sown as low as nine percent is sown more than once. Dry farming is predominant in the district and the important wetland tracts are located in the Shanmuganathi and Kodaganar basins. Paddy is the principal crop (37 percent) followed by oil seeds (23 percent) and fruits and vegetables (24 percent). Sirumalai and Virupatchi hills are known for a special variety of plantains. Fruits like orange, lime, mango and grapes are the specialities of Dindigul, Nilakottai and Palani taluks. In the plains, the important crops are paddy, cholam, cumbu, millets, oilseeds, cotton, sugarcane, onion etc. In the Kodaikanal and Sirumalai hills the major crops are coffee, citrus fruits etc.
Forest

The Dindigul Forest Division covers the entire district, except Kodaikanal division and has eight ranges. Both the divisions have reserved forests as well as reserved land. In Dindigul division, the eastern part i.e., the eastern part of Gujiliamparai and Vadamadurai blocks, the northern-eastern part of Vedasandur block, the Sirumalai Hills and the hilly area of Natham block, the northern slopes of the Palani Hills have reserved forests. Three pockets of reserved lands are found in the Sirumalai Hills, the eastern lower Palani Hills and the north central slope of Palani Hills,

In the Kodaikanal Forest Division, reserved forest covers the major area and reserved lands occupy a small area.

Net Area Sown

The net area sown is 58 percent of the total area. The north-western, the central and the south eastern parts of district i.e., Thoppampatty, Palani, Reddiarchatram and Natham blocks stand out predominantly, with more than 70 percent of the cultivable land. It is less than 40 percent in the dry
blocks, viz., Guziliamparai and Vedasandur, Kodaikanal Block and the western part of Reddiarchatrara Block have smaller area because of hilly terrain. The majority of the villages in the eastern and the central part of the district are in the category with less than 40 percent of the net sown area.

Physiography and Relief

The district has extensive hilly and rocky areas with undulating plains. Palani hills, ranging in heights from 1000 to 2700 meters, from the northern spur of the western ghates. Similarly with an average height of 2500 meters, the upper Palani Hills, has four important valleys, namely, Kudirayar valley, Porandalar valley, Pallar valley and Marudhanathi valley; it has also several peaks like Perumal Hill, Pallangi Hill, Vembadi Shola Peak etc. The lower Palani Hills consists of a confused jumble of hills from one another by steep and beautiful wooded valleys. Those hills are Thandikudi, Virupatchi hills etc. On the eastern side, the Sirumalai Hills, the Alagarmalai, the Natham and the Ayyalur Hills are found. There are also many isolated hills, like Madukamalai, Karandamalai and the great rock of
Dindigul. The hilly terrain in the south-east and the east slope down steeply in the northern direction and towards the central part of the district.

Irrigation

Well is the predominant source of irrigation. The important irrigation schemes are Pallar, Porundhalar, Kodaganar and Manjalar. In the plains dry farming is practiced with the exception of Shanmuga nadhi and Kodaganar river basin.

Rainfall

The annual rainfall is about 1214-50 mm (excluding Kodaikanal) which is more than double the normal rainfall of the state, (500 mm). As for seasonal distribution, the full benefit of the south-west monsoon could not be harvested because of the western ghats forming a barrier. The north east monsoon is the principal monsoon. The remaining two seasons, winter and summer are insignificant. Floods have occurred occasionally. Dindigul and Vedasandur are the driest parts.
Industry

Some of the fast developing industrial activities of recent origin are lime-kiln, brick-kiln, spinning and paper mills. Other traditional but important industries are leather tanning, lock making, brass ware industry, tobacco and cigar making, jewellery work, dying, art-silk weaving etc. Next to farming Dindigul is an important industrial centre.

A number of spinning mills are coming up in Vedasandur and Vadamadurai Blocks, besides a few paper mills in Swaminathapuram. A mini steel industry has been established. Tobacco and Cigar, metal dyes, iron, cotton spinning and weaving are the other promising industries. The district thrives with handloom industry in Chinnalapatti, which is located 11 kilometers away from Dindigul. Chinnalapatti art silk sarees and sungudi (cotton) sarees are famous throughout India. More than 1000 families are engaged in the industry. In addition, Khadi industry (spinning, weaving and dying) has been promoted by Gandhigram in a big way. An industrial estate is available at Dindigul for the benefit of small scale industries.
Infrastructure Facility

Dindigul and Palani are the two important educational centres with arts and science colleges, professional colleges and polytechnic. The district has two universities, namely Gandhigram Rural Institute, Gandhigram and Mother Teresa Women’s University, Kodaikanal. There are 1351 schools functioning in the district. The district has nine hospitals, 16 primary health centres and 307 sub centres. Agricultural produce are marketed in six permanent and six regulated markets along with seven unregulated markets and seven shanties.

With regard to veterinary facilities four hospitals, 27 dispensaries, 11 key village sub-centres and one poultry extension centre are providing services to the livestock population.

The district has a good road network, well connected with other parts of the state. National Highway No.7 and 47 run through the district. Surfaced road length is 3071 km while unsurfaced length is 3071, 37 km. Meter-gauge railway line connects the district with Coimbatore, Palaghat
(Kerala) Madurai and Quilon, while broad gauge links with Karur, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Chennai, Kanyakumari and Bangalore.

Block Profile - Athoor

Athoor block is located 16 kms west of Dindigul town, spread over 135.79 square kilometer. It has a total population of 85,239 of which 42,971 are males, and 42,268 females. There are 21 revenue villages in the block, which cover 114 hamlets and they are attached to 22 village and 3 town Panchayats.

This block is served by an arts college, along with a technical college and 3 each of higher secondary schools. About 75 elementary and 60 middle schools are also functioning. The people of this block take treatment in two government hospitals and private hospital and two primary health centres. In addition to these, 31 mini health centres are catering to the needs of the pregnant mothers and nursing children, while two dispensaries and 5 clinics are functioning in the block for cattle care.
The tar, metal and mud roads of Panchayat Union and Village Panchayats connect various villages and central places in the block. Open wells, handpumps connected with over head tank and ground level tanks along with tape connections of Peranai, and Kamarajar Dam facilitate water supply to the people.

A railway station, two police stations a police out post and a rural university are notable for their service. Chinnalapatty town Panchayat in the block is very famous for handlooms and wire chair. Nationalized banks, primary cooperative banks and fair price shops are rendering fruitful service to the people.

Reddiarchatram Block

Reddiarchatram, the block headquarters, is located on the Dindigul Palani main road (SH7) and its boundary begins on the eight kilometer from Dindigul town. It has a total population of 87,788 with 44,322 males and 43,466 females including the scheduled caste population of 15,672 of which males are 7,955 and 7,717 females; there are 557 schedule tribe people of whom 293 are males and 264 are females as per the 1991 census.
Geographically this block is spread over 147.03 square kilometers. The revenue villages cover 214 hamlets under 23 village and two town Panchayats. The educational needs of the block are met by 82 schools with a higher secondary school and three secondary schools. There is also one professional and a technical college. Two primary health centres supported by 12 health sub-centres take care of the health of the people. Two veterinary dispensaries and eight sub-centres treat the cattle population of the block.

The block is covered by 9 kms of tar road, 69 kms of metal road, 49 kms of stoned road and 17 kms of mud road. Panchayat roads of metal, stone and mud types have been put-up to a distance of 7 kms, 66 kms and 20 kms respectively. These roads link most of the villages and the main roads of major towns. Two railway stations are functioning in the block, water supply is made available through 293 open wells and 280 handpumps with the support of 60 over head tanks and 10 ground level reservoirs.

The total cultivable land is 51,922 hectares of which 2061 hectares is wet land and 49561 hectares dry land. The area of fallow land is about
DINDIGUL DISTRICT
LOCATION OF THE STUDY AREA

LEGEND

- State Boundary
- District Boundary
- Taluk Boundary
- Block Boundary

SCALE

0 10 Kms

77° 45' E
20728 hectares. Tanks, small ponds and check dams or percolation ponds numbering 166, supply water for agricultural purposes. A ginning factory/spinning mill and five tanneries are functioning in the block. In the process of the development of the block, the role of commercial and financial institutions, such as one land development bank, ten cooperative societies, 24 primary agriculture cooperative banks and the nationalize bank is worth mentioning.

Village Profile

Kalikkampatty

Kalikkampatty is a village Panchayat as well as a revenue village in Athoor block of Dindigul district. People belonging to all the three religious groups, namely, Hindu, Christian and Muslim live here. The total population conies to 1062 (553 males and 509 females) living in 272 families. There are 100 scheduled caste families comprising Pallar (60 families) and Sakkiliar (40 families).

Of the total 146.61.0 hectares of land, a majority (96.70.5 hectares) are dry lands while another 35.69.01 hectares garden lands. The soil type is
red soil as well as black cotton soil. Vegetables, Paddy, onion are the major
crops cultivated on the garden lands and cholam, cotton and pulses are the
crops grown on the dry lands. There is a Primary school in this village and
for other higher studies they have to go to Panchampatty or Gandhigram.
For medical facilities, these people depend on the PHC at Chinnalapatty or
G.H. at Dindigul.

Ambathurai

This is a Village Panchayat as well as a revenue village in Athoor
block of Dindigul district. This village is also called as Melakottai where
the Jamin of this area lived. This is a multi-caste village where the people
belonging to Naicker, Pillai, Dhobi and the Scheduled Caste live. The main
road which runs at the centre of the village divides the residential area of the
caste Hindu families and the residential area of the Scheduled caste families.

Agriculture and related activities are the major occupation of the
people in this village. A sizable portion of the members are also engaged in
other types of activities like labour in the wire chair factory, washing and in
government service. But a majority of the scheduled caste members are agricultural labourers.

There is a middle school in the village. For higher studies, the students go to Chinnalapatti or Gandhigram. Health care is provided by the hospitals in Chinnalapatti and Gandhigram.

**Kulathupatty**

Kulathupatty is a hamlet that comes under T.Puduppatty Panchayat, in Thethupatty revenue village of Reddiarchatram block. It is a remote village with no transport facilities. There are a total of 72 families, all belonging to Hindu religion. The total population is 351 among whom 178 are males and 173 females. A majority of the total families, numbering 57 are scheduled caste of whom 50 belong to Pallar and 7 to Saklciliar groups. The total scheduled caste population is 175 of whom 87 are males and 88 are females.

The total geographical area is 75.80.5 hectares, one-third of which is garden lands (24.35.5 hectares) while the remaining majority is dry lands.
Vegetables, cotton, cholam, paddy are cultivated on the garden lands where as cholam and pulses are the major crops cultivated on the dry lands.

Since there is no school facilities of any grade, the parents send their children to Puduppaty for primary and middle school education and for high school education, they have to go to Kannivadi 6 Ians away from here. For medical facilities, these people go to Kannivadi and Dindigul town.

S.Vadipatty

S.Vadipatty is one of the hamlets in Silvarpatty Panchayat, Silvarpatty revenue village of Reddiarchatram block in Dindigul taluk and district. There are a total of 133 households with a population of 580 of which 280 are males and the remaining 300 females. The majority of the people in this village belong to Hinduism while a small minority belongs to Christianity. Among the total families 72 are scheduled caste families of whom 40 families are Pallars and 32 Paraiyars.

The total geographical area is 97.43.0 hectares of which garden land is more (38.48.5 hectares) than the other types of lands. Cholam, ground
nut and pulses are the major crops cultivated on the lands of this village. After primary education, the students have to come outside the village for any type of higher studies. For other necessities, the villagers depend on Reddiarchatram and Silvarpatty and for medical facilities they go to Dindigul.

Morepatty

Morepatty is one of the hamlets in Morepatty village panchayat and revenue village in Vadamadurai block of Vedasandur taluk in Dindigul district. There are 91 families belonging to the scheduled caste groups with 35 Pallars, 40 Paraiyar and 16 Sakkiliar families.

As this area is a drought prone one, dry land farming is adopted by the land owners. Agriculture and related activities, labour in the spinning mills that have come up in Vadamadurai area are the major types of occupation of these people.

There is one primary school in this village and for high school education, the students go to Vadamadurai. There is also one health sub-
centre and for other health needs, the people go to Vadamadurai where there
is primary health centre and the government hospital is at Dindigul.

**Pilathu**

Pilathu is yet another study village in Vadamadurai block. This village Pilathu is also one of the hamlets in Pilathu village Panchayat in Pilathu revenue village in Vedasandur taluk of Dindigul district. There are 93 scheduled caste families of whom 43 are Pallar 28 are Paraiyar and 22 Sakkiliars.

Agriculture and allied activities and work in the spinning mills are the major occupation of these people of whom majority of them are landless agricultural labourers.

There is one primary school in this village and for high school, they go to Vadamadurai. Higher educational institutions are at Dindigul.

To meet the health needs, there is a health sub-centre; the PHC is functioning at Vadamadurai whereas the government hospital is at Dindigul.
Sample

The study was carried out among 588 respondents from six villages of three development blocks in Dindigul district. These three development blocks spread over all the directions of the district headquarters with various socio-economic and demographic characteristics were selected at random. A total of six villages, at the rate of two villages per block were selected. These six villages consisted either of all the three scheduled caste groups or a minimum of two groups under study. Thus, a total of 588 respondents from all the three scheduled caste groups were contacted for this study. Census method was followed in selecting the respondents. All the family heads or any available responsible persons in the family were contacted for data collection.

Sample Size

There were a total of 588 families belonging to all the three scheduled caste groups in these six villages. All these 588 families formed the sample size for this study.
Sources of Data

The required data for the study were gathered both from the primary and secondary sources. The information relating to the demographic particulars, socio-economic conditions, the type of relationship that existed in the past as well as that exists at present in various aspects like marital, occupational, financial etc., were gathered directly from the respondents and this formed the primary data. Population details, geographical particulars of the study village etc. were collected from census, official records and journals and these formed the secondary data.

Tools of Data Collection

A well structured interview schedule was prepared consisting of questions on all aspects touching the objectives of the study by consulting experts in the subject. This interview schedule was pre-tested and this pre-test helped in re-structuring the same. After necessary modifications, the interview schedule was finalized and data were collected by administering the interview schedule to the respondents.
Apart from this, data were also collected by focussed group discussion with the members of each group. This helped to get an insight about the pattern of relationship that exists in general among the members of the various caste groups in the study villages.

Data Analysis

The collected data were checked for validation and were fed into a master table. Individual tables were prepared (both one way and two way) keeping in view the objectives of the study. Percentages, charts, diagrams were used wherever necessary to illustrate the data.

Scope of the Study

The study findings highlight the interactional hierarchy prevalent among these three Scheduled Caste groups, how these weaker sections are benefited and affected by the various government programmes, etc. It also brings to light the type of existing relationship among the members of these three groups in their day to day affairs. These findings will help the development workers, NGOs and to the policy makers in formulating new
development framework suited to these three groups and this will facilitate proper implementation of such schemes.

Limitations

The study was carried out only among the three major groups of the Scheduled Castes in six villages of Dindigul District. So, the results can be generalized to the study villages and Dindigul District at the micro level and the whole of Tamil Nadu at the macro level.

Chapterization

This thesis has been presented in five chapters. The introductory part, dealing with the origin and status of these Scheduled Caste groups, has been presented in chapter I. The second chapter deals with the review of literature pertaining to the study. The study design along with the profile of the study villages has been dealt with in Chapter III. The tables, their analysis and interpretation of these tables forms Chapter IV, while the summary of findings and conclusion and recommendations are presented in Chapter V.