INTRODUCTION

Research in social science as in other fields is a search for knowledge. It is now widely acknowledged that history of a people is enormously wider than the history of their kings and ministers, wars and treaties. History can be considered as the record of the life of societies of men, of the changes which these societies have gone through, of the ideas which have determined the actions of those societies and of the material conditions which have helped or hindered their development. Social and cultural conditions are considered important in writing history in modern times. History is not merely a record of great kings and dynasties, their coronations and wars and victories and deaths but is a logical sequence of development of social and cultural system. In this connection one could recall the observation of Cohen in his work, 'The Meaning of Human History' where he states that

"Instead of the old restriction, to the study of kings and dynasties, warriors and the like, there came also a more human conception of the proper province of history, to include ordinary social functions such as games, social manner, everyday business transactions, all the things which constitute the substance of the daily life of men, women and children"

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It is necessary that social history received its due importance and attempts are made to undertake problem oriented researches in the field. G.M. Trevelyan had rightly stated that 'without social history, economic history is barren and political history unintelligible'. Though it is difficult to reconstruct social history the attempt is worth undertaking. An attempt to know the actual life of men in each successive age of the past is the aim of social research. Different areas of critical history like socio-economic studies, religio-social studies and the various causes going to make the Tamilian culture remains to be explored. Curiosity has always been the intrinsic trait of human mind and it has served as a compelling drive in the exploration of man's surroundings. The curiosity to know the past, the character and activities of one's ancestors; the circumstances that had led to the formation of the present; the cause for one's present hardships and prosperity etc. constitute a natural psychics trait in man. History is social introspection. It includes the recollection of society's past and an examination of its evolution and the process requires memory, recording of the past and conclusion which is critical in nature.

One of the oldest institutions in Indian society is caste system. Caste is the most general form of social organisation in India. There are in India more than three thousand castes, each culturally distinct endogamous


community sharing traditionally a common occupation and a particular position in the localized hierarchy of caste ranking. The two characteristics features of the caste system its ubiquity and exclusive presence only in India as a contrast to the social grouping prevalent in Europe or America has found many able scholars devoted to its study. Caste is an all India phenomenon and is the steel frame of Hinduism. Caste has conferred certain benefits in the matter of social development. It has contributed to the evolution of the solidarity of the group, helped in specialization in different branches of occupation and has fostered traditions in art, craft, industry and science. Indian culture has been preserved inspite of the existence of innumerable castes because of India's ability to find unity in diversity. Although conflicts between castes certainly occurred, castes must not be regarded as conflicting groups. Indeed, the caste system presupposes ideally the interdependent relationship of occupational castes functioning according to prescribed pattern of behaviour providing at once economic security and a defined status and role⁴. The stream of castes and subcastes really go to make a perennial river and finally become one at ocean of culture. The fact that Indian population could retain much of its virtue through different ages, mainly because of the institution of caste has been observed by the European writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth century who were connected with Indian administration of the East India company⁵.


With the advancement in the field of science and its impact on religion, there are changes in the social life of the people. The advent of drastic changes in social outlook had led to the disintegration and slow disappearance of the rigidity of caste system. Change is the law of nature. The social structure is subject to incessant change. Inspite of the efforts of individuals for stability and permanence, the society undergoes the phenomenon of growth, decay, revival and accommodation of changes which results in modification of the social structure in course of time. Inspite of these changes in the social structure, caste is still the foundation of the Indian social fabric and record of caste is still the best guide to the changes in the various social strata of Hindu society. Questions of marriage customs, education and occupation are inseparably connected with the caste system. Hence it is essential to study the history of various castes which have enriched the culture of India as a homogenous one.

Modern history stresses on the study of the history of the people. Tracing the past and evaluating the system with its merits and demerits helps in enriching the culture and civilization. Social differentiation with its attendant demarcation of groups and of status of individuals is a very widespread feature of human society. A foreign visitor to India is stuck by the phenomenon known as the caste system. Though he may not understand the full working of the system, he realises the fact that Hindu society is divided into groups called castes, which differ in their degree of


G.T. Boag, *Census of India 1921*, p.152
respectability and circles of social intercourse. The word 'Caste' comes from the *portuguese* word 'casta' signifying breed. When the Portuguese entered into relations with the people of the Malabar coast they were quick to observe the segmentation of Hindu society which were graded in a sort of hierarchy, the upper groups refraining from superstitious care from all intercourse with those considered more lowly.

Despite an already vast and geometrically expanding, literature, the analytical and empirical description of caste in India remains problematical. Different scholars have come out with varied definitions of caste. J.H. Nelson has defined caste as

"A large or small community of men of one race and language who are knit together by common interests and by common social laws and customs peculiar to such community, and are in a greater or less degree dissociated from the rest of the population of which they form a part by the circumstances of them having such interest and following such laws and customs."

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Imperial Gazetteer considers caste as an extension of the family and the blood-bond relationship through marriage being the principle of grouping of different castes. It also states that,

"Birth determines irrevocably the whole course of a man's social and domestic relations and he must throughout life eat, drink, dress, marry and give in marriage in accordance with the usages into which he was born"\(^{10}\).

Thus the two important characteristics of caste system happens to be the confirmation of membership to those who are born in a group and include persons to be born in that group and restriction on members by an inexorable social law to marry outside the group.\(^{11}\) Ghurye lists the following features as characteristic of Hindu caste system, (1) segmental division of society (2) hierarchical arrangement of castes (3) restriction on feeding and social intercourse (4) civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different castes (5) lack of unrestricted choice of occupation and (6) restrictions on marriage\(^{12}\).

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10 Imperial Gazetteer, p.323.
According to M.N. Srinivas castes are found everywhere in India and they are

"hereditary, endogamous usually localized group having a traditional association with an occupation, and a particular position in the local hierarchy of castes"\(^{13}\).

Risley defines caste as

"Collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor, human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community".\(^{14}\)

The traditional system in which each economic function is fulfilled by a particular caste is considered as relationship of servitude. It was in fact, a system of reciprocity and redistribution but not one of equality.\(^{15}\)

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\(^{13}\) M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays* (Bombay, 1962), p.3.


\(^{15}\) R.L. Hardgrave JR, loc.cit.
The review of the various definitions of caste leads to the conclusion that caste systems resemble racial stratification in their biological concern with differences of birth and marriage. They resemble the much more widespread systems of social and economic classes in containing ranks that tend to be culturally marked, occupationally linked, hereditary and endogamous.

While caste system is a unique feature of Indian sub-continent, it is necessary to remember a subtler but equally effective and valid truth that within India caste has not developed in the same manner and to the same extent everywhere. The varna concept was a chief feature of the aryan society of the later vedic period. The development of caste system in north was different when compared with the same in Tamilnadu. When the aryans conquered and occupied the Indus and gangetic plain, the need arose for them to evolve a pattern of life which would exclude indigenous population and at the same time place the conquerors in an advantageous position in society. Thus the caste system of the north developed on lines determined by historical circumstances. In Tamilaham different conditions existed. Though from the earliest literary works of the Tamils including Tolkāppiyam we get evidence of the aryan influence, it is wrong to assume that cultured and organized life developed in Tamilaham only after aryan
infiltration. This is seen from the fact that Tamil culture and aryan culture are not identical. The historical circumstances that led to the development of caste system in Tamilaham was different from those of the north.¹⁶

The Tamil society of the sangam age was divided on geographical basis and occupation of the people. The divisions were, the land of forests desired by Mayōn (the blackgod) the world of hills desired by seyōn (the redgod) the world of sweet waters desired by the king (of gods) and the world of wide sand desired by varunan called mullai, kurinji, marudam and neidal respectively. The residents of these tracts were shepherds, hunters, farmers and fishermen.¹⁷ The denudation of forests and arable tracts led to the creation of pālai or desert land. There were other castes in Tamilnadu in the Sangam period namely pānan, paraiyan, tudian and kadamban.¹⁸ The old tribal polity evidencing a large number of horizontal cut up kinship groups, with their peculiar system of endogamy and ritual taboos existed in tact in the south and the varṇa system was a coat put on this ancient structure thereby creating a social criss-cross both horizontal


¹⁷ Tolkappiyam, ‘Poruladikaram’, 1.5. P.T. Srinivasa Iyengar (Trans), History of the Tamils from the earliest times to 600 A.D. (Madras, 1929), p.82.

¹⁸ Purananuru Stanza, 335.
and vertical and very clearly the system functioned in a most peculiar way\textsuperscript{19}. V.A. Smith while pointing out the civilized advancement of the Tamils and difference between the caste system of Tamilnadu and that of North India states that

"The Tamils had developed an advanced civilization of their own, wholly independent of north India. Immigrants from the north, who had settled at Madura and some other cities, sought to introduce Hindu notions of caste and ceremonial but met with much opposition, and the caste system which for many centuries past has been observed with special strictness in the south was then inchoate and imperfect\textsuperscript{20}.

The fact that varna concept came to the south at a comparatively later time and the succeeding centuries saw the gradual hardening of classes is also expressed by A.L. Basham. This process continued until the south Indian

\textsuperscript{19} N. Subrahmanian, \textit{Sangam Polity, op. cit.}, pp.267-268.

\textsuperscript{20} V.A. Smith, \textit{Early History of India} (Delhi, 1985), p.439.
Brahmins became more strict in the observance of rituals, and the untouchable even more debased than in the north. Eventually caste system became more rigid in south India. During the pre-British period, the Hindu rulers exercised considerable power in the regulation of caste rules and rights.

The structure of the Tamil society was unique and that it was not subject to the varna type of North India has been opined by R. Rajalakshmi in her work ‘Tamil Polity.’ According to her

"The Tamil society was only very loosely and notionally subject to the varṇa division, possibly not at all to the varṇa dharma of the classical type and the rulers were Tamilians professing Kshatriya customs. Nor were Tamil peasants śūdras. From king to peasant intermarriage was imaginable without restriction based on the narrowness of sub creeds. The Brahmans however stood apart as a privileged entity in other wise integrated society."

21 A.L. Basham, The Wonder that was India (Bombay, 1971), p.138.
Thus it is evident that the caste system is a unique feature of the Indian society but its origin and development was not the same in different regions of the sub-continent. Especially the caste system of Tamilnadu differed from that of the north.

This work 'The History of the Thuluva vellalas' is an attempt to study the various factors in relation to the Thuluva vellala caste, a sub-sect of vellalas, a prominent community in South India. The study has been undertaken to earnestly answer questions like who were the Thuluva vellalas, their origin their area of concentration etc. An attempt to study the customs and traditions of the people of the Thuluva vellala community and their religion has also been made. Services of eminent personalities of the Thuluva Vellala community to the society at large is discussed.

M.N. Srinivas 'Caste in Modern India and Other essays' (Delhi 1978) are some of the books dealing with caste in India. Edgar Thurston's 'Castes and Tribes of Southern India' (7 volumes) (Delhi 1987) gives in detail the manners, customs and physical appearance of the various castes and tribes of southern India. Account of the caste system in Tamilnadu is also provided by Dr. K.K. Pillay in 'The Caste System in Tamilnadu' (Madras 1977) M.A. Sherring in 'The Tribes and Castes of the Madras Presidency' (Delhi 1975) and Simon Casie Chitty in 'The Castes Customs Manner and Literature of the Tamils' (Delhi, 1988).

There are some scholars who have concentrated on the study of a single caste exclusively. To mention a few are 'The Nadars of Tamil Nad' by Robert L. Hardgrave Jr (Berkeley & Los Angles, 1969) 'The History of the Maravar 1700-1802' by Dr. S. Kadhirvel (Madurai, 1977) 'History of Kondai Katti Vellalas' by Stephen Alan Barnett (Chicago, 1970) and the 'History of the Kongu Vellalas' by S.P. Kandasamy (Madras, 1985). Till now an exclusive study of the Thuluva vellala community has not been done, and hence the research on the various aspects of the Thuluva vellala community has been attempted.

The work is based on the following hypothesis.

The Thuluva vellalas are one of the sub-sects of the Vellala community.
They were immigrants from Tulu country in south Canara to Tondaimandalam in 2nd Century A.D.

They were essentially Tamils because during the period when migration took place Tulu Country was a part of Tamilnadu.

From Tondaimandalam the Thuluva vellalas had moved and settled in different parts of Tamilnadu in different periods of history. The customs and traditions are many which identify the community members and distinguishes them from rest of the society. The conduct of these customs involved the participation of members of other communities which had led to peaceful co-existence of different communities.

The contribution of eminent members of the community are in different fields and the underlying principle of all those contributions was that they were intended to serve society as a whole and not restricted to the Thuluva vellala caste alone.

The study is spread over five main chapters. The introductory chapter deals with the caste system as a unique feature of the Indian society. The history of caste system in Tamilnadu based on geographical divisions of the land namely kurunji, mullai, marudham, neidhal and pālai is discussed and distinguished from the caste system prevalent in north India. The importance of social history is emphasized. The various source materials for the study of the topic are also discussed in this chapter.
The second chapter deals with the origin and history of the Thuluva vellalas. Characteristic features of the vellala community of which the Thuluva vellala is an offshoot is discussed. The main occupation of the vellalas namely farming, their presence in Tamil society from ancient period, the respectful position enjoyed by the members of the community right from the beginning through the various periods of history is illustrated. The origin of Thuluva vellalas is traced in this chapter. The fact that the Thuluva vellalas gradually moved from Tondaimandalam and settled in different parts of Tamilnadu at various stages is dealt with. With the advent of the East India Company how the Thuluva Vellalas continued to ‘enjoy a prestigious position in the society by being mirasis is explained. The association formed by the members of the Thuluva vellala community, the services of the association to the people of the community are also discussed.

The third chapter deals with the customs and traditions of the people of the Thuluva vellala community. Nothing in the world appears to be of such great antiquity as the Hindu caste, Hindu custom, Hindu ceremony and the rituals which are related to them. The entire edifice of Hindu civilization is established on the four main pillars namely Hindu caste, Hindu custom, Hindu ceremony and the rituals. Customs and society are

B.N. Banerjee, Hindu Culture Custom and Ceremony (Delhi, 1979), p.141.
inseparable and they are co-existent. The customs are not uniform but firm. The variety of customs as a whole forms the base of the society in order to facilitate the interest of the individual and the society as a whole. Human behaviour or conduct which do not fall in line with these customs are not acceptable to the society and any violation of custom is likely to be treated with punishment by the society.

The social customs of the Thuluva vellalas are many and it is a long line of rituals from the cradle to the grave. In all the rituals importance is given to women folk. The social customs are broadly divided into three important stages. The first stage begins with the birth of a child, passes through the christening of the baby, its earboring ceremony and ends with 'Manjal Nirattu' if the baby is female. The marriage ceremonies form the second part while the death rites are the third and last. The various festivals celebrated by the community are enumerated. The religion followed by the Thuluva vellala community finds a place in this chapter. There are both saivites and vaishnavites in this community. Members of the community have made liberal charities to many saivite and vaishnavite temples and epigraphic evidence speaks about these charities.

The fourth chapter brings out the contribution made by certain eminent members of the Thuluva vellala community to the society. In a civilized modern society men with high integrity had commitments to help the people in the society, and to especially those who were in wants and needs. They set the tone to people to emulate them and thereby enrich the society. The history of a nation is the history of its greatmen and families. These people have, from time to time, shaped the fortunes of the country. The services of Mr. Pammal Sambanda Mudaliār a great dramatist, Dr. Mu. Varadarajan a teacher turned academician, Dr. A. Ramaswami Mudaliār a modern legislator, Dr. A. Lakshmanaswami Mudaliār an educationist and eminent gynaecologist, Dr. Guruswami Mudaliār a doyen in the field of medicine, Mr. V. L. Ethiraj a legal luminary and philanthropist and Mayilai Thiru Guruji a religious person who had made contributions in the spiritual sector have been enumerated.

The concluding chapter attempts an objective assessment of the entire history of the Thuluva vellalas. The importance of the study of social history has led to the study of different castes and communities. The existence of different endogamous groups namely castes, from ancient period and their role in development of culture of a region has been discussed. Of the innumerable castes in existence the vellala community has been picked up and its general characteristic features have been discussed. The many subdivisions of the vellala community are mentioned and it is pointed out that Thuluva vellalas form one of the subsects of the vellala community.
The origin and history of the Thuluva vellala community from the age of Athonda Chakravarti to the modern period has been traced. In the present day they are found in different occupations. The long list of ceremonies of the community, their traditions, and functions celebrated by the people of the community have helped them in maintaining their identity. Contribution made by eminent personalities of this community to society in various fields like fine arts, literature, legislation, education, medicine, women's education and spiritual field have been pointed out. Thus an objective assessment of the various aspects of the Thuluva Vellala community has been made.

The study of the History of Thuluva vellala is based on both primary and secondary sources. It is to be pointed out that there are various difficulties in getting materials for writing social history. It has been rightly stated by Macaulay,

"The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity - these are for the most part noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are
pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies nor enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives.  

Generally historians working on Indian history complain about the paucity of source materials for a correct appraisal of the social and economic conditions of the ancient and medieval periods. Such lament regarding poverty of information is applicable for the social history of Tamilnadu as well. Writing of social history becomes all the more difficult while dealing with agrarian societies. Marc Block pointed out that those who devote themselves to agrarian studies always face the threat of finding it difficult and unable to decipher the scrawl of the past, and more often than not, write social history in reverse. Mrs. Jayaswal also has stated about the infant nature of the studies in the social history of the Tamils. The historians of south India, while giving a complete picture of the ancient political and administrative institutions have only made a note about the contemporary social life. But the varna concept and the complicated Jāti structure have barely received any notice. The centre point of

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25 Trevelyan, English Social History, op. cit., General Introduction, p.XVII.


historiography of Tamilnadu is heroic personages and their deeds of valour. Ancient and medieval societies and social conditions have received scant attention. Even sporadic references to these aspects are in the nature of after thought appendices to the political history discussed in detail and the link between politics and society has been touched upon. History does not give minute details. It is also not available in a coherent form. Its fragments are to be linked to get a complete picture. Another problem that confronts a social historian is the ambiguity of the historical material available to him. Earliest Tamil literature writes of vellalas and velirs in general but never specifically about Thuluva vellalas. Also this literature with its characteristic features of imagination and emotions woven round it, makes it difficult to distinguish the reasonable from the fanciful. Inspite of all these hardships, a painstaking, patient and optimistic search for source materials help in getting them that helps in the study of the history of Thuluva vellalas.

The primary sources for the study can be broadly classified into five main groups. They are (1) ancient Tamil literary works, (2) the information derived from copper plates and epigraphic sources preserved in the Central archaeology department at Fort St. George and the state archaeological

department, Taramani, (3) official records preserved in Tamilnadu State Archives. These include census reports, gazetteers and manual of the different districts of Tamilnadu, Proceedings of the Madras legislative council, Proceedings of the Madras Corporation Council, debates of the Central Legislative Assembly, the Mirasi papers, Report of the Backward Classes Commission, Travelogues and autobiographies, (4) Doctoral Theses and (5) individual interviews with members of the community.

The ancient literary works provide a vivid account of the social conditions during the Sangam period. They provide a lot of information about the different geographical divisions of Tamil society, the occupation and life of the people of these areas. They refer to the presence of vellalas during the Sangam age, their occupation and status. The information derived from copper plates and epigraphic sources are very helpful for tracing the history during the medieval period. The role of the temple, the endowments made by individuals, the social groups of the time as well as their customs and habits are gleaned from the inscriptions. The various honours and titles enjoyed by the vellalas like the title of ‘Muvenda velăn’ exemption from death sentence granted to the vellalas, the organisation of the vellalas namely Chitrameli perianăttăr, its role and powers are the different information derived from inscriptions. Migration of agrarian communities from one region to the other is also evidenced in the
inscriptions. The literature of the period mainly religious in character, throws light on the social and religious conditions of the age. The hymn of the Nayanmars and Alwars and Periapuranam by Sekkilar comes under this category. In the history of Tamilnadu literary tradition Sataka series began to emerge from the eleventh century A.D. It flourished in the Tamil country in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries A.D. Tondaimandalam Satakam furnishes information regarding the colonization of Tondaimandalam by the vellalas from Tulu, in south Canara during the time of Athonda Chakravarti. Mention must be made of the manuscripts collected by late Lieut. Col. Colin Mackenzie. Mackenzie, Colin served in East India Company, Madras in 1783. He was a surveyer who surveyed the territories which the British added to their dominion in the Carnatic. He collected a large number of manuscripts from the British conquered territories in India. H.H. Wilson, the orientalist made a catalogue of the manuscripts of Col. Mackenzie in two volumes. These manuscripts give detailed information of the ancestry of different communities. These collections look like fairy tales woven round meagre sources of history devoid of historicity. As a stranger Mackenzie was too eager to know everything about the newly conquered country by the British. Hence he collected everything about their ancestry despite the mythological aura that surround it. Yet these collections provide ample evidence to the conditions that prevailed from 16th to 18th century A.D. in Tamilnadu. Careful selection of details results in identifying certain facts like the extent of Tondaimandalam, occupation of the zone by the vellalas etc.
The literature provided by the Thuluva vellala associations serve as an important primary source. The history of the community, the marriage customs of Thuluva vellalas, notes on career and services of eminent personalities of the community to the society and the history of the Thuluva vellala associations and the role of the associations in safeguarding the interest of the members is well brought out in the literature provided by the association. The literature also helps in understanding the role played by the Thuluva vellalas with regard to the Kapālīswarar temple at Mylapore right from its construction to the present day.

The census reports, gazetteers and manuals of the different districts of Tamilnadu help in getting facts regarding definition of castes, their enumeration, classification and their distribution in different districts of the state. Notes on occupations, festivals and practices of caste is also provided by them. Proceedings of the Madras Legislative Council, of the Madras Corporation, debates of the Central Legislative Assembly etc. help in tracing the role played by members of the community in these administrative bodies while simultaneously they help in understanding advances made in education, administration and political field. Report of the Backward Classes Commission helps in locating the community in the list of backward classes, the review of status of backwardness of the caste,
and attempts made by the people of the community in retaining backward status. Travelogues help in getting details about important cultural centres and festivals. The Mirasi papers are the published documents containing extensive extracts ranging from the fifth report of the Select Committee of House of Commons of the Year 1812, Boards Consultation, proceeding on every aspect of the Mirasi system which was in prevalent not only in Chengleput district but in other parts of Madras Presidency. These mirasi papers reveal the fact that Thuluva vellalas held the prestigious position of mirasi during the rule of the East India Company and the various mirasi rights held by them. Autobiographies help in identifying the caste of the writer, and throws light on his career and services. The autobiography of Pammal Sambanda Mudaliar serves as a source material for his family background, educational and employment details, the transformation in his life from the judicial field to the world of drama, the factors that brought out the changes and his contributions to the art of theatre.

A number of research works on the social conditions of different periods in the history of Tamilnadu helped in constructing the history of Thuluva vellalas. ‘Sangam Polity’ by N. Subrahmanian is a monumental work that treats Tamil Society from B.C. 100 to A.D. 600 as a single unit. It is a pioneering work that gives interesting account of Tamil society
during Sangam period but did not differentiate between the society of the Sangam and post Sangam period. Dr. Alalasundaram in his work ‘Tamil Social life’ had highlighted the social history of the post Sangam period also known as sangam ‘Maruviya kalam’ or the ‘Dark period’. The social condition of Tamils during medieval period has been well dealt with by R.Rajalakshmi in her work ‘Tamil Polity’. One gets detailed account of the social conditions of the people during Pallavas and Vijayanagar rule in ‘Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas’ and the ‘Vijaya Nagar Polity’ the research theses of C.Meenaakshi and T.V.Mahalingam respectively. C.E. Ramachandran in his thesis ‘Tamil social life in the seventeenth century’ has described the Tamil society of the seventeenth century. The Mirasi system and its characteristic features are traced from the Mirasi system in Chengleput district (1760-1820) by Patricia Joseph. The role played by the community in the self respect movement is traced from a number of books, Dr.P. Rajaraman’s the ‘Justice Party - A Historical Perspective’ being the most important source. The above mentioned works help a researcher in tracing the social life of the Tamil society from the Sangam to the modern period.
The interviews with members of the community revealed the various customs and traditions of the Thuluva vellala community right from birth to death. Sources for tracing the customs of communities are very limited. The researcher runs up against the pre-literate character of the culture of community. Several foreign scholars have collected details of caste, customs and habits during the advent of British. Of them mention may be made of Edgar Thurston, Abbe Dubois and Francis Buchanan. Some information is provided in general regarding festivals, occupations and customs of the various castes in the country. To collect information regarding the customs of Thuluva vellalas in particular quite a number of senior members of the community were interviewed and they were very much interested in giving relevant information.

The secondary sources consist of a number of books on caste system in general and Thuluva vellalas in particular. The 'Colas' by K.A.N. Sastry gives valuable information on the social conditions of the Cholas. Books on vellalas is the product of the beginning of the twentieth century. Some of the books on vellalas are Velir varalăru by N. Raghava Iyengar, Velalar Nāgarigam by Maraimalai Adigal, Velân marubunmai vilakkam by T.S.S. Subramaniam, Velân marabilakkanam by S. Duraisamy Pillai and Velânmanthar senaithalaivar allathu senaikkudaiyār poorva sarithiram by
D. Gopal Chettiar. Burton Stein’s notable work ‘Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India’ is a notable work on vellalas. The work takes credit for diverting the hitherto traditional approach in research to historical studies. He has brought home the point that in medieval Chola times the vellalas were the back bones creating a strong government and were mainly responsible for migratory settlements in high plains and enlarging and improving, the agricultural operational trends. Thuluva velālar varalaru by Ramiah Pillai deals with the origin of Thuluva vellalas and the endowments made by the members of the community. But it is of incomplete nature. Puranic details have been accepted as axiomatic truths without scrutiny in true historical perspective. For example it states that on one special occasion when Lord Siva ‘looked’ at goddess Parvati in their abode she was excited which resulted in shedding of few drops of sweat from her shoulders. Thuluva vellalas were supposed to have emerged from those drops of sweat. The intention of the present study is not to find fault with those predecessors who have worked in the field. In fact, it was the earliest attempt on the history of Thuluva vellalas. It is on the lines set by those scholars the present study has been evolved. For tracing the history of Thuluva vellalas during national movement one comes across many difficulties. A number of books on national movement is available. But the history of the freedom movement in Tamilnadu is provided only by
Dr. Ma. Po. Sivagnanam in his monumental work "Viduthalaipporil Thamilagam" which is brought out in two volumes. As he himself had stated in the preface of his book, the freedom movement in other states like Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Orissa etc. were brought out by the governments of the respective states, but it was not so in the case of Tamilnadu. As an individual he had taken much pains and after much difficulty has brought out the History of Freedom Movement in Tamilnadu. It is a pioneering work on the topic and helps in finding the role of different communities in national movement.

Mention must be made of the book Varalāru Padaitha Valakkarignar by Karuppijah a senior journalist which is the only book that gives the entire information regarding the life, career and achievement of Mr. V. L. Ethiraj.

These books which constitute the secondary sources are available in Maraimalai Adigal Library, Connemara Liberry, Devaneya Pavanar Library, Madras University Library, Secretariat Library, Roja Muthiah Research Library, Perasiriyar Research Library, Dr. C. Balasubramaniam Library and Departmental Libraries of Quaid-E-Millat Govt. College for Women and the Ethiraj College for Women.