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VANNAN

A SCHEDULED CASTE OF MADRAS

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ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY
No.

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FOREWORD

The Constitution lays down that "the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interest of the weaker sections of the people and in particular of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation."

To assist States in fulfilling their responsibility in this regard, the 1961 Census provided a series of special tabulations of the Social and Economic data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The lists of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are notified by the President under the Constitution and the Parliament is empowered to include in or exclude from the lists, any caste or tribe. During the Census operations, the enumerators frequently face the problem of identifying the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. In the President's notification, though in some cases, the names of the sub-castes and sub-tribes and synonyms are given, there are many cases where such names have not been provided in the list. The Census enumerators therefore, require guidance about the acceptance or rejection of claims that they come across during the operations of some communities to be treated as sub-caste or sub-tribes of the notified Scheduled castes or Scheduled tribes. For this purpose, the Census Organisation has thought it wise to undertake detailed ethnographic studies in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India. This is also in conformity with the past Census tradition of presenting authentic ethnographic account of Indian communities.

For conducting the ethnographic studies, a number of ancillary operations are undertaken by the Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General, India, as well as the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations in the various States. These ancillary operations include : (i) compilation of available information on each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe and preparation of bibliogaphy in respect of them ; (ii) preparation and interpretation of maps showing distribution of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes over time and space ; and (iii) special studies on cultural, technological and economic changes taking place among the various tribal communities.

Dr. B. K. Roy Burman, Deputy Registrar General, India, Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit, assisted by Shri A. M. Kurup and Shri N. G. Nag, Research Officers, co-ordinating all these studies at the Central level.

Vannan is notified as a Scheduled Caste in certain areas of Madras and Kerala States. It is a community of traditional washermen. It is divided into four endagamous groups *viz.*, Ehali, Eranguli, Nadar and Puratha Vannan. The first three serve the caste Hindus while the fourth one serves untouchable castes like Paraiyan, Pallan etc. In the present monograph an attempt has been made to bring out the Social and economic changes which are taking place among them. Educationally the Vannans are much better off with 38% literacy in their community. Many of them have graduated and many are in the Colleges. Occupational mobility is very much in the air and many have taken up white collar jobs. Those continuing in the traditional occupation are trying to join the co-operative field to

raise their economic status. Socially except the Puratha Vannan group the community does not suffer from the usual disabilities attributed to the Scheduled Castes.

Shri T. B. Bharati, Dy. Superintendent of Census Operations, Madras conducted the preliminary investigations and prepared the first draft. Shri A. S. Ramamurthy of the Registrar General's Office has done further field investigations and drafted the report. Shri A. M. Kurup and Dr. B. K. Roy Burman edited the report.

I avail of this opportunity to extend by warm thanks to all of my colleagues who have undertaken various studies on different aspects of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes of India.

A. CHANDRA SEKHAR
Registrar General, India

PREFACE

As an adjunct of 1961 Census, preparation of ethnographic monographs on a number of selected Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and ethnic groups with special status and ethnographic glossaries on all Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes have been taken up by the Census Organisation.

In India the Census organisation has a long tradition of undertaking ethnographic studies. Besides, there are certain reasons why, for its own operational purposes, it is necessary for the census organisation to take up such studies. During census operation, the Census organisation is required to make a complete enumeration of all the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the country. The ethnographic studies are required to establish the identity of the various communities including their segments. The social boundaries of various communities are not always rigid, they are in a state of flux. Ethnographic studies are required to keep track of these changes as well, otherwise comparison of consecutive census figures would give altogether wrong picture in respect of them. There is another aspect to study in respect of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in which the census organisation, as well as the welfare and planning agencies are interested—it is ethno-demography. In 1961 Census, separate tables were prepared in respect of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes on the following items :

(i) industrial classification of persons at work and non-workers by sex.

(ii) age and marital status,

(iii) education,

(iv) religion,

(v) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Castes,

(vi) persons not at work classified by sex and type of activity for Scheduled Tribes,

(vii) mother tongue and bilingualism for Scheduled Tribes.

The data available in these tables are to be analysed in respect of each Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe, so that the historical and cultural factors responsible for the demographic pattern can be identified and the impact of the emergent demographic pattern on the social structure can be determined.

The insight gained by the Census organisation, through ethnographic studies of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will be useful for interpretation of the demographic pattern for the country as a whole. Recent studies show that in India even now, it is difficult to correctly appreciate the various social and economic processes without reference to caste. On the other hand, in the interest of ultimate national goal, caste is not being recorded in census, except in case of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The insight gained through ethno-demographic studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is, therefore, of invaluable help for census.

At the same time, such study is very much useful for planning of development activities among the castes or tribes concerned. For instance, if the census shows that great deal of diversification of occupation has taken place among the Parayans of Kerala,

it is important for the planners to know whether the community consists of a number of disconnected segments or whether it means that a great deal of individual mobility is taking place where the main focus of community is other than traditional occupation. Again, when among the Bauris of Orissa, it is found that a very high proportion of the population is engaged in agricultural labour and next to them a high proportion is found in cultivation and also that there is considerable diversification of occupation, the following questions of sociological and practical importance arise :

(a) What is the historical relation between the agricultural labourers and the cultivators among the Bauris of Orissa ? The census data suggests one of the two possible developments, namely, (1) Bulk of the Bauris were cultivators and by a process of degeneration of their economy have become agricultural labourers, (2) on the other hand, it is also possible that the bulk of them were agricultural labourers and through a process of improvement of their economic condition, many of them have become cultivators.

(b) The fact that a considerable diversification of occupation has taken place, suggests that the economy has not remained in a stagnant condition. Here, it is to be examined whether the diversification is the result of upward mobility, or downward mobility, or even horizontal mobility, and what is the actual process by which the diversification has taken place.

(c) The Social dimensions corresponding to the diversification in economic life have to be examined. It is also to be examined whether in spite of diversification of occupation, the ethos of a particular occupation, for instance agriculture, continues to be dominant. In that case, diversification might have created problems of adjustment in values and attitudes.

Instances can be multiplied, but it is not necessary. What have been stated above, are enough to bring out the significance of ethno-demographic studies for planners.

The above dimensions of ethno-demographic studies have evolved through stages. In 1960 at the instance of Shri Mitra, Registrar General of India, a questionnaire for collection of ethnographic data was circulated among the Census Superintendents. In October, 1961, the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit was set up in the Office of the Registrar General, India, to coordinate the ethnographic studies and a few other ancillary studies, like village surveys, handicraft surveys, etc. In December 1961, a study Camp was organised in Delhi, where the personnel engaged in ethnographic studies, handicrafts studies and other social investigations in the office of the Census Superintendents, participated. In the study camp, it was considered that the ethnographic notes would mainly aim at making an objective assessment of the state of development of the different scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the context of the changes taking place in technology, economic organisation and total culture pattern of the country. It was further suggested that the primary focus of the study should not be on the exotic elements of the cultures of the different castes and tribes. It should be on the efforts of the communities concerned, to adjust to the modern conditions of life. In the light of the above decisions of the Study Camp, rapid ethnographic studies have been carried on by the staff of the Superintendents of Census Operations as well as by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the office of the Registrar General, India, in different parts of the country. These rapid surveys have brought out a number of methodological and operational problems. In May and June, 1966, two Ethnographic Study camps were held at Kurseong and Hyderabad, where personnel from the office of the Registrar General of India as well as from the offices of the Census Superintendent participated. In the Study Camp held at

Kurseong, the Secretary, Tribal Welfare, West Bengal and Director, Tribal welfare, West Bengal, also participated. In this Study Camps, an integrated frame for preparation of ethnographic notes was discussed and adopted. A copy of the same may be seen at 'Annexure' I. In addition to the studies in respect of each scheduled caste and scheduled tribe separately a number of subsidiary studies were underaken by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit of the Office of the Registrar General, India for gaining insight into a number of problems of general nature, which have bearing on the different aspects of the lives of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes of the country. These subsidiary studies are as follows :—

1. Shifting cultivation in Santal Parganas of Bihar and Garo Hills of Assam.
2. Pattern of Rehabilitation of displaced tribals of Rourkela.
3. Socio-economic survey of the scheduled areas of Rajasthan.
4. Socio-economic developments among the hillmen of North-East India.
5. Social structure and cultural orientation of Christians converted from scheduled castes.
6. Traditional rights of scavenging as claimed by scavengers in urban areas.
7. Grouping of castes and tribes with reference to occupation and inter-group and intra-group comparative study on the basis of the data available in earlier censuses.
8. Social mobility movements among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes.

On the basis of each of the subsidiary studies indicated above, a separate monograph is under preparation. It is also proposed to prepare separate monographs on a few scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and ethnic groups with special status in each state. Besides, ethnographic glossaries are proposed to be prepared in respect of all scheduled castes an scheduled tribes. For this purpose about one lakh references have been indexed.

The present Report on the Vannan is one of the monographs proposed to be brought out by the Census Organisation. A preliminary investigation on the community was undertaken by Shri T.B. Bharati, Deputy Superintendent of Census Operations of the Office of the Superintendent of Census Operations, Madras who also prepared the first draft. A fuller investigation on the community was undertaken by Shri A.S. Ramamurthy of the Office of the Registrar. General, India, under the guidance of Shri A.M. Kurup, Research Officer, Office of the Registrar General, India. The draft report prepared by Shri Ramamurthy was revised by Shri Kurup. It was finally edited by Shri Kurup and myself.

I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the colleagues who collaborated in this project.

Shri H. L. Harit, Investigator, who is looking after the compilation of information from published sources in respect of all scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other special ethnic groups of India deserves mention.

Shri A. Mitra, Registrar General of India for 1961 Census, whose farsighted initiative is responsible for social investigations in a large number of fields including ethnography, deserves thanks of all students of Indology. I have been benefitted not

only by his inspiration, but also by his valuable suggestions in connection with the ethnographic studies as well as the other studies, conducted by the Handicrafts and Social Studies Unit.

The tradition built by Shri Mitra, has been continued by Shri A. Chandra Sekhar, the present Registrar General of India under his guidance, the scope of the Social Studies by the Census Organization has been further expanded. In spite of his other preoccupations, he has gone through the final drafts of the ethnographic notes and given a number of valuable suggestions. I avail of this opportunity to express my gratefulness to him.

B. K. ROY BURMAN

VANNAN

NAME, IDENTITY, ORIGIN AND HISTORY

Vannan is a washerman community found in the Tamil speaking areas of Madras State*. Other washermen communities found in Madras State are Vaduga Vannan or Tsakala of the Telugu country and the Palla, Podara and Tullukka vannans. (Thurston, 1909, VII, 317). In the Malayalam speaking areas of Tamilnad both Vannan and Mannan are met with, though Mannan is more common. According to the Scheduled castes and Scheduled Tribes, Lists, modification order 1956, Vannan and Mannan are scheduled castes in the Kanyakumari district and Schenkottah taluk of Tirunellvelli district of Madras state. They are also scheduled throughout Kerala state except in the Malabar region. As the result of the re-organisation of Madras and Kerala States in 1956, the Vannan and Mannan of Kanyakumari district and Schenkottah taluk of Tirunelvelli district are included in the list of Scheduled Castes of Madras State. The Vannan of Tamil speaking areas stands on a comparatively higher status than the Mannan or Vannan of the Malayalam speaking areas. This is evident because of the fact that in the Tamil area the Vannan washes for the clean castes only, while the Mannan or Vannan of the Mayalam area washes for comparatively lower castes. Veluthedan, is another Malayalam caste of washermen, who washes for Nayars and other clean castes in the Malayalam speaking area. Thurston, quoting Francis (Madras census Report, 1901), says that the Mannan are a low caste of Malabar washermen who only washes for polluting castes and higher castes when they are under pollution following birth, death etc. (1909 VII, 319).

The field study on the Vannan was conducted in Bhuthapandi and Kurukkumadam villages of Thovala taluk situated 6 and 7 miles North and North East respectively of Nagercoil. The former is also the taluk head quarters of Thovala taluk. For the sake of comparison information has also been collected from a few Vannan families living in the urban centre of Nagercoil. With a view to ascertain whether there exists any relationship between the Vannans and Veluthedans, information on the latter has also been collected from Kuzhithurai, the taluk headquarters of Vilavancode taluk.

The Vannan of the Tamil area does not have any connection with the Mannan of Kerala. The different sections of Vannan found in Kanyakumari district are Ehali Vannan, Eranguli Vannan, Nadar Vannan and Purathavannan. Puthirai Vannan noted in the scheduled castes list in Madras state is known as Puratha Vannan in this district. Puthirai Vannan is a scheduled caste throughout the state except Kanyakumari district and Schenokottah taluk of Tirunelveli district. In these areas Puthirai Vannan is included in the Vannan caste and have not been enumerated separately during the 1961 Census.

It is recorded in the Gazetter of Madura district that the Vannan is rather an occupational term than a caste title and besides the Pandiya Vannan or Vannan proper, includes the Vaduga Vannan or Tsakala of Telugu country and the Palla, Podara and Tullukka Vannas who wash for Pallan, Paraiyans and Musalmans respectively (Thurston, Vol. VII, p. 317). The Vaduga Vannans and Tullukka Vannans are not found in the surveyed area. Some Vannans have assumed the name Irukuli Vellala, and Rajakan and Kattavaraya Vamsam and they have also been recorded as synonyms of the caste name, (Thurston, 1909, VII, 317). But these synonyms are unknown to the people of this area.

In Kerala the Vannan or Mannan work as washermen for the polluting castes or for the higher castes when they are under pollution. They also work as devil dancers and tailors. The two endogamous classes of Mannan are the Peru-Mannan and Tinda Mannan. (Thurston, 1909, VII, 318). In some parts of Cochin, Mannans are also known as Velans or Peru Mannan (quoted from Iyer 1901, Thurston 1909, VII, 342). However, these sections of the Mannan should not be confused with 'Mannan' a hill tribe found in the Anamalai hills of Travancore region.

Veluthedan, a Malayalam caste of washerman who washes for Nayars, is found is Vilavancode taluk of Kanyakumari district adjoining Kerala State. They are distinct from Vannan caste.

According to Census of India 1891 Madras, (Vol. XIII, 286) the word Vannan has been derived from Vannam (Sanskrit Varnam) which means colour or beauty. This etymological derivation seems to be in conformity with the general consensus about the occupation based origin of the caste.

As mentioned earlier the Vannans of this area are divided into four endogamous groups *viz.*, Ehali Vannan, Eranguli Vannan, Nadar or Shanar Vannan and Puratha Vannan. These divisions are made either with reference to the clients or with reference to the areas of origin of the segment of population concerned. According to the information Ehali and Eranguli Vannans are commonly known as Pandiya Vannans since they were migrated from Tirunelvelli district which was historically termed as Pandiyanadu. Within these divisions social Status is claimed on the basis of the caste that they serve. Ehali Vannan claims a higher social standing over other groups; the Eranguli claims the next rank. Both sections serve only the Hindu castes of high status like Pillai, Brahmin, Vellala and Vaniyar. The Nadar Vannan who washes for Nadars occupies an intermediate status, among the Vannans. The R.C. Vannans (or Roman Catholic Vannan) who are so called because of their adoption of Christianity, also holds the same position. Lowest in status is the Puratha Vannan who washes for untouchable castes like Paraiyan, Pallan and Sambavar.

* The present study was conducted among the Vannans of Kanyakumari district of Madras State.

There is a legend about the origin of Eranguli Vannan runs which as follows: One day a barren woman was washing her cloths in a river when Lord Siva disguised himself as an ordinary man and with the intention of testing her compassion for humanity, approached her and gave his upper garment for washing. It was full of lice and asked her to return the same without killing or wiping out the lice from the cloth. The woman skilfully transferred all the lice to another cloth and after having washed the garment once again transferred the same on it. She returned the garment to Lord Siva who was very much pleased and asked her to put out a burning stick in the running water of the river. She did it according to the instruction and the stick miraculously turned into a child. The descendants of the child since then are called as Eranguli. (Eram means wet, guli means burning stick).

Puratha Vannan, in Tamil, means those who are ostracized or '*Purakanikkapattavar*', since they are considered to be untouchables as they wash for the polluting castes and their settlements are away from the main village. They are also known as Theenda Vannan. (Theendamai means untouchability).

Irrespective of the sub-divisions, outsiders refer them by the generic name '*Vannan*'. On the other hand, when they refer to a person belonging to one of the divisions he is referred to by the specific name of the sub-division, such as '*Erangulli*, R.C. or *Puratha* and so on.

Members of these divisions do not intermarry or interdine with one another.

Regarding the myths connected with their origin none of the informants has a clear idea. However in the census of India Madras 1891 (Vo. XIII, 286) there is a tradition that they are the descendants of the mythological hero *Virabadra* who was ordered by Siva to wash the clothes of all men as expiation of the sin of putting many people to death during *Daksha's Yaga*. Hence the Tamil washermen are frequently called as *Virabadrans*.

Among the *Velans* (Mannan) of Cochin the following legend is reported to be prevalent. "Once upon a time, when *Parameswara* and his wife *Parvati* were amusing themselves, the latter chanced to make an elephant with earth, which was accidentally trodden on by the former, whence arose a man who stood bowing before them. He was called '*Mannan*' because he came out of mun (earth), and to him was assigned his present occupation. This tradition is referred to in the songs which are sung on the fourth day of a girl's first menses, when she takes a ceremonial bath to free her from pollution." (Thurston, 1909, VII, 342).

Yet another legend goes as foollows. "One day a girl and her friends were playing merrily on the banks of a river, when one of them noticed some blood on her dress. They took her home and her parents believed it to have been caused by some wound, but on enquiry knew that their daughter was in her menses. The daughter asked her mother as to what she did with the cloth she wore during her menses, when she was told that she bathed and came home, leaving it on a branch of a mango tree. On further enquiry she knew that the goddess *Ganga* purified herself by a bath, leaving her cloth in the river; that the goddess earth buried it in earth; and that *Panchali* returned home after a bath, leaving her dress on a branch of a banyan tree. Not willing to lose her dress, the girl went to the god *Parameswara*, and implored his aid to get somebody to have her cloth washed. When muttering a mantram (prayer), he sprinkled some water, a few drops of which went up and became stars and a few more which fell on the leaves of a banyan tree, there came out a man, to whom was assigned the task of washing the clothes of the women in their courses,wearing which alone the women are purified by a bath." (Thurston, 1909, VII, 344).

DISTRIBUTION AND POPULATION TREND

Distribution of population

As mentioned earlier Vannans are scheduled only in Kanyakumari district and Shenkotah Taluk of Tirunelveli district. In the other areas, only Purhirai Vannan is included in the list of scheduled castes. 3383 Vannans (1666 males and 1717 females) have been returned from Kanyakumari district and Schenkotah taluk of Tirunelveli district during 1961 Census.

The total number of Vannans returned from Kanyakumari district is 3067 (1519 males and 1348 females) and that from Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district is 316 (147 males and 169 females). The maximum concentration, 901, is found in Agastheswaram taluk of Kanyakumari district. The other taluks from where they have been returned are as follows : Thovalai (571) Kalkulam (471), and Villvancode (223).

16 Mannans were returned in Vilavancode taluk during 1961 Census. But during the survey of Kuzhithruai and adjoining areas of this Taluk, they could not be traced out.

The total population of Puthirai Vannan in Madras State as a whole is 1965. Madurai, Ramanathapuram and Tirunelveli areas have larger concentration of the community.

The sex ratio among Vannans works out to 1030 females per 1000 males. This slightly higher sex ratio may be due to the fact that some of their males who might have gone out to other areas outside Kanyakumari district and Shencottah taluk in search of work.

The distribution of Vannans in broad age-group is as follows :—

Age Group	Percentage
0—14	39·4
15—44	43·4
45 and above	16.9

Both Vannan and Mannan represent .056% of the Scheduled Caste population of Madras State and .844% of the Scheduled Caste population of Kanyakumari district. 73.49% of the Vannan population live in the rural areas while 26.51% are in the urban areas of Kanyakumari and Tirunelveli districts.

Population trend

As already stated, Kanyakumari district and Shencottah taluk of Tirunelveli district formed part of Travancore and Cochin state before 1956. During 1901 Census (Vol. XXVI-B) 393 Mannans and 522 Vannans were returned from Thovala, Agasthisvaram, Eraniel, Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks of Travancore. These now constitute parts of Kanyakumari district of Madras State. During 1911 Census, (Vol. XXIII: Part V) 581 Mannans and 934 Vannans were returned from the same area. This shows an increase in the populations of both Mannan and Vannan. During 1921 Census (Vol. XXV) no Vannan was reported; only 1364 Mannans (including Patiyans) were returned from Thovala, Agasthiswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks.

During 1931 Census altogether 1276 mannans were returned in Travancore State as a whole. But this number does not include any Mannan from the southern range which includes Thovala, Agasthiswaram, Kalkulam and Vilavancode taluks. It seems that the Mannans returned during the 1931 Census are the tribals of the same name, and not the untouchable people under study. It is however to be noted that 16022 Vannans (or Mannan Pathiyans) were returned in the State as a whole during the same Census. These number included 6310 persons in the Southern Zone.

It appears from the foregoing data that there is an element of instability in the social structure of the Vannans. Sometimes the terms Vannan and Mannan have been used interchangeably; again sometimes the people belonging to the same community have tended to return themselves under different names. All these have been reflected in the erratic returns during the different Census.

It is not possible to throw light on the population trend of Vannans as the population figures are not comparable since the present area covered during 1961 Census is changed from previous censuses.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The available published sources do not provide any information about the physical traits of the Vannans. In connection with the present survey some somatoscopic observations were made among the Vannans of Nagarcoil town and Bhuthapandy and Kurukkumadam villages of Kanyakumari district.

The height vertex ranged from 150.5 Cm. to 168 Cm and the mean of the sample was 64.4 Cm. Skin colour varied from light brown to dark brown. Out of the 20 persons observed, 5 were dark brown, 6 chocolate brown, 7 brown, 1 medium brown and 1 light brown. Low wave is the predominant hairform among them and only three had deep waves.

Sixteen persons in the sample had medium depression of nose, three had deep and one had shallow depression. The wings were some-what broad, but not flared. The eye slit in all the cases were straight and epicanthic fold was totally absent. Face was predominantly oval and only three persons had round face. Eighteen individuals had medium thickness of lips and only two had thick lips. Two persons had slight prognathism. The cheeks were not prominent and were predominantly medium type.

On the basis of the above somatoscopic observations, it can be stated in a general way, that the Vannans are medium in stature the average height being 164.4 Cms. Their skin colour is generally brown to dark brown. Hair form is of low wave. Root of nose is medium and the wings are normal. They have predominantly oval face with medium chin and medium lips. Prognathism is absent. The eyeslits are straight and the eyelids are without epicanthic fold.

CLAN, FAMILY AND KINSHIP

As already discussed, Vannans are divided into four Sub-divisions *viz.*, Ehali, Eranguli, Nadar or Shannar and Puratha Vannans. In the villages of Bhuthapandy and Kurukkumadam where mainly the survey was conducted, all the persons of the caste belong to Ehali Vannan Sub-division, but in Nagercoil town where supplementary studies were made, all the four Sub-divisions are found.

As noted earlier, these Sub-divisions are endogamous. But they do not have 'gotrams' or 'illams' for regulation of marriage. Cross cousin marriage is allowed and it is preferred among them.

Residence among the Vannans is generally neolocal patri potestal. After marriage the bride goes to stay with the husband, who in most cases sets up a new house of his own. In some cases however the wife lives along with the parents of the husband.

During the present survey a few cases of collateral type of extended households were recorded. But the consensus among the people is that such a type of household is going out of existence. The bulk of the population lives in nuclear households. It was however noticed that many element of jointness continued among the nuclear households, stemming from the same parents. Though they were having separate hearths, on ceremonial occasions they functioned as single units, in normal domestic matters also, they helped one another whenever necessary.

Intestate property, both movable and immovable is inherited in the male line. Generally, it is equally distributed among the sons. In some cases it has been reported that the eldest son gets a slightly bigger share since he has to perform some of the traditional rituals relating to the family. Moreover, he has to

look after the old parents and the unmarried brothers and sisters. After the death of the father the daughters, some times, get a share in movable and immovable property, provided that this arrangement is agreed upon by the brothers.

Kinship system among them is bilateral. Kins of both sides have important social role to play during child birth, marriage and death. During such occasions their presence is very essential for performing certain social obligations. During puberty ceremony the uncle (mother's brother) has to present a new sari and sweets to the girl. They have to consult uncles (both father's and mother's side) and grand parents before finalising a marriage. Brother's sons or daughters are treated as their own and if a man dies at an early age then his children are looked after by his brother or by his father.

DWELLING, DRESS, FOOD, ORNAMENTS AND OTHER MATERIAL OBJECTS

Settlement and dwelling

Kanyakumari district has been mostly inhabited by people from Coromandal Coast, *i.e.*, Tirunelveli and adjoining areas. There are two district culture zones in the district, Nanjilnad and Idainad. According to the ancient literature, Nanjilnad remained under Pandiya rule till the 10th century A.D. Then it came under the Chola dynasty. After the decline of Chola power, Venad chieftains established their hold on Nanjilnad. One branch of the Chera family which ruled over Kerala migrated to the south and settled at Padmanabhapuram, about 12 miles from Nagercoil and established the Venad kingdom which later on came to be known as Travancore, an anglisied form of Thiruvithancode. During the Venad rule, many battles were fought between Pandiyan forces with the help of Vijayanagar kings to take possession of Nanjilnad. But Venad emerged victorious. In 1609 Nanjilnad and Kanyakumari fell to the Nayaks of Madurai. These historical incidents and evidences shows that the southern part of Kanyakumari district has more affinity with Madras State. In his 'Malabar and the Dutch' K. M. Panikkar says that 'the southern portion of this territory (south Kerala) both climatically and to some extent ethnically belonged to Tamil district and its political and cultural affiliations are more with Madras and Tiruchirapalli than with Calicut, Cochin and Quilon.' (District Census handbook 1961. 4).

Settlement pattern

The layout and settlement pattern of the village where the survey was conducted are identical with those found in other villages of Tamilnad.

Being a serving caste Vannans are found in every village and town in the state. Ordinarily there are two or three households in a village the number may go up, depending upon the population of the village and the washing facilities available. At Bhuthapandy there are seven households of Vannan who are engaged in washing the clothes of the villagers. An altogether different situation prevails at Kurukkumadam, where there are 40 households of Vannan. They however do not wash the used clothes of villagers. They wash new clothes (Kodi) given to them for that purpose by shops and manufacturing establishments.

An examination of the physical layout of a typical Tamil village would give some clue to the social Status of the different Sub-divisions of the Vannans.

In Tamilnad, the village consist of a compact residential area surrounded by agricultural fields. The houses are constructed in rows and generally the people belonging to the same caste or the same caste-status live in the same row. The street inhabited by the Brahmans is called Agraharam. Generally the high caste Hindus live by the side of the Agraharam. The low caste people live in the outskirst of the village in irregularly huddled huts, surrounded by agricultural fields. The positions of the Vannan houses in this residential complex would give some idea about their Status in the village community. Two groups of Vannan, Ehrali and Eranguli, who occupy the highest position among the washermen live by the side of the caste Hindus. The Nadar Vannans live in Nadar locality, on the other hand the Puratha Vannans who serve the low castes like the Sambhavars and Paraiyans, live by the side of their clients. It thus appears that the Vannans are segmented with reference to the clients that they serve and that their status to ordinate with that of their clients. In the urban areas a different situation prevails. Most of the Vannan carry on their trade through laundries, where they accept clothes for washing from all communities including the untouchable castes. The laundries are situated in the main shopping centres along-with other shops. The houses of the launderer are either behind the laundries or situated in the streets along with those of other communities.

The houses of the Vannans are generally constructed on '*purampokku land*' or waste land of the village. At Bhuthapandy the vannan houses are in a row adjacent to those of the Vanniyars. A lane from the main street leads to the vannan locality. It is a narrow footpath and runs through the rear side of the Vanniyar houses. Some of their houses are pucca ones with brick walls plastered with lime and the roofs are of crude Mangalore tiles which are locally prepared by the potters. The slant of the roofs is sharply inclined so as to facilitate easy drainage of rain water. The other houses are of mud wall and roofed with palmyrah leaves. Out of seven houses at Bhuthapandy five are pucca and two are kachha.

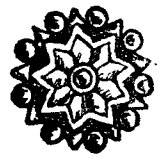
The houses are generally constructed on rectangular plinths with one or two rooms. In the front room they keep the washed and dried clothes and do ironing on a table. They live in the inner room. Those who have one room, mark out a small portion by low partition wall for keeping the soiled clothes. They cook their food in the corner of the inner room or make an improvised kitchen adjoining the inner room. They do not have latrines in their houses and go to the adjoining fields for defecation. Some of the houses have an open space in the rear, which may be used for tethering cattles. It may also contain a few coconut palms,

plantain and other fruit bearing trees. If the housing conditions of all categories of Vannans are unsatisfactory, those of the Puratha Vannans are invariably very bad. These are single room tenements, made of mud walls and coconut leaf roofs, almost always badly maintained and far away from the main residential area or Urnatham of the village.

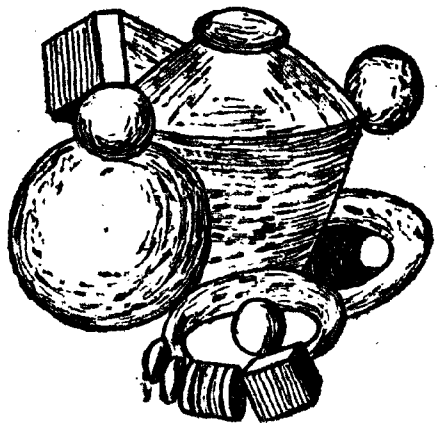
In the towns the Vannans generally live in rented houses in poorer localities or at the rear of the laundries in the shopping areas. More often that not, these houses are ill-lighted and ill-ventilated and unhygienic.

Dress

Since very few Vannans purchase clothes of their own, their dressing habits are mostly conditioned by the kind of dress they receive for washing. Normally loin cloth locally called *Veshti* and a towel on the upper part of the body form the dress of the men at work. One end of the loin cloth is tucked in, while the other left free extending upto the ankles. Sometimes a piece of cloth may be wrapped over the head to cover the hair from getting drenched while washing clothes. When going to the markets and other public places they wear a shirt or banian. The womenfolk wear sarees in the same fashion as the poorer women belonging to the other castes of the area They adjust the fold at the back and throw the "palav"over the left shoulder. There is however one matter in which the dressing habit of the Vannan is different from that of the high caste Hindus of the region. While a high caste Hindu widow cannot wear coloured saree a Vannan widow is not subjected to any such restriction. Young girls are seen in skirts and blouses.



Kammal



Pambadam

Ornaments

The women folk among the Vannans wear very few ornaments like *Kammal, Pambadam, Tanduvetti*, necklaces etc. Most young women wear '*Kammal*' (Stone studded ear studs). Old women have ear ornaments known as *Pambadam, Tanduvetti*. '*Kammal*' is an ear stud either made of brass or gold. Some times *Kammal* is studded with stones or some design is engraved on the metal itself. It consists of two parts—the outside ornamented portion and the screw inside.

Pamdadam is a heavy ear ornament and it is generally made of some alloy of brass. Some times the rich people wear gold *pambadam* as well. '*Thanduvetti*' is another ear ornament which is simple in design. On the neck, one or two cheap metal chains are worn. In addition, the married women, wear '*tali*' (marriage badge) strung on a black cotton thread. The '*talis*' worn by the Vannan women are of two kinds: One is 'W' shaped and is made of gold; the other is '*Pillaiyar tali*' which is flanked on either side by a small star shaped golden bead. The golden beads found in it are called *Seravers*. Sometimes the name of the husband and the wife are inscribed on the "W" shaped Tali. In addition to the above ornaments, two types of ornaments are very commonly worn by Vannan women. They are golden nose screws and creap bangles made of brass or glass.

Utensils

Generally utensils made of brass, copper and aluminium are used by the Vannans. For cooking purposes they use either earthenware or aluminium vessels. The earthen-wares more commonly used are '*Chatti*' and '*Panai*'. The '*Chatti*' is used for cooking and '*panai*' is used for storing water. Each Vannan family possesses a big earthen pot called '*Vannan Thazhi*' for steaming the cloth with washing-soda. The other common utensils are '*Kudam*', '*tambler*', '*thattu*', and '*Kuttuvilakku*'. Kudam and Kuthuvilakku are made of brass. On the whole their utensils are similar to those of other castes of the locality.

Food habits

The staple diet of Vannans is rice. Since millets are not grown in this area, they are not accustomed to them. They cook twice a day and the same is consumed three times. The morning and mid-day meals are in the shape of rice *Kanji* (gruel) while the night meal consists of freshly cooked rice and a sauce. For the mid-day meals occasionally they substitute tapioca for the rice gruel. Tapioca and fish are cheap in these areas. In the villages, a part of their food requirement may come by way of collection of cooked food from the houses of those whom they serve. The collections are heavy on festive days or when there is a marriage in the village. The Vannans are non-vegetarians. They eat fish, mutton, chicken, squirrel and pork. Of these, fish is most frequent. Theenda Vannans have no objection to eat beef while the other divisions of the caste abstain from it scrupulously. All of them chew pan. Consumption of alcoholic liquor is also said to be frequent, even though it is prohibited under Law.

ENVIRONMENTAL SANITATION AND HYGIENIC HABITS, DISEASE AND TREATMENT

As already mentioned the conditions of living of the Vannans are unsatisfactory both in the urban and rural areas. Their habits of personal cleanliness are however much better. They take bath regularly using soap and some local plant-fibres for cleaning their body. Many of them apply sacred ashes or sandal paste on their foreheads after bath.

Disease and treatment

For treatment of minor diseases they depend on local medicine-men called '*Vaithiyars*', who generally prescribe herbs and other indigenous medicines. At Bhuthapandy there is a '*vaithiyar*' belonging to Vannan caste. His clients however belong to other castes as well. In the western taluks of Kanyakumari district the indigenous medicinemen are known as *Asans*.

For the treatment of insect bite, snake bite, scorpion bite etc. the Vannans and their neighbours generally approach '*Manthrigars*' (Sorcerors) blonging to Puratha Vannan caste. The manthrigar brings with him a branch of neem leaves. Sitting in front of the patient, he goes on waving the branch and chanting some sacred formulae. From time to time he strikes the patient with the branch. It is believed that the spread of the poison is controlled by the sacred formulae and that during the physical contact of the neem branch with the body of the patient the poison is extracted out.

The help of the *manthrigar* is sought when a person is believed to have been possessed by evil spirits or *paie pitithal*, as they locally call. In such cases the *manthrigar* would burn a piece of camphor and incense and would exercise the evil spirit by sitting in front of the possessed person, waving a neem branch and chanting some sacred formulae.

Their occupation of washing clothes requires them to stand constantly in water for hours together and as a result they sometimes suffer from a kind of skin disease. Blisters appear on the skin in the lower parts below the knee and on the hands. In such cases, they apply spirit (denatured alcohol) two to three times on the affected parts.

Now-a-days many of them are deviating from the traditional pattern and do not hesitate to take recourse to modern allopathic treatment.

LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Language

The ancestral language as well as the mother tongue of Vannans of Kanyakumari district is Tamil. They also understand Malayalam which was the medium of instruction in Schools in this district, till the re-organisation of the State in 1956. Those who are educated upto school final may speak and write a little of English.

Education and Literacy

The percentage of literacy among the Vannans as per the 1961 Census returns is 38·0. The percentage of literacy among their males is 47·3 and that among females is 28·9. The effective percentage of literacy calculated by omitting the population of 0-4 age-group comes to 44·3 for the Vannans. This is considerably higher than the percentage obtaining for the Scheduled Castes as a whole in the State, which is 17·2%. When compared with the general literacy rate for the state which is 36·5%, Vannan stands in a higher level.

The percentage of literacy in the various age groups is as follows :—

Age group	Percentage of literacy	
	Among Vannans	Among General population of the state
5— 9	46·3	33·60
10—14	60·7	50·82
15—19	50·6	43·67
20—29	41·7	38·52
30—44	41·6	33·70
45 and above	26·9	26·34

It is to be noted that the percentage of literacy in all the age groups noted above are above the corresponding levels of literacy obtaining for the general population of Madras State.

A Statement giving the percentage distribution of the literacy by educational standard among Vannans as well as among the general population of the area concerned is furnished below :—

Percentage of level of literacy in different categories among Vannans and general population in Kanyakumari and Tirunelvelli district

	Literates without educational level as P.C. to total literates			Primary or junior basic as P.C. to total literates			Matriculates and above as P.C. to total literates		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Urban Vannan . . .	9·15	7·94	17·09	4·33	4·25	8·58	1·60	0·80	2·40
General Population . . .	5·57	4·68	10·25	3·10	2·34	5·44	1·54	0·61	2·15
Rural Vannan . . .	31.38	20·04	51·42	12·68	5·93	18·61	1·28	0·56	1·88
General Population . . .	33·15	24·28	57·43	11·78	8·32	20·10	3·35	1·26	4·61
			Tirunelveli District						
Urban Vannan	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil	Nil
General Population . . .	16·26	10·31	26·57	6·58	4·25	10·83	2·91	0·69	3·60
Rural Vannan	87·80	4·87	92·67	4·87	2·44	7·31	—	—	..
General Population . . .	33·34	14·40	47·74	6·29	3·11	9·40	1·56	0·36	1·86

In the village, Bhuthapandy where the survey was conducted, the percentage of literacy among the Vannans is 38·2. Three of the literates have reached the level of Matriculation and the rest are at various stages. There is a general willingness on the part of the parents to send their children to schools. The members also enjoy concessions in education. There is a Teachers' Training School at Kulasekaramputhur about 8 miles from Nagercoil. Two persons of this caste, one from Bhuthapandy and another from Kurukumadam, were trained there. This school provides training not only for the Scheduled Caste students but also for the members of other castes. There are also two graduates among Vannans in this tiny hamlet of Kurukumadam who are employed as Government servants. But the same position does not obtain in the case of other villages where the Vannans live. In the case of this village, their economy is comparatively better since they wash new clothes from the textile Shops of Nagercoil by way of contract whereas in the other villages they depend on the households to whom they are attached under the system of traditional patron-client relationship, which fetches only a very low income.

Old people are conscious of the disadvantage of illiteracy and therefore they want the present generation to take up education seriously. Children are encouraged to join schools and continue their studies. The people are also aware of the privileges given to scheduled castes. But in case of Puratha Vannans the conditions are different. They say that their economic conditions do not allow them to send their children to schol although they are willing to educate their children. Tohe literacy figures for Puratha Vannans are not enumerated separately as they are included in the list of Vannans in this district.

ECONOMIC LIFE

In the villages, where the traditional pattern still persists, each Vannan household serves about 15 to 20 caste Hindu households. They periodically wash the clothes of their patron clients and in lieu of the same, they receive five to six markal (24 Madras measures) of paddy, twice a year, that is, once after each harvest. Besides, frequently when they go for collecting soiled clothes or delivering washed one, they are given something to eat as matter of grace.

There are a few occasions when traditional services are expected from the Vannans. They are to wash the clothes when a girl of the patron-client household attains puberty or when she is in period. During child birth also, the washermen are to wash the clothes of the parturient. On this occasion, they generally receive some quantity of raw rice as remuneration. At times, remuneration in cash and kind (generally clothes) are also received by them. In case of death in the household of the patrons, they supply clothes, for being spread in the cremation ground, for the visitors to sit. For such services also they are paid in kind.

Now, the traditional services as well as the traditional modes of payment are becoming more and more rare. In the urban areas, they have almost disappeared. In the rural areas also, several changes are perceptible. For instance, now the washermen are more frequently

paid in cash than in kind. There is also slackening of the earlier restriction against the washermen of the higher castes serving the so-called inferior castes.

According to 1961 Census the workers in this community form 48·6 percent of the total population. Out of the total of 1644 workers, 940 are males and 704 are females.

There is a wide spread impression among the people of the area that the Vannan females are more industrious than the males. It is believed that most of the operations connected with washing of clothes are done by the females. It is however difficult to say whether actually the females would score higher than the males in this matter. For the purpose of the present report, it is of great significance that 42·5 percent of the female population belonging to Vannan caste returned themselves as workers during 1961 Census. This is at least a measure of their attitude orientation towards actual economic life.

Occupational Details

Industrial classification of the Vannans according to 1961 Census, is as follows :—

Table showing industrial classification of workers among Vannans

Occupation	Males	Females	Total	Percentage 100
Cultivators	47	11	58	3·53
Agricultural Labourers	3	3	5	0·30
Mining & Quarrying	2	1	3	0·18
Household Industries	4	29	33	0·20
Manufacturing other than household	7	..	7	0·43
Industry Transport, storage and Communication	7	..	7	0·43
Other services	870	661	1,531	93·13

The Statement shows that 93·13 % of the workers of Vannan caste, belong to the industrial category of other services. It is this industrial category which includes the occupation of washing. While from this statement, it is not possible to come to a definite conclusion that the bulk of the workers belonging to the community are still engaged in the traditional occupation of washing, the possibility of this being so, cannot be ruled out. In fact by a resorting of the Census slips, it has been found that out of 1531 persons engaged in services, 1289 are washermen. There are a few among them who are working as teachers, ayurvedic physicians and tailors. Among the other industrial categories, only two are worth mentioning. They are cultivation and household industry, accounting for 3·53% and 2·00% respectively of the total working force.

The technique of washing clothes, they adopt, is as follows : They go round the houses of the clients and collect the clothes to be washed. These are brought in separate bundles for each household. After that the clothes in each buldle are scrutinized to see whether they bear '*Vannan Kuri*' or (dhobi-marks) correctly. If any one does not contain the particular mark, it is marked appropriately with the help of a resin which come out of a black nut called '*Sembrakottai*'. This nut can be purchased from the bazar or collected from the forest. After the markings are made, particular care is taken to separate the white clothes from the coloured ones, so that the former do not get smudged by the colour of the latter. After this, all the clothes are drenched in water and then dipped in a solution of Soda ash. Then they are piled over the special type of pot *Vannan Thazhi* for the purpose of steaming. Here also, the white clothes are placed in such way that they are not smudged by the coloured pieces. The pot is heated with fire-wood for six hours. The steamed clothes are allowed to remain over the pot for another six hours. They are then taken out and washed three times in water, after beating over a stone. They are then dried in sun and brought home. For white clothes an additional process of whitening is done by dipping them in a weak solution of blue or Tinopal. The clothes which require stiffening are dipped in a weak starchy solution. The final item in the process is ironing.

At present washermen from villages go to nearby towns to collect clothes for washing. They also take clothes from laundries on contract basis. From laundries they collect clothes at the rate of 6 rupees per 100 pieces(for washing only). In towns some Vannans own laundries of their own. The ironing is done by members of Vannan caste or other day-labourers who are paid at the rate of Rs. 2 to Rs. 3 per day and a light refreshment. People of other castes, including even the Brahmans, own laundries in towns, but washing is

done only by the members belonging to Vannan caste. In such cases the laundry owners do only the managerial jobs, but not the actual washing operations. At Kurukkumadam there are about 45 households which are engaged only in washing new clothes from handloom co-operative societies and other textile shops. The rate for washing is Rs. 45 per every 400 dhoties which includes cartage charges for taking them to Nagercoil town.

During the 1961 Census, 94 females were reported to be engaged in scavenging in urban areas. But no such person called be traced out during the field investigation. The Consensus of opinion in this matter is that either some persons of lower social status tried to pass off as Vannans or some erroneous entries were made during the Census Operations.

Some Vannans are also engaged as indigenous medicinemen. They are locally known as '*Vaithiyars*' and even the caste Hindus approach them for treatment. Setting of fractured bones also done by these medicinemen. For all such treatments they are paid in cash. At Bhuthapandy, one person is carrying on this profession and the female members of the same household are continuing to wash clothes. Those persons who know sorcery and devil dancing, are called '*Manthrigans*'. They generally belong to the Purathavannan division. In olden days they used to go in the streets inhabited by the people of the low castes and sing songs to drive away the evil spirits. They are locally known as '*Erapattukarars*" (night singers). In the past, the people were afraid to see such persons during night. Now of course, the things have changed.

The *Erapattukarans* are generally asked by the local people to go round the streets during the months of Margazhi (December-January) and sing songs to drive out the evil spirits. The local belief is that during these months evil spirits haunt villages and try to harm the people. This belief coincides with the fact that it is during these months that there used to be outbreak of epidemics like small pox and chicken pox. Goddess Mariamman is believed to be responsible for controlling these diseases. During the months of December and January these *Manthrigars* go around the locality with ringing of bells and chant some *manthras*. They are paid by the local people in cash and kind.

In spite of the bright prospects in the washing industry, the economic condition of the Vannan has not improved materially. At Bhuthapandi, out of the seven households engaged in washing, two are in the income group of Rs. 25 or less, two are in the income group of Rs. 26-50 and two are in the income group of Rs. 51-75 per month. Only one household is in the income group of Rs. 76-100 per month. The income position of the other households who have taken up other occupations is not also materially different. From the expenditure pattern it is seen that food forms 55·0% of their monthly expenditure. The expenditure on dress comes to 7·0%. Smoking and chewing account for a considerable proportion of their expenditure, *viz.*, 19·9%. A large number of their households (69·61%) are in debt. The average debt per household comes to Rs. 433.

LIFE CYCLE

Birth

Birth of a child to them is considered as a gift of god. Miscarriage during child birth is considered to be a stroke of bad luck. During prenatal period the enceinte is subjected to some restrictions, like avoidance of taking pappaiah, mango, dry fish etc. It is believed that these induce abortion. Birth of a male child is more welcome than of a female one. When a woman is pregnant for the first time, a ceremony called *Valaikkapu* takes place during the seventh month. The ceremony takes place at the house of the husband's parents. For this purpose an auspicious day is fixed after consulting the astrologer. Close relatives are invited for this occasion. On the appointed day the expectant mother, after an oil-bath, wears a saree presented by her parents-in-law. She is then seated on a wooden chair or stool and all the females go round her and sing songs, occasionally teasing her with satirical folk songs. For this occasion they purchase new bangles and adorn her. The ceremony comes to a close with a vegetarian feast to those assembled on the occasion.

During the first conception the woman is taken to her parents' house in the 7th or the 9th month after the performance of *Valaikkapu*. The journey is undertaken on an auspicious day. Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays are considered to be auspicious for the purpose. Subsequent deliveries usually take place in her husband's house.

Delivery mostly takes place in an inner room of the house. In case of an one roomed house, a partition is made to provide secrecy. A woman belonging to the Nadar caste, called '*Maruthuvachi*' who is experienced in the art, attends the parturient. Sometimes elderly women of Vannan communities also assist during delivery. The *Maruthuvachi* has to attend the confined woman for about seven days. A remuneration of Rs. 15 together with pan supari, fruits and flowers are given to her on the seventh day. The placenta is severed by her and is usually buried in the backyard. Soon after the delivery, a medicinal preparation, called *Inji Lekiyam* made out of pepper, garlic, ginger etc., is given to the mother to induce appetite. On the 16th day, the child and the mother are given baths and then they come out of seclusion.

Pollution is observed for 41 days, at the end of which the parturient is given a purificatary bath by the elderly female members of the community. Thereafter, she enters the kitchen and resumes her normal household duties.

Name-giving Ceremony

As they are expected to register the birth of the child with the Panchayat or Municipality, as the case may be, they informally give a name to the child within seven days of its birth. But the formal traditional name-giving ceremony is performed on the 16th day of a child's birth. On this day they invite relatives and friends. The child is laid on a cradle and is christened

by an elderly woman of the family, generally the grand mother (father's mother). The children are generally named after grand parents. Sometimes children are also named after their favourite gods. They rever lord Murugan and the common names for male children are Murugan, Arumugam, Shanmugam etc.

Tonsure and Ear-boring Ceremonies

Tonsure ceremony is performed after two or three years in the case of both male and female children. Those who are economically sound, generally take their children to Tiruchendur Murugan temple. Others perform the rites in their respective houses. On this occasion a barber is called in to ceremonially remove the hair. In the olden days barbers belonging to their caste used to perform this function. But now the members of '*Ambattan*' (barber) caste do the job on payment.

They select an auspicious day for the ear-boring ceremony after consulting an astrologer and extend their invitation to all their kiths and kins. A goldsmith is invited to pierce the ears of the child, amidst cheers, fun and frolic by the assembled men and women. The fun and frolic is meant for soothing the child who normally would be weeping because of the pain. When the operation is over all the assembled persons are entertained to a feast.

Puberty Ceremony

The puberty ceremony, called '*Sadangu Kalithal*' or '*Todakku Tirthal*' is done when a girl attains puberty. She is first asked to sit in a secluded spot of the house. The demarcation of the secluded spot is made by placing a wooden pestle (*ulakkai*) a little away from her. On the 16th day, she is taken home for the performance of *Nalungu* rite or ceremonial oil bath. Generally, the bath is given by young girls. On this occasion, friends and relations, mostly females, are invited to the house. Her maternal uncle presents her a new sari and a blouse. At the end of the oil bath, she is asked to feed young children perhaps, symbolic of her role as a prospective mother.

Marriage

Adult marriage is the norm in the community. Marriageable age for boys is above 20 and for girls is above 15 years. According to the 1961 Census 99.92% of the persons in the age group 0—14 are never married. This affirms the absence of child marriage in the community.

Cross-cousin marriage, both on father's and mother's side, is allowed; but there is preference for mother's brother's daughter. Marriage with elder sister's daughter is also prevalent. At Bhuthapandy out of the fifteen marriages which have taken place recently, five are with mother's brother's daughter, three are with father's sister's daughter and one is with elder sister's daughter, only in six cases spouses have been taken from unrelated families Monogamy is generally practised by all the four divisions. Polyandry is unknown. In the past polygynous marriages were followed. At present it is allowed only on the ground of barrenness. But in such cases prior consent of the first wife is to be taken. During 1961 Census, 698 married males and 796 married females were enumerated in the community. These figures tend to indicate that, though very small in number, polygyny is not completely unknown in the community.

The proposal for marriage generally comes from the boy's side and a negotiator is engaged to settle the marriage. Now-a days the proposal may also start from the girl's side. Both the parties consult the astrologer for matching the horoscopes (*Jathangam*) of both the bride and the groom. The astrologer generally belongs to the '*Kanikkar*' caste. In case of the Purathavannans however the astrologer belonging to the valluvan caste is consulted. In urban areas, some may even consult Brahman astrologers. When both the parties are satisfied about the agreement of horoscope, they fix an auspicious day for formal agreement of the marriage. For this function they select only Fridays and Wednesdays, after consulting an astrologer. On this day the parents of the boy and other close relatives visit the girl's house and exchange betel leaves. This ceremony is called '*Parichiam or pariam*'. The dowry is also fixed on this day. Dowry is given according to the economical or educational attainment of the bridegroom. It generally ranges between Rs. 100 and Rs. 1,000. The amount is given to the boy's father. A part of the amount is given during the time of '*pariam*' and the rest of the amount is given during the solemnization of the marriage. Sometimes, if the family is well-to-do, the girl's parents agree to give some gold ornaments to the girl. On their part, the parents of the groom present a saree and a blouse to the bride on the marriage day.

Each sub-caste of the Vannans has now-a-days a *Sangam* or association for looking after its social affairs. During marriages the contracting parties have to pay Rs. 3 to the association. In case of poor families the association also contributes some amount for marriage expenses.

Marriage ceremony is usually a very simple one, and takes place in the bride's place. The marriage pandal is erected by persons who are specially engaged for the purpose. The pandal consists of bamboo poles and is covered with bamboo thatis. The inside of the roof is lined with white cloth. At the entrance on either side they plant two fruit bearing plantain trees. A row of mango leaves inserted in a rope is also tied at the entrance. These are considered to be auspicious articles for such occasions. The actual marriage ceremony takes place in the morning, avoiding '*rahukalam*' (inauspicious time). At the fixed time the bride and the bridegroom are seated on a mat inside the pandal. In front of them auspicious articles like coconut fruits, betel leaves and arecanuts are kept in a plate. A lighted lamp is also kept by the side of the plate. The '*tali*' is kept along with other articles in the same plate. During this hour instrumental music like '*Nathaswaram*' (wind instrument) '*Melam*' (drum) etc. are played by professional musicians who belong to '*Pillai*' caste. The bride and the groom are dressed in new cloths. The plate on which the '*tali*' is kept circulated among the elders for their blessings. Then the groom

ties the '*tali*' around the neck of the bride with the assistance of his elder sister. Then a feast, consisting of vegetarian items only, is given to the relatives and friends. In the evening the couple go in a procession to the temple.

Divorce is allowed in case of barrenness of wife or adultery. The divorcee is allowed to remarry. Widow remarriage generally takes place with the prior consent of the caste association. But it seems that the caste association is inclined to give its consent, only in rare cases. During 1961 Census, 9.73% of the female population was enumerated as widow. This high percentage seems to indicate that the bulk of the widows do not remarry.

According to 1961 census the marital status of the Vannan community is as follows: Out of the total population 51.0% are never married, 41.50% are married, 6.35% are widowed, 1.06% are divorced and .03% belong to the unspecified group. Out of the total male population, 54.20% never married, 41.90% are married, 2.88% are widowed status, and 1.02% are divorced or separated. In the case of the females 47.99% are never married, 41.12% are married, 9.73% are widowed and 1.10% are divorced or separated.

Death

The Vannans dispose of their dead bodies either by burial of by cremation. The latter is more popular. Immediately after the death of a person the relatives are informed by village menials like '*Vettiyans*' or '*Parayans*' or by some friends. The corpse is kept inside the house till the relatives arrive. When they arrive the body is given a bath and is smeared with perfumes and sandal paste. In the mean-time a bier called *Padai* is prepared out of bamboo poles and paddy straws. They also purchase a new pot for carrying fire to the cremation ground. The body is removed from the house and kept on the bier. People now bid last farewel to the departed soul. Some garland the body with flowers. If the dead man's wife is alive she, adorned with all ornaments, circumambulate the body thrice and then removes all her ornaments and keeps them on the chest of her husband's body. Then she bids the last farewel and retires inside. The body is then covered with a new cloth, generally white in colour and carried to the cremation ground by relatives and friends. The brothers-in-law, nephews and other close friends act as pall bearers. Music is played by beating drums and blowing conches by musicians belonging to '*Paraiyan*' caste. The eldest son carries fire in a new pot. By the time the funeral procession reaches the cremation ground a pyre is made with dried cow-dung cakes by the '*Vettiyan*' or watchman of the funeral ground. He is paid separately for the service. The body is removed from the '*padai*' and is laid on the pyre. The cloth by which the body is covered is generally given to the '*Vettiyan*'. Then the chief mourner walks around the pyre and lits it. Some of the elders of Vannan community officiate in the funeral ceremony. All of them who accompanied the funeral procession then go to a river or well near the cremation ground and after taking bath return home. In case of burial the grave is dug by the '*Vettiyan*' and the body is placed inside it with the head directed towards the south. In case of the Pandiya Vannas, the body is placed in the grave with the face downwards while in case of the Theenda Vannas, the face remains upwards.

In those cases, where the dead body is disposed of by cremation, a ceremony is performed on the second day. It is called '*Kadathu*'. On this day, small pieces of burnt bones and ash are collected in a pot and then is carried to the nearest river by the chief mourner for immersion. The pot is then broken and left on the spot, and the chief mourner and the party accompanying him return home after taking bath in the river.

In case of burial, the chief mourner takes some cooked rice, vegetable and gheee on a plantain leaf to the burial ground on the third day, and leave the same there as offerings to the manes.

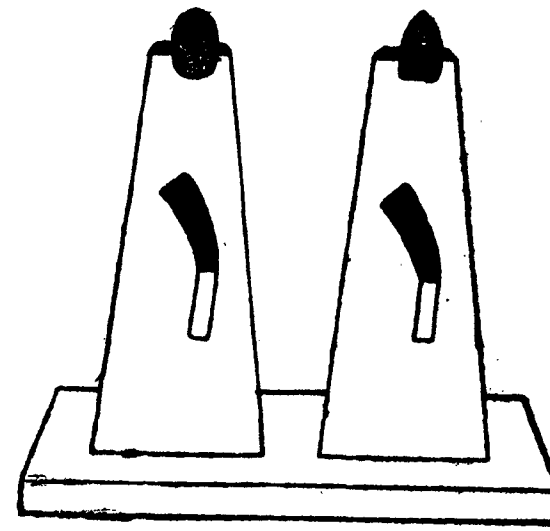
Mourning is observed for sixteen days. During this period the members of the family do not take non-vegetarian items of food. On the sixteenth day, the house is cleaned, new earthen vessels are purchased and a feast consisting of vegetarian items only is given to the relatives.

There is no annual death rite among the community.

RELIGION

The Vannans profess Hindu religion. However a few of them, as noted earlier, have embraced Christianity, but still continued to be called as Vannan and carry on their traditional calling of washing clothes.

All Hindu Vannans in the surveyed area are Saivaites, that is, the sect of worshippers of Lord Siva.



DEITIES
SUDALAI AND MADAN

At Bhuthapandy the supreme deities of Vannans are Sudalai and Madan. The temple dedicated to these deities is situated near the settlement of the Vannans. The deities are represented by two pyramid shaped lime and mortar structures, nearly four feet in perimeter at the base and four to five feet in height. They are emplanted on a raised, stone-built platform which is square in shape. On the front sides of the pyramids are chopper shaped figures in relief, made of mortar and then painted with red ochre. In front of the raised platform, are installed two smaller deities, known as *Mundan* and *Esakki*, in the form of stones. An old man belonging to the Vannan community looks after the affairs of the temple. The office is generally hereditary. The priest is known as '*pusari*' or '*swamikondad*'.

Once in a year they sacrifice fowls or goats before the deities. The informants remember that about forty years ago they used to celebrate in this temple an annual festival called *Kodai*, on a grand scale. On this occasion, they used to invite '*villupattukarans*' (narraters of myth and legend through songs accompanied by musical instruments), also they used to sacrifice a large number of goats. Their friends and relatives from the neighbouring villages used to gather in large number and used to be entertained in a grand feast.

In addition to the local folk-deities, they worship all the Hindu gods and goddesses of all-India and regional spread. They specially rever Lord *Murugan* of Tiruchendur. Also they worship *Esakkiamman* and *Mariamman*, the latter one being considered to be the presiding deity of chiken pox, small pox etc.

The well formulated religious belief and practices of the Vannans are supplemented by a number of vaguely conceived magical beliefs. For instance, an ordinary fever, is not infrequently attributed to the effect of evil eye.

As mentioned earlier *Murugan* temple situated at Tiruchendur is held in special reverence by the Vannans. They generally visit it for the performence of tonsure ceremony of their children, or for making votive offereings on fulfilment of views. The annual festival of the temple, falling sometime in the month of March, is another occasion, drawing a large number of Vannans to Tiruchendur. The caste associations of the Ehali Vannans and the Eranguli Vannans maintain separate rest houses, called "*Madams*" at Tiruchendur, for the convenience of the pilgrims belonging to their respective sections.

Among the festivals performed by the Vannans at the family level, more important are '*Thai Pongal*', '*Deepavali*', '*Karthigai*' and '*Adi Amavasai*'. *Pongal* is celebrated in the Tamil month of '*Thai*' roughly corresponding to January. It is performed immediately after the harvest and is marked by thanks giving to Sun-god and mother earth. On this occasion new rice is cooked in new earthen pots and offered to the sun god. The second day of '*Pongal*' is known as '*Mattu Pongal*' and is performed in honour of the cattle. Those who possess cattle bathe them and decorate them with flowers and vermilion. Then the females keep a light in a plate and wave it before the cattle.

Deepavali is another important festival. It is celebrated in commemoration of the destruction of the evil spirits by Lord Krishna. People take an oil bath early in the morning and those who can afford, wear new cloths on this day. Newly married sons-in-law are invited by the parents-in-law for a feast.

During '*Adi Amavasai*' (New moon day) in the month of Adi (August) they visit Kanyakumari and take dip in the sea.

Christian Vannans celebrate Chrismas, Good Friday and Easter. Generally they do not take part in festivals celebrated by the Hindu Vannans.

RELATION AMONG THE DIFFERENT SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY

As already mentioned the Vannans are divided into four sections in Kanyakumari district. Each forms a distinct unit for determining the normally permissible range of marriage alliance, organisation of religious functions etc. While the member of the Ehali and Eranguli vannan sections take food from one another, they do not intermarry. Again both these sections refrain from taking food and water from the Nadar and Puratha Vannan sections. The latter two sections, however, do not have any objection to take food and water from Ehali and Eranguli Vannans. The Nadar Vannans in their turn refuse to accept the Puratha Vannans as their equal and do not accept food and water from them. Thus the Puratha Vannans are considered to be at the bottom of the social ladder among the Vannans. It seems to be because of two reasons. Firstly, traditionally they serve the untouchable castes which the other sections of Vannan do not. Secondly they are economically weak. During the present survey no Puratha Vannan was found to own a laundry.

The economic position of the Nadar Vannans is slightly better than that of the other Vannans. But by no means they can be considered as affluent. Not only ritually, but economically also they are weaker than the Ehali and Erunguli Vannans.

All the four sections have separate associations of their own for organising social and religious functions. At the same time, they have a common professional organisation, the washermen society, with its head-quarters at Nagercoil. Only a person belonging to one of the four sections of the Vannan can become a member of this organisation. A non-Vannan, even though they may be owning a laundry, cannot become a member of the society. It is reported that the hierarchy prevaling in the ritual relations of the four sections of the Vannan is not reflected in the functioning of the common professional society.

Ceremonial relationships centering the profession

Traditionally, the Vannans are washermen of other castes. Normally a Vannan household is expected to serve a few patron clients. As indicated earlier, in the houses of the patron clients they are required to

render some ceremonial Services, during the crucial events of life, like birth, puberty, marriage and death. In other words during the rites de passage, the Vannans become coparticipants with their patron clients in a common ritual complex. This imparts some element of identity to the Vannans and their patron clients. This is reflected in the fact, mentioned earlier, that the ritual status of the Vannans is determined by the ritual status of the clients. The Vannans serving the *Harijans* (Untouchable castes) are degraded not only in the eyes of their neighbours but also in the eyes of other Vannans.

The ritual structure however does not provide the only frame, not even the most important frame to day, for guiding the relationship between the Vannans and their neighbours. To a much larger extent, the relationship between the Vannans and their neighbours is determined now-a-days by marked laws. It is not infrequently that even where the Vannans are called upon to serve on ritual occasions, they are paid in cash and not in kind. This is looked upon as a pure economic transaction and not ritual interaction. Thus the occasion may be sacred, but the service may be essentially secular. Considered on terms of its effect, the sacred may be looked upon, to have been diverted of its capacity to twist the arms of the society. In urban areas particularly, it may not even be considered as an events if a Vannan, normally serving the high-castes, serves a *Harijan*.

INTER COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIP

In the past the Vannans were not allowed to enter into the streets of the caste Hindus. They were living in separate localities which however were not so much secluded as those in the case of other low castes like Paraiyan, Pallan etc. They were admitted to limited areas from where they could hand over the clothes to their clients. After receiving the clothes from the Vannans, the clients belonging to Brahman and other high castes, used to dip the same in water and then dry up. They considered the clothes to have been polluted by the touch of the Vannans and thought it necessary to remove the pollution by dipping them in water. The Vannans were subjected to a few other disabilities also. They were not allowed to draw water from public wells. Either they had their own wells or they could take water from certain places earmarked for them. Even in rivers they could not bathe in the same spots where the caste Hindus bathed. Ordinarily they were not allowed to enter in the village temples. During the village festivals they could only watch the functions from a distance. Barbers who served the caste-Hindus did not serve them. On the other hand they were served by barbers belonging to their own caste. There were one or two families of barbers for three or four villages. They are supposed to hold a degraded position. Members belonging to the washerman section of Vannan caste did not inter-dine or inter-marry with members of these barber families even though they belonged to the same caste.

In the recent decades, the social status of the Vannans has changed considerably. In the rural areas the extent of change is much less than that in the urban areas. But even in the rual areas, they are today allowed to visit any corner of the village without any restriction. They can enter the houses of the caste Hindus to hand over the clothes washed by them. Gone are days, when the caste-Hindus would wear the clothes only after dipping in water and purifying. They can enter the temples and their children can sit with those of the high castes for receiving education in the schools. They can draw water from the public wells and taps without any restriction.

In the urban areas, not only that the Vannans do not suffer from any social disability, but frequently they freely mix with others in equal terms. It is not uncommon to see a Brahman attending the marriage performance in a Vannan house, as a guest. Brahman priests are however not engaged in Vannan houses even now. It is not because such priests would not have been available had the Vannans wanted it, but because of change of social values. As a part of the self-respect movement, which swayed the non-Brahman castes of Tamil area, in the second decade of the present century, any of them no longer think it necessary to engage Brahman priests for presiding over their ceremonies. It seems that the Vannans have fallen in line with the other non-Brahman castes in this matter.

ORGANISATION OF SOCIAL CONTROL, PRESTIGE AND LEADERSHIP

The Vannans do not have any traditional Panchayat of their own to regulate the affairs of the community. Even in the past, disputes regarding family matters were referred to the elders of the family or lineage. Disputes with other families belonging to the same caste or other castes were taken to the village Panchayats, which were generally controlled by the caste Hindus. The offenders were frequently required to pay fines or were subjected to corporal punishment. In case of serious offences, the persons concerned could even be driven out of the village.

At present they have caste associations called *sangams*, viz., *Ehali sangam*, *Eranguli sangam*, *Nadar Vannan Sangam* and *Puratha Vannan Sangam*. These *sangams* are of recent origin, some are hardly ten or fifteen years old. These associations are more interested in rendering social service and introducing reforms in social and ritual matters than in regulating day to day social relations and applying sanctions against violation of social norms.

During the present survey a study was made of *Enali Sangam*, at Nagercoil. Its jurisdiction extends over the taluks of Thovala and Agastheeswaram and also Thachalai area of Kalkulam taluk. The three main office bearers of the association are the president, the secretary and the treasurer or *Thalaivar*, *Kariyatharisee*, and *Porulalar* respectively in local terms. There are also six ordinary members of the managing committee. All these posts are filled up through election. The president however is generally an affluent person belonging to the community, who possesses a good personality and commands respect of the members of the community.

The membership of the association is confined to the community. Though enrolment is not compulsory, practically all the Vannan households of the area have enrolled themselves after paying 25 paise as membership fee. It seems that they look upon it as a moral obligation. Besides it is likely that a man, who has failed to enrol himself would be cut off, by his fellow castemen from social ceremonies. On the occasions, of birth, marriage, death etc. But till now, there has been no occasion to test it.

As mentioned earlier, the association serves as a forum for looking after the social and cultural interests of the Ehali section of the Vannans. At the time of Solemnization of a marriage, the contracting parties contribute Rs. 3 to the fund of the association. The amount they collected is spent for construction of rest houses for the members of the community in pilgrimage centres, performance of festivals in the temples and assistance to needy members during marriage, death etc.

Sometimes the president of the association settles minor disputes among the members. But he does this more in his personal capacity as an influential person than in his official capacity as president of the association. In fact the association as such, is not expected to deal with individual disputes.

As noted earlier there is an organisation of Vannans in Kanyakumari district. This is called *Vannan Sangam*. Any person, who is Vannan by caste can become its member by paying an annual subscription Rs. 3 only.

The main function of the organisation is to serve as the sponsoring agency of a cooperative society meant to promote the economic interest of the Vannans.

Co-operative Society

The name of the Co-operative Society is "Kanyakumari District Washermen Co-operative Society". It was registered on 4-6-64 and started functioning in the same month. At present it has 421 members about 50% of whom are Christian Vannans belonging to Roman Catholic section. The affairs of the society are managed by a Board of Directors consisting of a president, a vice-president and five members. All above office bearers are elected once in every three years. The Secretary is a Senior Inspector of the Co-operative Department, whose services have been placed at the disposal of the Society by the State Government, free of charge.

At the time of the survey, the President of the society belonged to Eranguli Vannan, and the Vice-president belonged to R.C. (Roman Catholic) Vannan community. Three out of the five members of the Board of Directors were R.C. Vannan, one was an Asan and the remaining one was a Puratha Vannan.

The value of each share of the soceity is only Rs. 5. The total paid up share at the time of the survey was Rs. 7,585. The society has received a share capital loan to the tune of Rs. 5,000 from the Government. It is an interest free loan and is repayable in ten equal instalments. It has also received an equipment loan amounting to Rs. 10,000 on the same terms and conditions as in the case of share capital loan. Besides, the society has received a loan of Rs. 50,000 at 8¾% interest for purchase of Soda ash for distribution among the members. This loan is to be repaid to the Government in twelve monthly instalment. The Welfare department of the State Government has made available to the society a special interest free loan of Rs. 6000 for purchase of iron, to be repaid in five equal instalments 120 members enjoyed the benefit of this loan. The benefits of the other loans were enjoyed by about 100 members.

Generally the loans are given in kind and not in cash, for establishing laundry and obtaining other washing equipments. A member can get loan to the extent of five times his share capital. The society is running two sales depots, one at Nagercoil and the other at Monday Market, about 15 miles from Nagercoil. Washing material like Soda ash, washing soaps and indigo are sold from these shops to washermen at a cheaper rate. They also call for tender for the supply of irons. These irons are manufactured at Trivandrum. They are made of bronze by moulding process. For the irons supplied to the Cooperative Society, the firm concerned, need not pay the inter-state tax to the full, which is of 10% of the total price of the irons. For such cases, inter-state tax at the reduced rate of 2% is to be paid.

The society is also running a laundry at Nagercoil and a number of washermen work here on salary basis.

Though the above facilities provided by the Co-operative Society have helped the members substantially, it seems that they are not enough to meet all their requirements. In the course of a number of individual and group discussions, the members of the society pointed out that medium term loans and washing materials at cheaper rate should be made available to them to a much larger extent. They also feel the need of *dhobi khanas* with modern facilities for washing clothes. Another felt-need of the Vannas of Nagercoil relates to housing facility. Almost all of them live in rented houses in Nagercoil. Sometimes they are forcibly evicted by the landlords. They like to have a colony constructed for them.

During the survey it was found that the Vannans of Kanyakumari district have a sense of solidarity not only at the district level, but also at the State level. They have even some sense of solidarity with the Vannans of other States as well. There is a Madras State Washermen's Society. All the district societies of the Vannans are reported to be affiliated to it. In July 1966, a conference was organised by the State Society at Madras. In the conference, *inter alia* the following demands were made—(i) all sections of Vannans should be included in the list of Scheduled Castes; (ii) all the facilities provided to the Hindu Vannans should be extended to the Christian Vannans; (iii) housing colonies and *dhobi-khanas* should be established for the Vannans.

Biography

Name : Subbaiyan Age : 70 years

Caste: Vannan Sub-caste: Ehali

He is the pujari (priest) of the temple of the Vannans of Bhuthapandi, for the last 30 years. Prior to him, his father was holding this post. Generally the office of the priest is hereditary. He learnt from his father the duties and the skills of the office. His family had migrated to this village from Tirunelvelli about four generations ago. (Those who migrated from Tirunelvelli are called as Pandiya Vannan).

He has one son and two daughters. The daughters were married in a nearby village. The son is aged 22 years and is staying with him, along with his wife. The son is engaged in washing clothes while Subbaiyan looks after the temple. The offerings made by the devottees to the deity constitute the main source of livelihood for him. He can also utilise the fruits of the trees situated in the temple premises. There is no regular pay or other remuneration attached to his office. In his younger days, in addition to doing his priestly duties, he used to wash clothes. Now he has given up the same.

He had one brother, who died sometime ago and whose widow and son are living in a separate house in the same village.

Every Friday Subbaiyan cleans the temple and decorates the idols with flowers and performs puja. On other days he lits a lamp and offers betelnuts and betel leaves on a plate to the deities. Here it may be noted that there are images of the deities *Sudalai* and *Mandan* in the temple. The temple is situated on the periphery of their residential area in the village. In the past the Vannans used to celebrate a festival called *Kodai* every year. It used to continue for four days, on this occasion they used to sacrifice many goats and fowls to *Sudalai* and *Madan*. Now they do not celebrate *Kodai* on such a grand scale. Subbaiyan remembers that about forty years ago, about forty or fifty goats were sacrificed and a feast was given to the participants including the friends and relatives from the adjoining villages.

2. Name : V. Lakshman Age : 24 years.
Caste : Vannan Sub-caste : Ehali.

His family had migrated from Tirunelvelli long back and he was born at Bhuthapandy. He studied up to school final examination and completed teacher's training at Kulasekaramputhur about nine miles from Nagercoil. He knows that the Government gives a number of concessions to the scheduled caste people. He obtained a certificate of his being a scheduled caste from the Block Development Officer and availed of the concessions during his education. After passing the teacher's training course he joined as a teacher at Vallakollai village in Chidambaram taluk of South Arcot District. He stayed there for six months and then left his job, since his widowed mother was staying alone in the village. He has half an acre of land and he looks after the same. His mother is engaged in washing cloths. If he gets a job at Bhuthapandy or in adjoining villages he would like to take up the same.

According to Lakshman, the people of his community are now taking interest in education and sending their children to schools. But he considers that more academic education will not do much good to his community. It is only making the new generation averse to the traditional occupation of the community; but as in his own case, unless they attain higher education, it will not be easy to obtain alternative means of livelihood of the desirable type. In fact the most urgent problem facing his community today is that of unemployment among the half-educated younger people. To solve this problem, he suggests that, more emphasis should be given to imparting technical education to his people. Besides, the conditions of work in the profession of cloth washing should be modernised. Another problem which according to him demands immediate attention is housing. Generally their houses are constructed on *purampokku* land without proper roads and lanes. The foot paths passing through their area are narrow and dark. There is no electricity in their houses and the general impression, that their residential area provides is that of a God foresaken land.

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ANNEXURE

FRAMEWORK FOR ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY

I. Name, Identity, Origin and History

1. Name : synonym ; sub-caste/sub-tribe as in President's Order and as in other published sources such as census reports, monographs, etc. grouping with other castes & tribes during various censuses. Affinity with other castes and tribes according to recognised authorities.
2. Etymological significance of the name : names by which the community is referred to by (a) others and (b) itself.
3. Identification of the community by occupation or any other way of life.
4. Myths and legends connected with the origin and history of the community and its segments ; historical references and popular beliefs about history and migration of the community.

II. Distribution and Population Trend

1. Area where found : population and concentration in the State and outside ; physical aspects of the areas of concentration.
2. Numerical strength in 1961 and population variations during 1901-1961 ; sex ratio ; age-groups and rural-urban distribution in 1961.

III. Physical Characteristics

1. Racial stock : appearance and affinity with other known communities.

IV. Family, Clan, Kinship and Other Analogus Divisions

1. Family ; size (observed & published), Types, residence after marriage, descent, lineage and its economic and religious function and inheritance.
2. Clan gotra and sub-clans ; names, etymological meaning, clustering of clans, belief and mythology about origin, status among clans, clan and regulation of marriage (preference and prohibition), occupation and clan, clan and rituals, clan & food (restrictions, prescriptions etc.)
3. Others : Phratry, Duel organisation, like moieties etc. as in 2 above.

V. Dwelling, Dress, Food, Ornaments and Other Material Objects Distinctive of the Community

1. Settlement : Village site, location, settlement pattern (agglomerated, nucleated, dispersed, sprinkled, isolated, amorphous, star-shaped, horse-shoe-shaped, linear, rectangular, circular or ring-shaped etc.) and variations ; regional pattern *vis-a-vis* pattern of the community.
2. Neighbourhood pattern on the basis of religion, castes (Caste Hindus, untouchables) and tribes etc. with segregations, if any, and the basis thereof.
3. Dwelling unit : Compound, entrance, source of water the use of different parts of the house (latrine, cattle-shed, isolation huts etc.) ; shape (square, round, irregular etc.) ; storeys ; nature of floor, plinth ; wall ; roofing ; thatching ; ventilations and doors ; materials used ; decorations and embellishments ; temporary structures.
4. Dress, including head gear and foot wear—used ordinarily, on ceremonial occastions and special occasions, sex-wise and according to majority or minority ; dress of priests and office bearers ; variations.
5. Ornaments : use ; material used ; from whom obtained ; variations according to sex and age.
6. Purpose, attitude and variations according to sex and age.

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7. Food and drink : Materials (staple and other), prescriptions and prohibitions, fuel, utensils, and mode of preparation ; practices connected with serving and taking of food ; preservation of food and rituals, if any.
8. Equipments connected with economic pursuits, religion and ritual ; how procured ; material used, construction, manipulation and purpose.
9. Other household equipments. As above.
10. Equipments connected with recording of time, space and weight and their methods of use.

VI. Environmental Sanitation, Hygienic Habits, Disease and Treatment

1. Environmental sanitation, settlement, disposal of night soil, garbage, etc.
2. *Hygienic habits : cleanliness of body, teeth, dress, houses, utensils, etc.*
3. Diseases : Incidence ; local names ; interpretation of the causes ; symptoms ; diagnoses and curepersons and methods involved.
4. Modern systems of medicine and attitude of the community towards it.

VIII. Language and Education

1. Ancestral Language : Classification according to Grierson, persistence of ancestral language and literature.
2. Mother tongue : clasification according to Girerson ; bilingualism and multi-lingualism, regional language.
3. Information collected during 1961 on language and literature.
4. Education and literacy : Traditional and modern attitude, information collecetd during 1961-literacy and levels of education.

VIII. Economic Life

1. Economic resources : Land, community land, individual ownership and types of land possessed and land utilised.
2. Forest wealth : Flora and fauna ; nature and extent of right in the forest, forest utilization.
3. Fishery, Livestock and others.
4. Working force : Sex wise, urban and rural variation and comparison of the same with the region.
5. Non-workers.
6. Industrial classifications : Details as collected in the field and comparison with that of the 1961 Census figures ; traditional occupation and changes in the pattern ; main and subsidiary occupations.
7. Forced labour, bonded labour, patron-client relationship (jajmani), mode of payment.
8. Seasonal migration connected with occupation : recruitment, formation of working groups.
9. Nomadic movement : Cycle and occupational pattern.
10. Shifting cultivation : method, implements and equipments, produce, participation, cycle of rotation, measure to regulate shifting cultivation and its impact.
11. Terrace cultivation : As above.
12. Income and expenditure : Sources of income, expenditure on food, clothing, house, education, social functions and others.
13. Other aspects of economic life.

IX. Life Cycle

A. *Birth*

1. Beliefs and practices connected with conception, barrenness, still birth, miscarriage, abortion child death, regulation of sex, etc.

2. Pre-natal and natal practises : Residence, diet, work, taboos etc. delivery place, assistance, equipments used in delivery, position during delivery, severance of umbilical cord (who does and how done), disposal of placenta.
3. Post-natal practices : Confinement and segregation, ceremonial pollution, diet for mother and child, rituals.
4. Protection and care of child and training.
5. Attitude towards birth of child preference about sex, preference about number, segregation of sex, etc.

B. *Initiation*

1. Initiation ceremony ; descriptions.
2. Pre-marital sex relations within the community, outside the community, sanctions and toboos.

C. *Marriage*

1. Age at marriage for both sex ; prohibited degrees of relationship, preferences, widow re-marriage (preferences & toboos).
2. Civil status and social status.
3. Types of marriage : Monogamy, polygamy (Polyndry and polygyny).
4. Selection of spouse : Qualities valued (for bride and groom) mode of selection, procedure.
5. Modes of acquiring mate : By negotiation, force, intrusion, elopments, etc.
6. Terms of settlement : Payment of bride price, dowry, service, exchange, adoption, etc.
7. Ceremonies connected with marriage : details including who presides over the marriage and services of functional castes.
8. Statistical data as per 1961 Census.
9. Divorce : Reasons and procedure.

D. *Death*

1. Concept about death, measures to ensure future well being of the soul, measures to avert harm by the spirits.
2. Methods of disposal : Burial, cremation, exposure, floating on water, etc.
3. Preparations for disposal of dead, informing friends and relatives, treatment of the dead body, digging of pit etc. for disposal ; how carried, who carry, who accompany, place of disposal, methods of disposal, norms and taboos.
4. Ceremonies connected with disposal.
5. Death rites ; Details.
6. Monuments : Tombs, megaliths, etc.
7. Pollution : duration, restrictions in work, food, dress shaving, hair cropping, sex life, etc. removal of pollution.
8. Mourning ; mourners and duration.

X. Religion

1. Deities ; supreme deity, benevolent deities, malevolent spirits, presiding deities of village and other aspects of life including occupation, clans, *gotras* etc.
2. Place of the deities in the regional pattern and Brahmanical and other traditions.
3. Rituals and concepts associated with the pantheon.
4. Spots associated with the deities, pilgrim centres and methods of worship.
5. Religious functionaries.

6. Calendar of festivals and their observance.
7. Concept of soul, hell, heaven, rebirth, transmigration of soul, etc.
8. Sects and denominations : Name, distribution, beliefs and practices, etc.
9. Statistical information.

XI. Leisure, Recreation and Child Play

1. Use of leisure time : For male, female, children and adult ; seasonal variation in liesure time.
2. Recreation—their mode and extent, for males, females and children.
3. Leisure and recreation with reference to work.

XII. Relation Among Different Segments of the Community

Recognised segments—name, basis (territorial, ceremonial, social, prestige, religion, sect, education, age, etc.) Intertrela ionship among various segments ; status of the segment, status of women.

XIII. Inter-community Relationship

1. Ceremonial relationship : Service By Brahmins, traditional service by castes like barbers, washermen, etc.
2. Pollution by touch or proximity to high Caste Hindus, use of well, admission to temple.
3. Secular relationship ; Model for other communities; dominance due to economic resources, political status, social status, etc.
4. Bridge role, buffer role, alliance and antagonisum of the community.

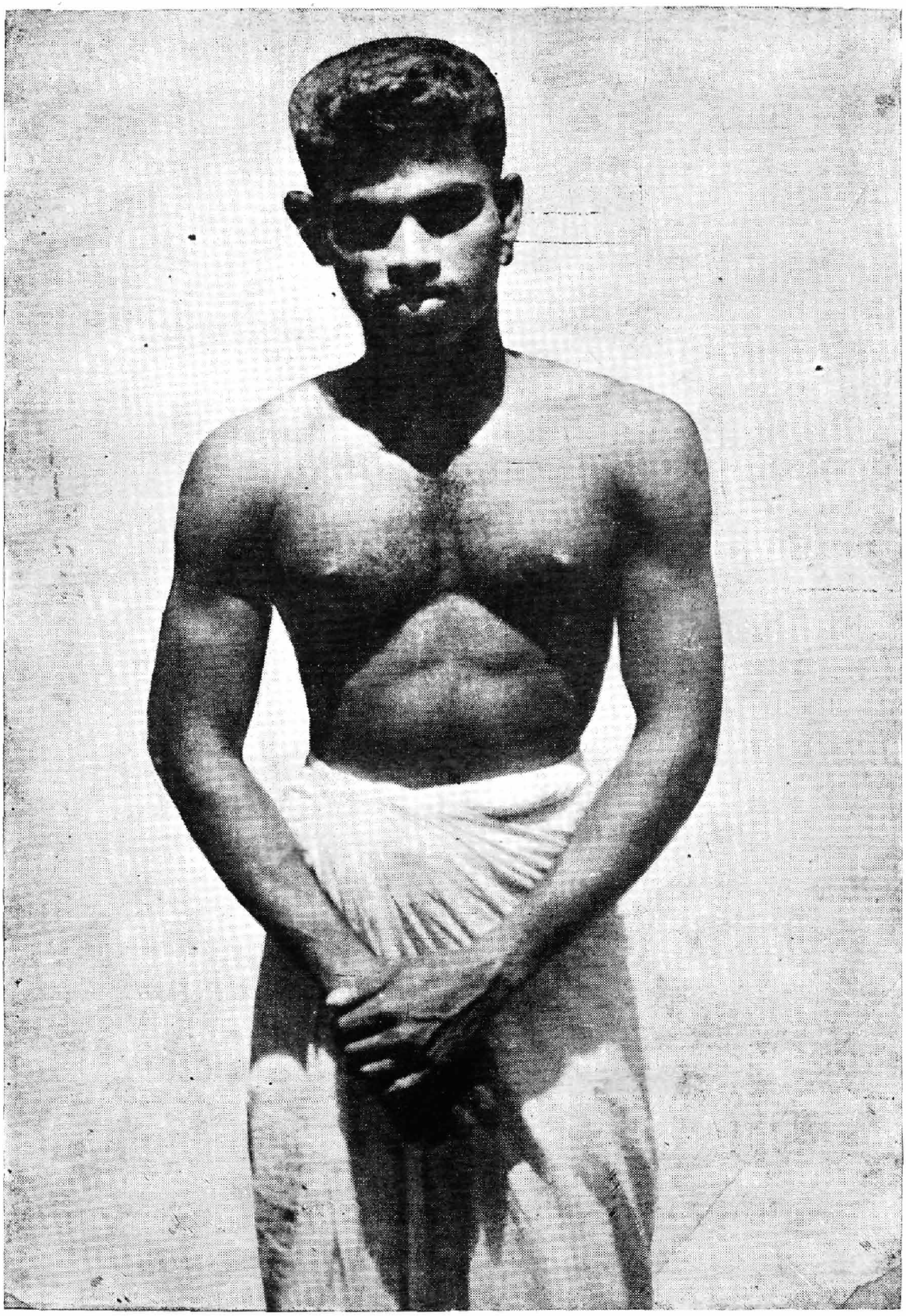
XIV. Structure of Social Control, Prestige and Leadership

1. Social control : Levels of social control, community level, regional level hereditary, special functionaries etc., social control by other agencies.
2. Mode of acquiring offices.
3. Control exercised by traditionally recognised leaders, functionaries of statutory bodies of the region, powerful individuals belonging to the community, etc., at the regional level, and local level.
4. Relationship between spheres of social control and agencies of social control.
5. Leadership : For social change, for technological change, for political action and for other organised activities at the community level, regional level and local level.
6. Social prestige : Method of gaining social prestige (by performing ritual, merit of feast, associating with historical association etc.) symbols of social prestige.

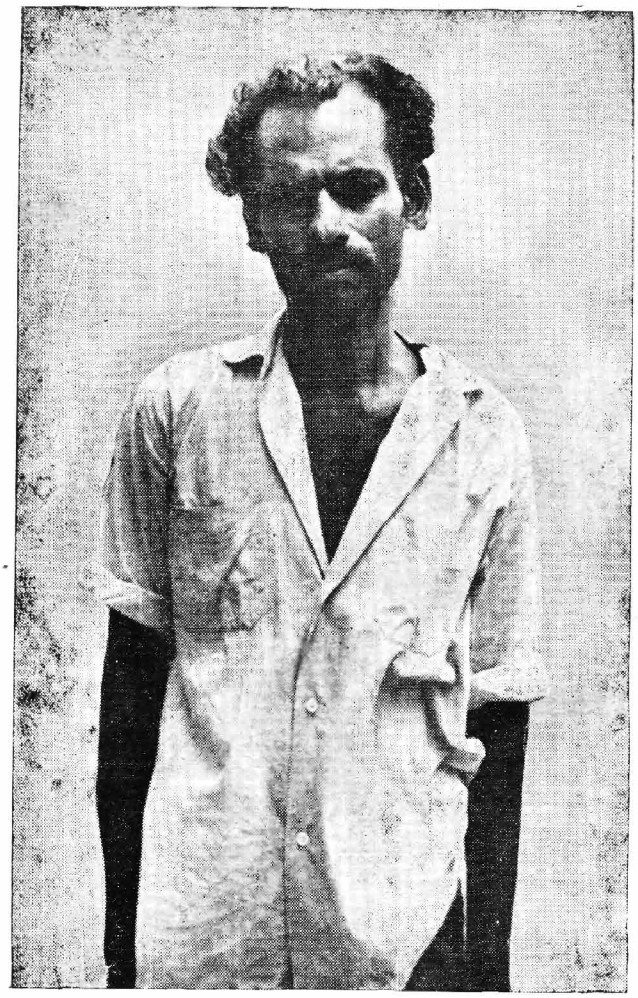
XV. Social Reform and Welfare

1. Social reform movements : Intensity ; reasons (for raising social status, establishing traditional norms, for westernisation, etc.) ; History and import of the movements.
2. Social Welfare : Agency, religious organisation, community as a whole, Govt., Official and non-official, role of the social welfare measures and impact.

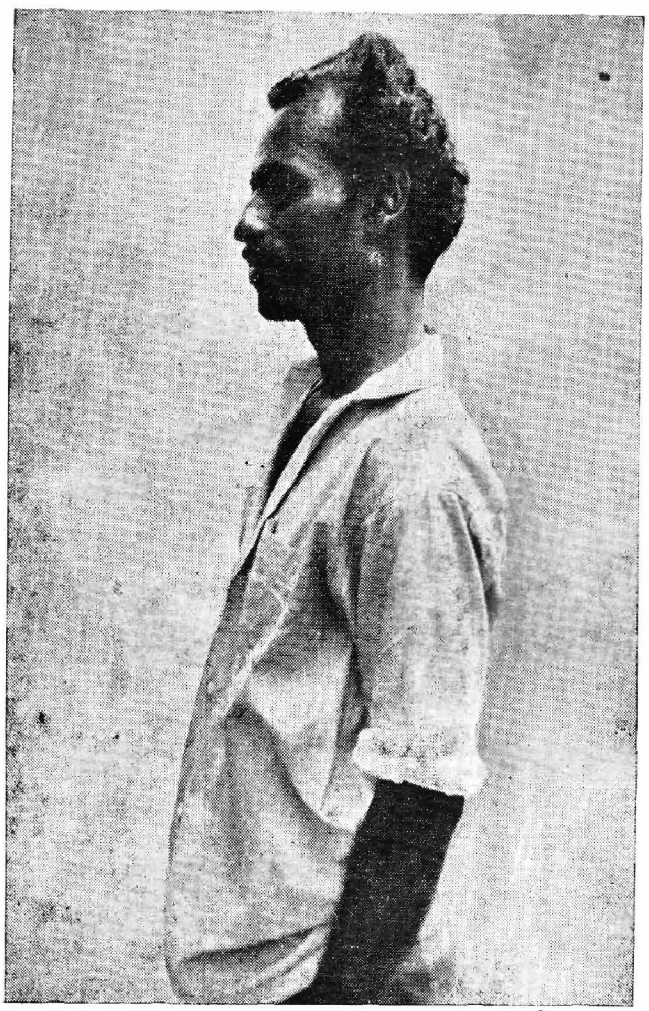
XVI. References cited and Other bibliography



1. Vannan male of the Ehali group



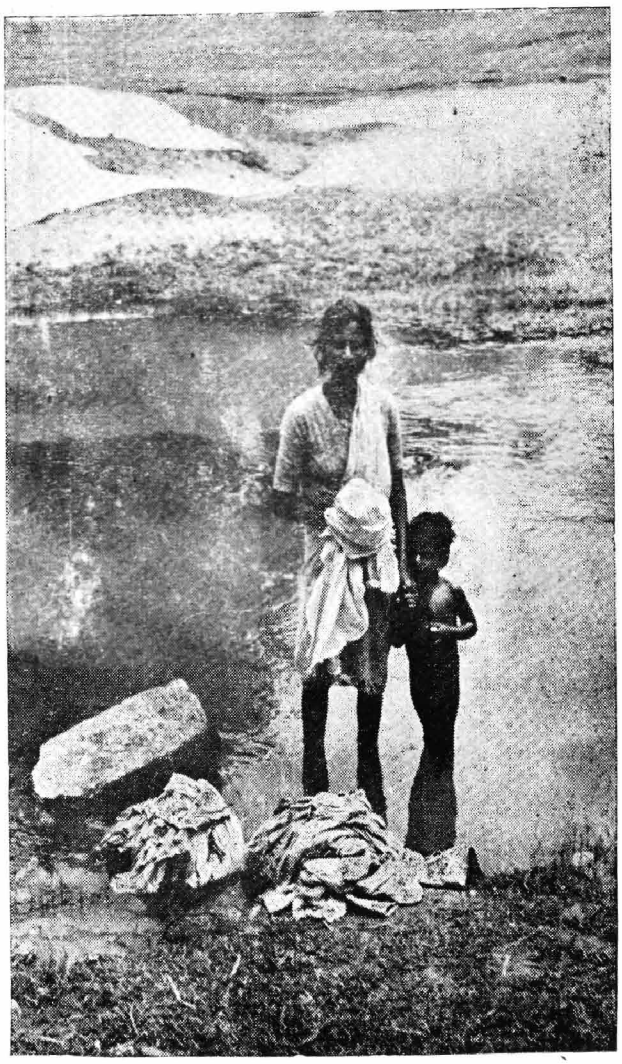
2. Puratha Vannan male (front view)



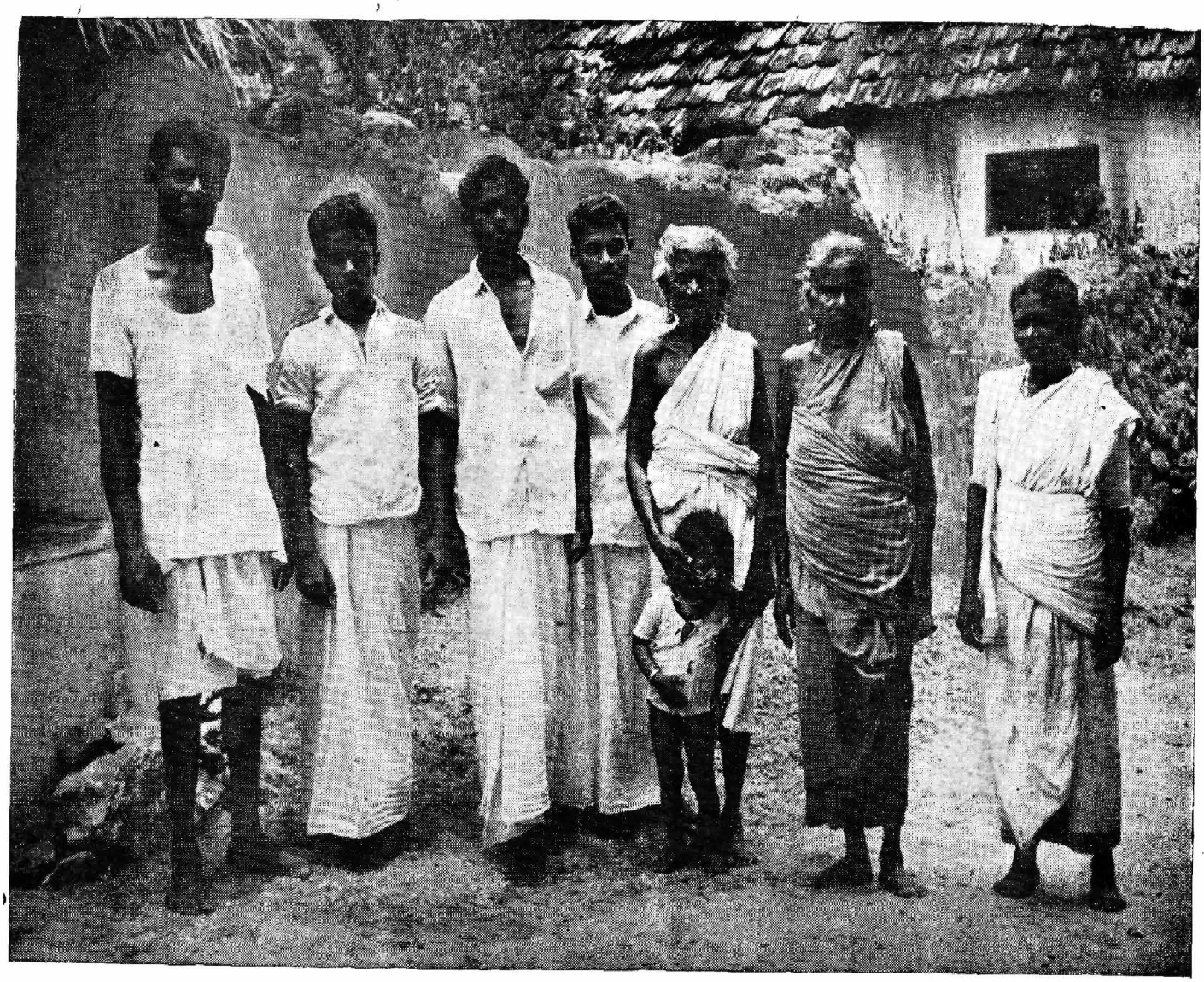
3. Puratha Vannan male (profile view)



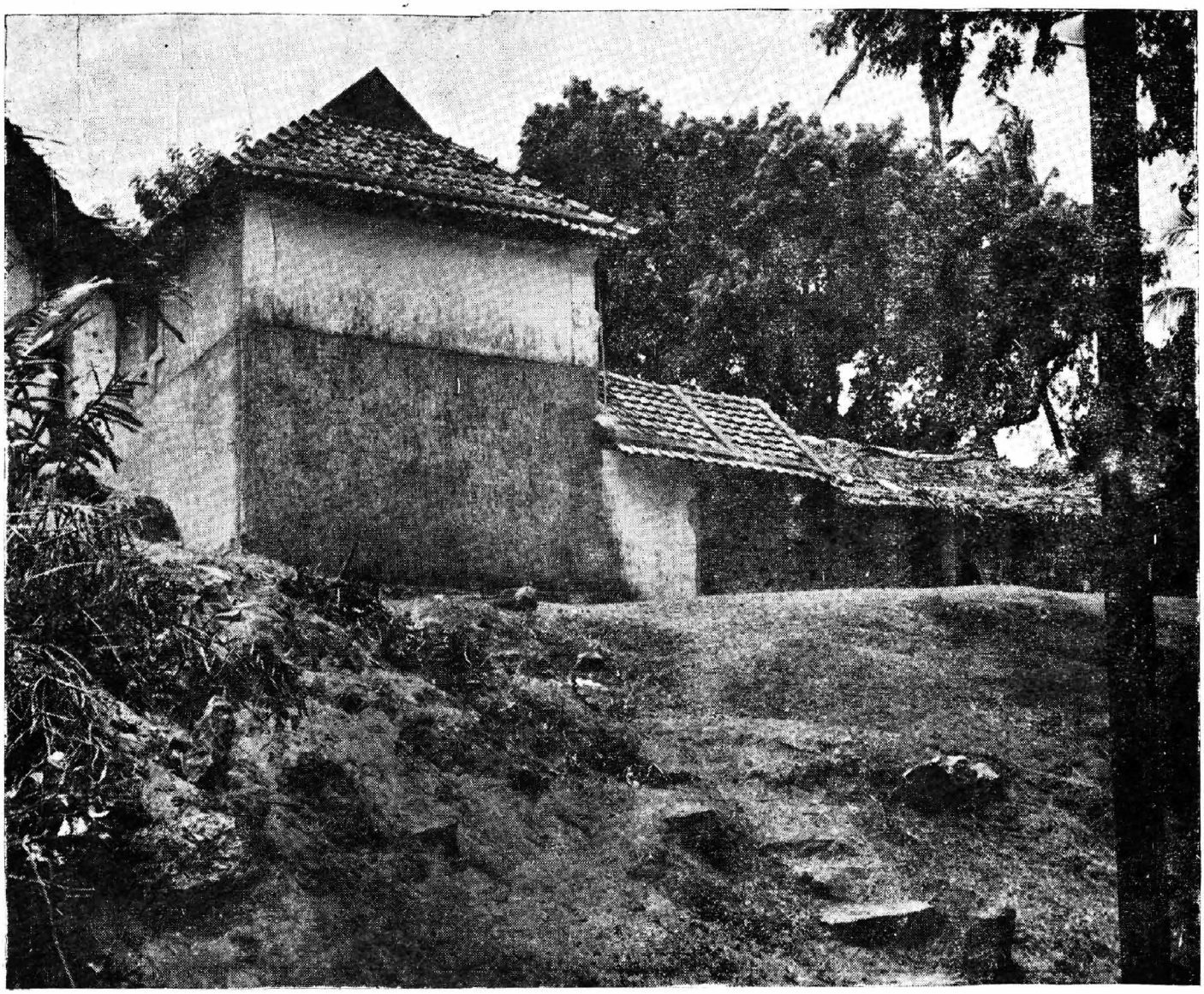
5. Vannan couple



4. A female Vannan at work

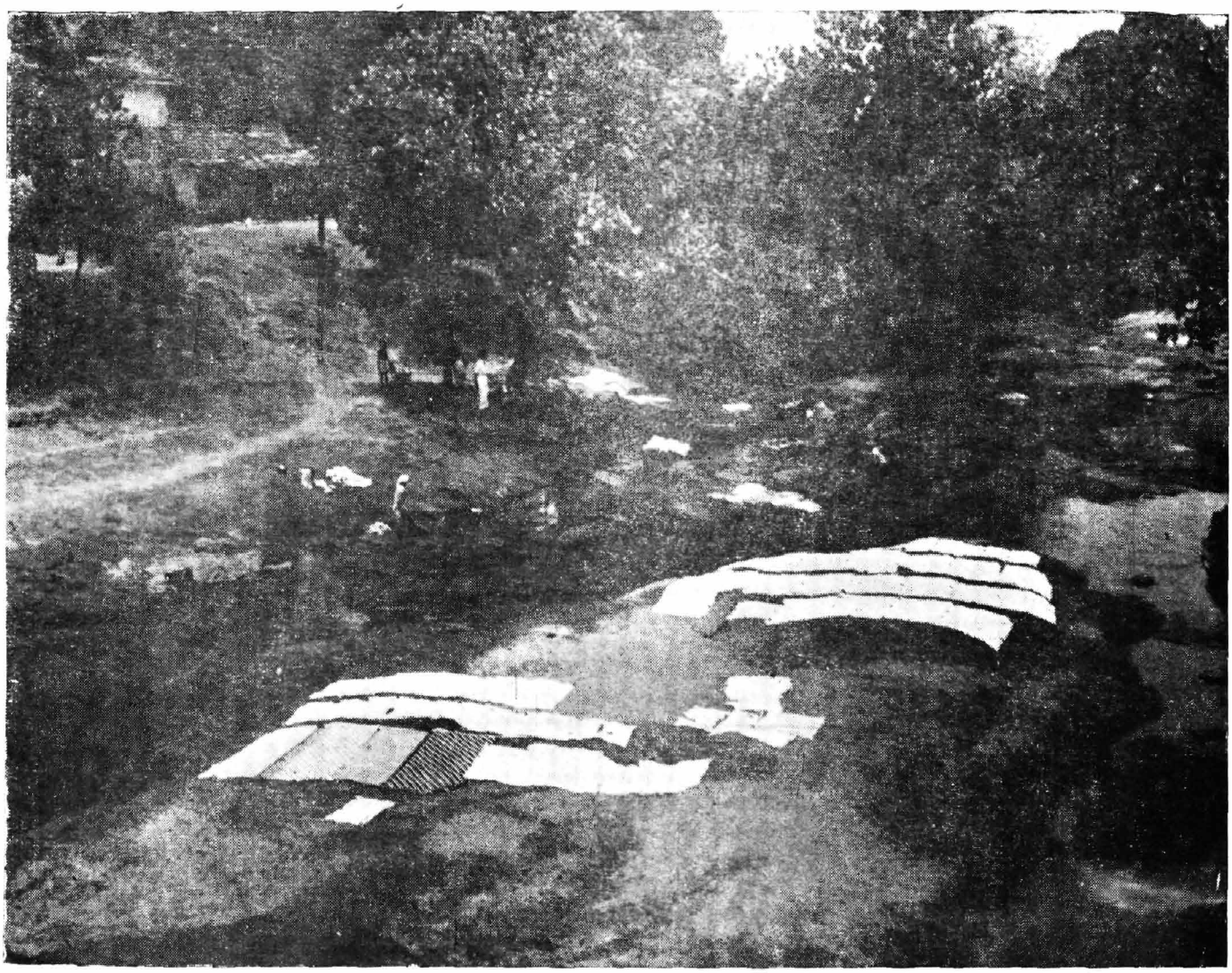


6. A group of Vannan



7. Vannan house

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8. Vannan at work by the river



9. A Vannan temple, the deities are Sudalai and Madan



10. Esaki, a deity of the Vannan

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