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Social Divisions of Early Tamilnadu பண்டைத் தமிழகத்துச் சமூகப் பிரிவுகள்

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to summarise and analyse the social divisions in early Tamilnadu. It is needed to testify the communal segregations and varnasrama extended in the geographical area of early Tamilnadu. An analytical approach is followed with the ten idylls as the primary sources. The eight anthologies, Tholkaappiyam, twin epics, commentators' commentaries, publishers' opinions, researchers' findings and epigraphists' reports serve as secondary sources. There were various social divisions which formed different communities on the basis of occupations, varnasrama and racial differences which influenced the marital relationships in early Tamilnadu.

KEY WORDS: Occupational divisions and subdivisions in early Tamilnadu, divisions based on varnasrama in early Tamilnadu, racial differences in early Tamilnadu, residential areas and social divisions, recommendation based on social division, influence of social divisions in marital relationships.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to summarise the social divisions in early Tamilnadu and analyse the same. It is needed to get a clear idea about the communal segregations and varnasrama extended in the geographical area of Tamilnadu.

Literary review

Tholkappiyam gives the different landscapes found in Tamilnadu which determine the occupations of the people who lived there. The twin epics give a detailed picture of the cities and people who lived there. Naccinarkiniyar speaks about vēlālar who commanded people in cultivation. In the anthologies poets have listed four divisions of

original inhabitants and four different races of people who lived in early Tamilnadu. Aivai Cu.Duraisamip Pillai commented that the four varnas were never prevalent in early Tamilnadu. Po.Ve.Somasuntharanar has said that the four different streets illustrated in Mathuraikkanji were the streets of priests, spys, commanders in the army and ambassadors. He accepted the presence of vēlālar and paarppaar in the city of Pukaar as illustrated in Pattinappalai. Narayanasami Ayyar comments on the residential areas of thinaimaanthar. U.Ve.Saaminatha Ayyar pointed out that vēlir were vēlālar. On the basis of mythology Mu.Raakavaiyangaar concluded that vēlir belonged to the fourth varna. Na.Mu.Vengadasamy Nattaar and Raa.Vengatachalam Pillai state

that *mazhavar* and *maravar* were of the same race. V.D. Mahajan in his book has briefed various *naakaa* kingdoms and rulers. *Su.Kumaarasaami Aachchaari* talks about *naaka kandan* in his book. *V.Kanakasabaip Pillai* in his thesis had given details about *naakar*. Excavations revealed semiprecious stone jewellery in the city of *Pukaar*. Archeology reports identify the *nikamathaar* as *vanikar*. Andrae F.Sjoberg has concluded that the society of Dravidian Civilization was multifaceted. *Mathu.Sa. Vimalaanantham*, said that there were no complications in the marital relationships between the various social divisions in early Tamilnadu. *K.K.Pillai* has given a note that there were no communal barriers but for occupational divisions in early Tamilnadu. *Thodaradaivu*- Sanga ilakkiyam helps in collecting the details about *mazhavar*, *maravar*, *mallar* and *kalamar*.

Methodology

An analytical approach is followed with the ten idylls as the primary sources. The eight anthologies, twin epics, commentators' commentaries, publishers' opinions, researchers' findings and epigraphists' reports serve as secondary sources.

Categories of social divisions

There were three categories of social divisions found in the society of early Tamilnadu as illustrated in the classical Tamil literature. They are:

1. Communities identified by the occupation related to the area of living
2. Communities related to the four varnas
3. Communities which do not fall under the above two groups

This categorization is supported by the conclusion inferred by Andrae F.Sjoberg in her article on the basis of archeology, culture, linguistics and racial evidences; that 'Dravidians form a multi faceted society with many divisions (Symposium on Dravidian Studies- "Who Are The Dravidians"- p.1-33).

Poets have praised the kings of Tamilnadu as leaders for various races. *Aiyuur Mudavanaar* is praising a *Kon* as an honourable leader of four races of people living in Tamilnadu then. *Thaamaan Thonrik Kon*'s benevolence is so great that he was accepted as their leader by all the races. The quote;

"*aravar aravan maravar maravan
mallar mallan tollor marukan*" (*puram*.399).

talks about *aravar*, *maravar*, *mallar* and *thollor*. Among those four races *thollor*; in other words called *muthukudi* (*puram*.391) denotes the original inhabitants of early Tamilnadu. *Maangudi kizhaar* has given a list of four communities which had the pride of being the original inhabitants of early Tamilnadu as;

"*tuṭiyaṇ pāṇaṇ paraiyaṇ kaṭampaṇ enru
innāṇku allatu kuṭiyum illai*" (*puram*.335).

Thudiyar, *paanar* and *paraiyar* are illustrated often in the anthologies while *kadambar*'s details are yet to be drawn.

As per the anthologies there were four different landscapes in Tamilnadu with specific groups of people living there (*poru*.L.218-221). The fifth one is the drought prone area bound to change when there is rain (*cilap. kaadukaan*.L.64-66). As per the rule of *Tholkappiyar* they had their own part as *karupporul* in *akam* lyrics

(*Tholkappiyam - porulathikaram- akaththinaiyiyal*- r.5, 20, 23) and hence may be called *thinaimaanthar*.

1. Those who lived near the sea - *Parathavar*
2. Those who lived in the hills or its suburbs - *Kuravar*
3. Those who lived near rivers - *Akavar*
4. Those who lived in the forests- *Kaanavar*
5. Those who lived in and around the hills and forests with scanty rainfall - *Eyinar*

All these social divisions are dealt with in the list below.

Category-I: Occupational divisions

There were different social groups depending on their occupations related to their area of living. Each group of people living in specific residential areas viz. *Cheri* or *kudimurai* or *chiiruur* meant for them; with their own leader *cherik kizhaan*, the presence of subdivisions straining the marital relationships and inferiority imposed on certain occupants paved the way to conclude that they formed different communities among *thinaimaanthar* the original inhabitants of early Tamilnadu.

The descriptions of the capitals *Madurai* and *Pukaar* in the idylls furnish the details of various social divisions with specific residential areas; briefed with the types of cottages found there and their surroundings.

- *Paanar* - bards who play *yazh*; a string instrument, catch fish using baits and perform death rituals i.e. *paankadan* for the dead (*peru*.L.283-290; *mathu*.L.219; *puram*.201; *nar*.11).
- *Valaignar* - those who do fishing with nets in rivers or other nearby water resources (*mathu*.255-256; *peru*.L.274; *malai*.L.454-455).
- *Thudiyar* - those who announce the approaching enemies and flood playing *thudi*; a percussion instrument (*puram*.269; *pari*.7).
- *Paraiyar / porunar* - those who cultivated millets, drove chariots in which the horses were tied and held by *valbu* i.e. skin of animals used to make *parai* a percussion instrument; beat them to perform ceremonial worship for *vendhar*, and served them as soldiers (*mathu*.L.98-104; *akam*.76; *pathir*.30, 75).
- *Kizhar* - those who were leaders of either *cheri* or *uur* where *uzhavars* lived. *Kovuur kizhaar* called himself and his allies as '*porunam yām*' an expression of first person inclusive plural (*ulappaattuth thanmaip panmai*); meaning they were *porunar*. He was a leader of the township *Kovuur* (*puram*.386). The fact that there was a '*cērik kiḷavan*' (*kali*.370); the leader of a *cheri* emphasizes the communal segregation.
- *Uzhavar / akavar* - traditional millet cultivators and employees in paddy Cultivation (*peru*.L.197). They are mentioned as '*vaṇkai viṇaiṇar*', as they were hard working people in the lands. '*karunkai viṇaiṇar*', highlights their strengthened arms. '*vaḷamcey viṇaiṇar*' praises the result of their perseverance. and '*ērōr*' signifies the farm tool to plough the fields (*peru*.L.223; *mathu*.L.262-270; *malai*.L.462; *poru*.L.221; *chiru*.233).

- *Thozhuvar* - those who water the fields using the technique of *erram*. They are illustrated as '*nīrttevvu niraī toḷuvar*' (*mathu*.L.89).
- *Kuravar* - those who cultivated foxtail millet in the hills and collected honey. They are mentioned as '*puṇam cūḷ kuravar*', and '*malai urai kuravar*'. Also '*arai uru tīntēṇ kuravar aruppa*' talks about their task of collecting honey (*mathu*.L.299-301 *malai*.L.203; *nar*.64; *akam*. 322).
- *Vēṭṭuvar* - hunters; mentioned as '*pulavu nāru kayavāy... vēṭṭuvar*' (*puram*.324) Which illustrates their habit of eating flesh of the animals they hunted.
- *Kovalar / aayar / idaiyar / pothuvar* - those who rear cattle. They are mentioned as '*maṭivāyk kōvalar*' signifying their habit of whistling to collect the grazing cattle and '*onṇamar irukkaik kūḷār itaiyan*' (*peru*.166, 175; *kali*.103) briefing their dress code and food habit. They wore only one piece of cloth to cover their bottom and drank *kuuzh* cooked with millets.
- *Kaanavar*- those who lived by cultivating millets, capturing elephants and collecting root tubers in the forests. Their occupation was evident in the quotes '*vilankal mīmicaip paṇavai kāṇavar pulam*' and '*kāṇavar kiḷaṅku akaḷ neṭuṅkuḷi*' (*malai*.L.298-299; *peru*.L.111-117; *mathu*.L.292-293; *akam*.21; Aingurunuru, 2009. p.305-h.208).
- *Eyinar / kuuliyar*- those who lived in the desert; indulged in plundering the riches and stealing the cows of *kurunila mannar* who were their foes (*patti*.L.266; *mathu*.L.310-314; *malai*.L.422; *peru*.L.129-146).
- *Parathavar* - those who made their living by fishing in the sea, collecting conches to make bangles and drive ships. They are mentioned as '*niraitimil vēṭṭuvar*', '*kōṭu pōḷ kaṭainar*', '*nāvāy perunīr oṇṇunar*' (*mathu*.L.116, 321, 315-325, 511) and '*aṇiṇaḷai pōḷunar*' (*cilap. indhira*.L.47).
- *Umanar* - they manufacture salt and sell the same. They are mentioned as '*veḷḷuppup pakarnar*' (*mathu*.L.117; *peru*.L.65)
- *Pazhaiyar* - those who manufacture and sell toddy or beer (*malai*.L.459). They're referred to as '*kaṇṇotaiaiyāṭṭiyar*' (*cilap. indhira*.L.24) also.
- *Nulaiyar* - those who prepare and sell fermented honey (*chiru*.L.158-159).
- *Velan* - one who performs the rituals regarding worship of Lord *Murukan* in a possessed state (*mathu* .L.284; 611)
- *Kadambar* - There are details about people hoisting the flag to celebrate the festival of Lord *Murukan* on a *kadambu* tree (*akam*.382); *velan* wearing the flowers of *kadambu* while performing the rituals in a possessed state (*akam*.98); Cheras slaying the defence tree *kadambu* in the islands of their sea (*akam*.127; 347; *Pathirruppaththu* 2007. h.12, 17, 20).
- *Iyavar* - artists who play musical instruments (*mathu*.L.304)
- *Kodiyar* - artists who perform dances playing drums as represented in '*koṭum paraik kōṭiyar*' (*mathu*.L.523)
- *Mazhavar* - thuggees who stole the herds of cows; which is defined as the battle of *vetchi*; appeared shabby with bundled flowers on their heads as *kanni* (*nar*.387); indulged in highway robbery and murdered passerby travellers (*poru*.L.21; *akam*.91, 101) *Ori* the chieftain of *Kolli* was said to be their leader (*nar*.52). Many kings were praised for controlling them and appointing them as their labourers. The *Cheras*, *Pandyan*, *Athiyaman*, *vēḷ Aavi* and *Pulli* were attributed the prestige of taming their rudeness (*mathu*.L.687; *pathir*.21, 55; *puram*.90; *akam*.1, 61).
- *Kuuviyar* - those who cook using concave utensils i.e. utensils in the shape of *kuviyam* and sell savouries like *mellada*i and *mothakam* (*mathu*.627; *peru*.L.377).
- *Kaazhiyar* - those who wash the clothes (*akam*.89)
- *Kannul vinaignar* - artists who draw (*mathu*.L.516-518)
- *Paakar* - those who rear and ride elephants. They are also called as *kaazhor*. (*mathu*.L.658-659; *malai*.L.327).
- flower venders (*mathu*.L.515)
- smoky perfume venders (*ibid.*)
- *Paasavar / Vilaignar* - those who sell meat (*patti*.L.198; *pathir*.21)
- *Kaniyan* - one who had astronomical knowledge and calculated the time. Poet *Kaniyan Poongunranaar* was one among them (*puram*.192).

Cheri (kudimurai)

The residential area of *paanar* was represented as; '*perumpāṇ irukkai*' (*mathu*.L.342) and '*mīṇcivum pāṇcēri*' (*mathu*.L.268) representing their occupation of fishing. *Parathavar*'s residence was briefed as '*ilaṅku vaḷay iruṇ cēri*' (*mathu*.L.136) focusing their occupation of collecting chanks for the production of auspicious bangles and "*puṇṇai oṇkiya pulālam cēri*" which reveals the environment surrounded by *puṇṇai* trees and the smell of fish (*kuru*.351). '*vāl ilai makaḷir cēri*' (*nar*.380) refers to the residential area of harlots.

In *cheris* there were cottages with thatched roofings. Cottages in dry lands were thatched with grass or leaves. They are mentioned as '*pul vēy kurampai*' (*akam*.200) and '*ilai vēy kurampai*' (*mathu*.L.310) The cottages of *parathavar* were relatively small; built using baits as the supporting sticks for roofing (*patti*.L.80-90). The residence of *kuravar* was described as having very low thatching as expressed in '*kuṛi irai kurampai*' and the area was referred to as *chirukudi* (*kuru*.95). The living area of *uzhavar* was often referred to with the adjective '*taṇṭalai*' to prioritize the greenery and the abundance of water related to cultivation (*peru*.L.355). The residential area of *vēṭṭuvar* was in the forests with small entrances (*mullaippaattu*.L.24-27). *Kovalar*'s residential area was surrounded by thorny bulwark; sung as '*miḷai cūḷ kōvalar*' and '*iṭu muḷ vēli eruppaṭu varaippu*' indicate their occupation of rearing cattle (*malai*.L.409; *peru*.L.154).

Kudimurai (*kurunthokai*, 2007. p.240, h.130) is a term that substitutes *cheri* which was the residential area in the outskirts of a town; as per the briefings in many hymns (*akam*.220; *nar*.331; *kuru*.262). In general they were called '*puraccēri*' (*patti*.L.76); matching with the above mentioned meaning. The term *kudimurai* confirms the presence of communal segregations as *Maangudi kizhaar* specify the original inhabitants of early *Tamilnadu* as *kudi* (*puram*.335).

Chiiruur

Kovalar lived in *chiiruur* (peru.L.185-191) which was formed by a group of more than one *cheri* as reported in ‘*cilkuṭic cīrūr*’ (puram.329). ‘*ūralam cēri cīrūr*’ (nar.77) is a brief note which brings out the detail that it was smaller than a town and wasn't adjacent to a town or city. It proves that different communities lived separately in each *cheri*. The commentary of Narayanasami Ayyar supports the above mentioned explanation (Narrinai, 2007. p.98). So an *umatti* who was selling salt for paddy in the barter system shouted at each and every *cheri* of the *chiiruur*.

“*nellum uppum nērē ūrīr kolḷirō eṇac cēritōrum nuvalum*”
(akam.390)

is the narration that picturizes *chiiruur*.

Thinaimaanthar who sold their agricultural products i.e. millets are differentiated as ‘*kūlam pakarnar kuṭi*’ (pathir.13); and they had a separate market place called *kuulaveethi* or *kuulamaruku* (cilap. indhira.L.23, uurkaan.L.211; mani. kaccimaanakar pukka kaathai - L.49).

Marital strains among subdivisions of aayar

We are able to identify the subdivisions within the occupational group *aayar*. There were three subdivisions namely;

- *nallinaththu aayar* who rear cows
- *pullinaththu aayar* who rear goats or sheep
- *kottinaththu aayar* who rear buffaloes.

The subdivision played a vital role in determining a marital relationship. The narration;

“*pullinattu āyaṇai nāyiyi... nallinattu āyar emar*” (kali.113)

portrays a strained relationship between the lady who belongs to the subdivision *nallinaththu aayar* and the man who belongs to the subdivision *pullinaththu aayar*. The superiority complex of the lady based on occupational segregation was the reason for her deliberate hesitance to accept his expectations. There was status differentiation prevailing between those subdivisions which hindered the progress of their affair. Though she yielded to him at last; the negative mentality of the lady as a daughter of *nallinaththu aayar* to proceed further in continuing the relationship with a man from the subdivision of *pullinaththu aayar* was an indicator of communal segregation. The term *pullinam* gives the meaning that goats and sheep are inferior to cows which were called *nallinam*. So people who reared them were identified accordingly. Such a strained pair of affairs is illustrated in another hymn also.

The girl who was a daughter of *nallinaththu aayar* fell in love with a man who belonged to the subdivision *kottinaththu aayar*. Her mother opposed her affair and looked at her harshly; as if she was whipping her with a stick in her hand. The daughter argued as;

“*kōṭṭinattu āyarmakaṇḍu yām paṭṭataṟku eṇkaṇ emarō poruppar porātār*

tamkaṇ poṭivatu evaṇ” (Kaliththokai, 2007. p.330, h.105);

receiving support from the relatives who were other members in the family. There is no doubt that the chaos was a result of communal segregation which evolved from occupational segregation.

Communities imposed with inferiority

Inequality between various occupations paved the way for various communities. Communities like *paanar*, *thudiyar*, *kaazhiyar*,

cremator, and those who spun the fibres of palm to prepare beds in the cot were considered to be inferior to others based not only on their occupations but also on their birth rights.

The lady washing the clothes was called *pulaiththi* (puram.311) which attributes the meaning that her community is looked down upon when compared to others. The man who fired the corpse was called *pulaiyan* for the same reason (puram.360). Similarly the term *pulaiyan* was used to mention *thudiyar* (puram.287). Skilled labourers who spun the cot with the fibres of palm and *paraiyar* were mentioned as *izhisinan* (puram.82, 289); a term which is equivalent to *pulaiyan*. *Thudiyar* is mentioned as *izhipirappaalan* (puram.170). This degradation was attributed to them on the basis of the principle prevalent then that they were inferior by birth. The person performing the funeral rites in the cremation yard is illustrated as *izhipirappinon* (puram.363) which means a man of lower community by birth.

Category-II: Varnasrama segregations

All the four varnas with their gradation as superior and inferior status were found with a strong base in early Tamilnadu. Anthologies refer to the people of four varnas as *paalor*.

The phrase ‘*kaṭavuḷ naṇṇiya pālōr*’ (kuru.203) illustrates the new cult that reached Tamilnadu by the people who belonged to the four varnas. *Ilangovadikal* talks about four *bhoothams* which belong to four varnas. Then he uses the same phrase *paal* to denote the four varnas. The commentary of Po.Ve.Somasuntharanar for;

“*nārpār pūtamum pārpār peyara*” (cilap. azharpadu kaathai-

L.108) says; ‘they are the Gods for the four varnas (Cilappathikaram, 1975, p.297). But in his commentary for *Kurunthokai* he says they were *thuraviyar* (Kurunthokai, 2007. p.363). But *Chaaththanar* gives a direct statement that they were people who belonged to the four varnas. He is using the term *paal* to denote the varnas in;

“*nālvēru varuṇap pālvēru kāṭṭi*” (Manimekalai- 2013. chakkaravaalak

kottam uraiththa kaathai- L.56). So we may conclude that *paalor* referred to the people who belonged to four varnas. The hymn written by Pandyan states;

“*vērrumai terinta nārpālulḷum*

kīlppāl oruvaṇ karpin mērpāl

oruvāṇum avanpār paṭumē” (puram.183).

Auvai Chu.Duraisamip Pillai in his commentary gives the synonym for ‘*kīlppāl oruvaṇ*’ as *kīlk kulattāṇ* i.e. one who belongs to inferior community and *mērpāl oruvaṇ* as *mērkulattāṇ* i.e. one who belongs to superior community. After that in the description he states that they were the divisions prevalent among Aryans of the north ... never in Tamilnadu (puranaanuuru part-1, 2007. p.400). As the author was a king who ruled a part of Tamilnadu; the matter talked about in the lyric should be portraying the then prevailing social status in Tamilnadu. So we are able to infer that during the period of anthologies the four varnas got well rooted in Tamilnadu also.

Four different streets of four varnathhaar

People belonging to the four varnas lived in four separate streets. *Paarppaar*, *vendhar*, *vanikar* and *vēlāḷar* lived in those specific streets meant for them (mathu.L.480-522). While *Maangudi Maruthanar* narrates the streets of *Madurai* he lists the skilled labourers and government servants standing in four different streets.

Po.Ve.Somasuntharanar in his commentary says they were the streets for priests, spys, commanders in the army and ambassadors. (*Paththuppaattu thokuthi-II*, 2008, *mathu*.p.159-169). For the same phrase used to narrate the same city *Madurai* in *Cilappathikaram* he writes *naalverutheru* stands for the streets belonging to the people of the four varnas (*Cilap. uurkaan*.L.212, p.139,140; *azharpadu kaathai*-L.108, p.296-297). There is no problem in attributing the same meaning for the same phrase in *Mathuraikkaanji* because; the poet narrating the city *Pukaar* of the same period briefed the lives of *vēlālar* and *paarpkaar* there. Po.Ve.Somasuntharanar himself accepted the fact that it was the lifestyle of *vēlālar* and *paarpkaar* in his commentary (*Paththuppaattu thokuthi- II*, 2008. *patti*.L.194-205, p.69-71).

Vethiyar / paarpkaar and the subject

There were some towns where only brahmins lived. The truth is asserted by the phrase ‘*maṛai kāppālar urai pati*’ (*peru*.L.301). ‘*kunru kuyiranna antaṇar paḷli*’ (*mathu*.L.474) talks about their schools meant for penance. It's referred again proving the authenticity (*patti*.L.51-55). They lived in large numbers in *Aamuur* (*chiru*.L.187-188). *Kurunila mannan Nalliyak Kodan* also supported them (*chiru*.L.201-206). Among them we are able to identify a subject:

- *Arivar* - those who calculated the time and seasons. They begged for food before the houses in the streets where there were no dogs and chicken (*kuru*.277) i.e. streets where *paarpkaar* lived. So we may infer that they were equivalent to *paarpkaar* (*kurunthokai*, 2007, p.499).

Vendhar

The unique feature of the dwelling place of *vendhar* was that they lived inside a fort which was surrounded by huge walls, a moat and cavalcade i.e. guard forest (*mathu*.L.351-356; *pathir*.53; *puram*.36). Government servants who served them lived inside the forts.

- Officers collecting tax - There were specific officers to collect the tax in the ports and highways. The job was considered so prestigious that those who did this for the commodities in the port were praised as; ‘*tol icait tolil mākkal... ulku ceya*’ (*patti*.L.121-130). The following quote

“*aṇar cevik kaḷutaic cāttotu vaḷaṅkum ulku uṭaip peruvali*” (*peru*.L.80-81) mentions the officers who collected tax from those who were transporting commodities using a herd of donkeys.

- Members in the committee for righteousness - ‘*aṇaṅkūru avaiyam*’ (*mathu*.L.489-492)
- *Soodhar* - those who praise *vendhar* in standing posture (*mathu*.L.670; *cilap. indhira*.L.48).
- *Maagathar* - those who praise *vendhar* in sitting posture (*ibid.*).
- *Vaithaalikar* - those who dance in the court for musical songs (*mathu*.L.671; *cilap. indhira*.L.48).
- *Naazhikaik kanakkar* - those who inform *vendhar* about time, seasons and astronomical positions of the planets (*mathu*.L.671; *cilap. indhira*.L.49)
- Soldiers - there were *porunar*, *mazhavar* and *maravar* in the army of *vendhar*. As *porunar* seemed to conduct the rituals of worship before the war and enjoyed the looting

after the victory of the war by sowing millets in the captured lands; their participation in the war as soldiers was inevitable (*pathir*.30,75). *Mazhavar* served as soldiers for the *Pandyas* (*mathu*.L.687), *Cheras* (*pathir*.21, 55) and *Athiyaman* (*puram*.90). *Maravar* served as soldiers in the army of *Ezhini* the son of *Athiyaman* (*akam*.105), *Pandyan Ilavanthikaip Pallith Thunjiya Nanmaaran* (*puram*.55), *Chozhan Nalangilli* and *Maavalaththaan* (*puram*.31, 43); *Cheras Palyaanaich Chelkezhut Kuttuvan*, *Kalangaayk Kanni Naarmudich Cheral*, *Aadukotpaattuch Cheralaathan* and *Ilanjeral Irumporai* (*pathir*. 28, 37, 57, 82).

The town planning was based on the economic disparity and communities. *Cilappathikaaram* illustrates that those who indulged in manual labour viz. the carpenters, weavers, tailors, manufacturers and venders of bronze and brass products and those craftsmen who produced ornaments of semiprecious stone beads lived in a separate area *maruvuup paakkam* while doctors, astronomers, soldiers, harlots, brahmins, *vanikar* and *vēlālar* lived in *pattinappaakkam* of *Pukaar*; a port city near the confluence of the river *Kaaviri* (*cilap. indhira*.L.13-58).

Vanikar

Vanikar had an occupational area apart from the traders among *thinaimaanthar*. ‘*tol koṇṭit tuvaṇṇirukkai*’ (*patti*.L.206-212) was the occupational area of *vanikar*. They were called *panniyam pakarnar*; meaning they sold valuables brought from overseas countries using barter system (*mathu*.L.506). They were referred to as ‘*maṇṇar piṇṇōr*’ in the epic (*cilap. adaikkalak kaathai*- L.109).

Vēlālar (kurunila mannan) and the subjects

Ministers among *vēlālar* (*mathu*.L.493-499) were called ‘*kāviti mākkal*’. In the court of *Nedunjezhian* there were representatives from *chirukudi* who flourished by cultivation; along with the people from the four geographical divisions in Tamilnadu (*mathu*.L.119-123). Therefore the people of *chirukudi* who supported brahmins (*patti*.L.194-205) were *uzhavar* who belonged to the fourth varna and those *uzhavar* in the first category were different. *Naccinarkkiniyar* introduces two types of *vēlālar* (*Tholkaappiyam Porulathikara Moolamum Nachinarkkiniyar Uraiyum* part-i, p.80, r.30)

1. One who ploughs the field himself.
2. One who commands others to plough the field for him.

U.Ve.Saaminaathaiyar in his publication talks about the same. He introduces *Aay vēl* and *Vēl Evvi* as *vēlālar* who commanded people to plough the fields for them (*Puranaanooru*, 1935, p.49&68). *Mu.Raakavaiyangaar* using the mythological approach asserts the fact that (*Vēlir Varalaaru*, 1913, p.1-27) *Aay Vēl*, *Paari Vēl*, *Nannan Vēl*, *Vēl Aavi* and *Vēl Evvi* as *vēlālar* who got their lands ploughed by common people.

The unique feature of the dwelling place of *vēlālar* was that they had only a compound wall called *oreyil* made of soil around their palatial houses (*akam*.373; *pathir*.58); in other words it was with ‘*oraran*’ (*akam*.45). The palace of *Neduvēl Aathan* resembled a ship floating in the sea; amidst paddy fields (*puram*.338). Among the soldiers of *vēlālar* there were *porunar* (*mathu*.99; *puram*.69), *vēṭṭuvār* (*akam*.181- *vēṭṭuvan Mignili* fought for *Nannan*), *eyinar* (*akam*. 142- *eyinan Athikan* fought for *Veliyan vēl* who supported *Punnaadan*), *maravar* (*peru*.L.99), *kalamar* and tamed *mazhavar* (*akam*.1). Among the list of races sung by *Aiyuor Mudavanaar* (refer: *Categories of social divisions*) the term *aravar* denotes the people of 3rd and 4th varna namely *vanikar* and *vēlālar* as they were the people

who brought Jainism and Buddhism into Tamilnadu. As their schools were called *arap palli*; *aravar* was the name attributed to those people who followed those religions. There were few subsects among *vēlālar*.

- *Kalamar* - those who were employees in paddy fields, fought for the *vēlālar* and

Looked after their herds of cows and oxen. (*poru*.L.194; *mathu*.L.259-261). They were found to be associated with *vēl Nannan* (*malai*.L.469), *Pisir Aanthaiyaar* (*puram*.212), and an anonymous *vēlālan* defeated by *Cheran* (*puram*.387). So they may be considered as a subsect within the *vēlālar*. *Po.Ve.Somasuntharanar* in his commentary has given ‘*uzhavar*’ as a synonym for *kalamar* (*Paththuppaattu Thohuthi-1 poru*.p.95; *thohuthi-II malai*. p.161). Similarly *Auvai Chu.Duraisamip Pillai*’s commentary also states *kalamar* and *uzhavar* as the same division of people. (*Puranaanuuru* part-II- 2007. p.414-415). It’s unacceptable because there were separate streets for *kalamar* and *uzhavar* in the city *Madurai* as narrated in;

“...menpula vanpula / kaḷamar uḷavar kaṭimaruku piṛa”
(*Paripaadal*, 2007.

p.435- h.thirattu-1). Also *Kudavaayil Kīraththanaar* has shown them as different social sects in the metaphorical narration *ullurai uvamam* of his hymn (*akam*.366).

- *Kuyavar / Vetkovar* - those who manufacture mud pots for cooking and

cremation (*puram*.32). They were found announcing the festival in the town of *vēlālar* and performing the rituals for worship (*nar*.200, 293). Their occupation was based on soil just as *vēlālar*. The prefix *vēl* in *vetkovar* (*vēl+kovar*) indicates the bonding between them. So they may be considered as a subsect of *vēlālar*.

Strained marital relationships amongst *varnaththaar*

Marital relationship between the four varnas was found problematic in many instances. There are twenty lyrics found in *Puranaanuuru* on the subject *makatpaarkanji*; of which thirteen verses talk about *mannar* objecting to give their daughters in marriage to *vendhar* (*puram* .337, 338, 339, 340, 341, 342, 344, 345, 348, 351, 352, 353, 354). This shows that though *vendhar* and *vēlir* were kings who ruled the country they were different on the basis of community.

Neduvēl Aathan refused to develop a relationship with any of the three *vendhar* by giving his daughter in marriage to any one of them. It is said that he will give his daughter to the person who is equivalent to him only.

"...taṇ takavu/ aṇaṅkārku īkuvan allaṇ" (*puram*.338)

is an open message showing the communal segregation.

When *Kapilar* emphasised *Irungovel* to marry the daughters of *Vēl Paari* he deliberately talked about both of them belonging to the same community i.e. *vēlir*. The phrase ‘*numaruḷ oruvan*’ (*Puranaanuuru* part-II, 2007. p.6, h.202) leads us to understand the fact that the first expectation for a marital relationship is that both the male and female belong to the same community.

Category-III

Many of the skilled labourers flourished in the cities of *vendhar*. Added to them there are few social divisions which neither fall under *thinaimaanthar* nor the four varnas. They need a broad based study.

- *Maravar* - upgraded as warriors from bandits who killed passengers on the way.

(*akam*.63; *puram*. 260; *kuru*.283). It's their peculiar nature to fight among themselves in small groups (*mathu*.L.592-596). Their appearance differed from *mazhavar* in wearing *thodi* of chank shells (*nar*.48). They served either *vendhar* or *mannar*; recovering the cows stolen by *mazhavar* in the battle of *karanthai* (*akam*.35- p.100) Their clash with *eyinar* is also a proof to infer that they were different from *thinaimaanthar* (*akam*.319). The commentaries of *Na.Mu.Vengadasamy Naattaar* and *Raa.Vengatachalam Pillai* that *mazhavar* and *maravar* were of the same race is unacceptable (*Akanaanuuru Manimida pavalam*-131- p.30; *Niththilak kovai*- 337- p.86). *Kudavaayil Kīraththanaar* has sung *maravar* brought back the herds of cows stolen by *mazhavar* (*Akanaanuuru Kalirriyaanai nirai*- h.35- p.100). So we have to conclude that *mazhavar* and *maravar* belonged to different races.

The quote of *Aiyuur Mudavanaar* (refer: Categories of social divisions) distinguishes *maravar* as different from *varunaththaar*, *thinaimaanthar* and *mallar*. Also *Thondaimaan* is praised as a leader for two races.

“*maravar marava maḷḷar maḷḷa*” (*peru*.L.99)

bears the meaning that he was an apt leader for both races *maravar* and *mallar*.

- *Mallar* - those who lived by working in the fields. There are forty instances in the

anthologies which talk about *mallar* (*Sanga ilakkiyam - thodaradaivu* <http://tamil.concordance.in/sangconc-1ma1.html#%E0%AE%AE%E0%AE%B3%E0%AF%8D%E0%AE%B3%E0%AE%B0%E0%AF%8D>). The quote of *Aiyuur Mudavanaar* (refer: Categories of social divisions) distinguish this race as different from *varunaththaar*, *thinaimaanthar* and *maravar*.

- *Naakar* - There were several subdivisions among *naakar*. From the name

Muranjiyur Mudinaakaraayar; we could understand a subdivision *mudinaakar* (*puram*.2). There was a poet and an army chieftain named with the suffix *naakanaar*. *Vēlḷaikkudi Naakanaar* talks about the consideration to be given to farmers (*puram*.35). *Naalai kizhavan Naakan* was sung as a minister and commander in chief for the army of King *Pandyan* (*puram*.179). *Nannaakanaar*, *Petta naakanaar* and *Kanna naakanaar* are the names of music composers (*pari*.2, 3, 5). Though there are instances in researchers’ opinion about *naakar* there is no evidence for their being a part of either *thinaimaanthar* or four varnas (*V.Kanakasabai- Aayiraththennuuru Andukatku Murpatta Thamizhakam*- p.75-86). They have listed many *naakaa* groups, *naakaa* rulers and *naakaa* kingdoms between various parts of India and the island country Ceylon (*Mahajan,V.D.- Ancient India*- p.378-380; *Kumaarasami Aachhari,Su.- “Cherar marabu”- Chenthamizh chelvi* 29- p.538-542).

The skilled labourers in the cities may be considered as subdivisions among *naakar*. *Neelanaakan* gave the special clothing material to *Aay vēl* (*chiru*.L.96) and thus we are able to know a division among *naakar*. In connection with this fact we are able to identify more subdivisions viz. weavers, designers of dressings and those who sold them, carpenters, goldsmiths and blacksmiths.

- *kaliṅkam pakarnar* (*mathu*.L.513) - those who sell clothes.
- ‘*vampu nīrai muṭinar*’ (*mathu*.L.514); those who produce brassiere for ladies

- *Kammiyar* - weavers (*mathu* .519-521; *cilap. indhira*.L.16-17). As the same term

denotes *thachchar* and goldsmiths (*peru*.L.248; *nedu*.L.85) who manufacture ornaments of gold; it seems there is a connection between these subdivisions.

- *Kollar* - blacksmiths (*nar*.258, 313, 394; *puram*.312) and goldsmiths.

'*mitiulaik kollaṇ*' (*peru*.L.207;) portrays the way of working in front of the furnace of a blacksmith; while '*poṇcey kollaṇ*' (*mathu*.L.512) speaks about people who were indulged in the production of gold ornaments. So we can conclude that the above mentioned divisions of skilled labourers *kammiyar* and *kollar* were subdivisions among *naakar*.

Golden ornaments and people who wore them are talked about as '*poṇ cuṭariḷai puṇainar*'. It was *vendhar*, *vēḷāḷar* and *vanikar* who wore gold ornaments. Women who wore golden *thodi* may be identified as those who belonged to the varna of *vēḷāḷar* because the specific lyric continued to talk about the rice from paddy which was cultivated by them. Young girls among *thinaimaanthar* had a craze for golden ornaments. A girl from the community of *paanar* refused to receive the paddy in the barter system for fish. She demanded gold ornaments plugged with pearls from the family which cultivated paddy in the country of *Vēḷ Evvi* (*akam* .126). This shows the fashion getting popular among the youngsters of *thinaimaanthar* in those days after the arrival of *varunaththaar*.

- '*poṇṇurai kāṇmar*' (*mathu*.L.513) - those who judge the purity of gold.

A lady from the community of *aayar* was not satisfied with getting gold bars in the barter system for selling ghee to the family belonging to one of the varnas. She preferred to buy more calves which proved the cultural difference between the two communities of people (*peru*.L.164; *cilap. uurkaan*. L.201-204) namely *varunaththaar* and *aayar*.

- '*tirumaṇi kuyīnar*' - The craftsmen who were able to pierce the precious

stones and lacing them into ornaments for *vendhar* and *vanikar*. It's understood that the stones being pierced were precious by the prefix '*thiru*' (*mathu*.L.511). They lived in *pattinap paakkam* (*cilap. ibid.*); in contrast with those people who lived in *maruvuorp paakkam* producing semiprecious stone laces for common folk. This difference in their place of living serves as strong evidence for accepting the fact that there were communal segregations based on the skills and economic status in early Tamilnadu. Archaeological findings in the city of *Pukaar* revealed stone beads of various colours and shapes (Indian Archaeology- A Review- 1961-1962 p.26; *Raaman*,K.V. - *Tholliyal Aayvukal* p.36-37).

Controversial schools of thought and clarifications

Recommendation based on social division

There were experts who say that in early Tamilnadu there were no communal segregations; but for the occupational segregations (*Mathu.Sa.Vimalanandham*, *Thamizh Ilakkiya Varalaaru*, 2004. p.9). It's proved baseless by the following instance found in the lyric by *Kallaadanaar*. He went to get help from *Poraiyaarruk Kizhaan*. People of *Poraiyaaru* identified him as a *porunan* and recommended for him saying;

"...*pacitteṇa ... mutukuṭi naṇantalai mūtūr viṇavalin*...

muṇṇum vantōṇ maruṅkilāṇ iṇṇum

aliyaṇ ākalin porunaṇ ivāṇ" (*puram* .391).

In the above mentioned lines of the hymn the people of *Poraiyaaru* were entitled with the prestigious adjective *muthukudi* i.e. a social division which comprises of the original inhabitants of early Tamilnadu and it's enough to conclude that they were *porunar* and hence their leader *Poraiyaarruk Kizhaan* also may be added to the same social division just as *Kovuur kizhaar* (refer: Occupational divisions). Although *Kallaadanaar* had come earlier and got alms from their leader; he was still eligible to be solicited because he seemed to be an unhealthy *porunan*. So he deserved to be entreated; is the message of the quote. This is authentic evidence to support the conclusion that there were communal segregations in early Tamilnadu.

Inter-communal marriages

A similar controversial idea is that; in early Tamilnadu there was no obstacle in inter-communal marriages (*K.K.Pillai*, *Thamizhaka Varalaaru Makkalum Panpaadum*, 2002. p.152-161). There are many instances to prove that the opinion is to be re-examined. A lady who belonged to the social division *parathavar* talks with her lover who belonged to the third varna *vanikar*. She intended to show her sulks saying;

"*emmaṇōril cemmaalum uḷarē*" (*nar*.45).

She being a lady from the social division *parathavar* was with the stinky smell of fish and asked him to go away saying; 'there are great respectful and admirable men in our own community'. The term *emmanor* is used here to talk about her own social division *parathavar*. As the hero of the hymn came in a chariot from *niyama muuthuur*; it's beyond doubt that he was a rich *vanikan*. Archaeological reports of Tamil Brahmi inscriptions testify the truth that *nikamaththaar* were *vanikar* (*Thamizhar Naadu Thakaval Thirattu- Bavani*,Maa., *Maangulam Thamizhk Kalvettukal*, 24.4.17.- *Samanar Paandiyar Uravu*). The economic disparity and social discrimination between both of them are well exposed in the lyric.

The lyric on the theme of *makatpaarkaanji* by *Alluur Nanmullaiyaar* (*puram* .340) exposes the practical truth prevalent in early Tamilnadu. When a common man; probably a *thinaimaanthan* enquired the poet about the parents of the girl who was playing; she answered in detail that the *kurunila mannan* (*vēḷāḷan*) will give his daughter in marriage to another *kurunila mannan* only; who may help him in guarding the agricultural fields and driving away *vendhar's* elephant massacring the cultivation; so that he may get additional support by increasing the relatives; to face the problems given by *vendhar*. This practice of giving a girl in marriage to a man belonging to the same social division confirms the communal segregation in early Tamilnadu.

Conclusion

Dravidian civilization was multifaceted with various communities during the period of anthologies. There were a set of social divisions based on the geographical identity and occupations in connection with their residential areas which influence their marital relationships on the basis of economy. Four varnas with a gradation of superiority and inferiority, their specific lifestyles and different areas of living; were found to have a strong base in early Tamilnadu. There were complications in the marital relationship between the people of four varnas. A third category of social divisions with skills in the production of commodities in various fields is yet to be studied deeply. Also it needs a separate study to identify the roots of *maravar*, *mallar* and *kadambar*.

Abbreviations

akam. - Akanaanuuru
 chiru. - Chirupaanaarrupadai
 cilap. - Cilappathikaaram
 h. - hymn
 indhira. - indhira vizhavu uureduththa kaatkai
 kali. - Kaliththokai
 kuru. - Kurunthokai
 L. - line / lines
 mathu. - Mathuraikkaanji
 malai. - Malaipadukadaam
 mani. - Manimekalai
 nar. - Narrinai
 nedu. - Nedunalvaadai
 p. - page / pages
 pari. - Paripaadal
 pathir. - Pathirruppaththu
 patti. - Pattinappaalai
 peru. - Perumpaanaarrupadai
 poru. - Porunaraarrupadai
 puram. - Puranaanuuru
 r. - rule
 uurkaan. - uurkaankaathai

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