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VADAMALAIPURAM : A RESURVEY

by

V.B. Athreya

MADRAS INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
79, SECOND MAIN ROAD, GANDHINAGAR, ADYAR
MADRAS 600 020

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Chapter I

The importance of micro level studies in the context of efforts to understand the dynamics of rural transformation hardly needs emphasis. With respect to Tamil Nadu, we have a comprehensive study of rural transformation using available published and unpublished information mostly at the macro level.[1] This provides, together with the theoretical literature on the problem of characterising the process of agrarian transformation going on in India, a starting point for further investigations into questions concerning the dynamics of rural transformation.[2] Detailed village level studies on the nature of social relations and productive forces constitute an important avenue of such investigation.

The present study is a resurvey of the village of Vadamalaipuram in the western part of Ramanathapuram district. This village, which is on the Virudhunagar-Sivakasi road at a distance of 5 kms. from Sivakasi and 18 kms. from Virudhunagar, was first surveyed in 1916 as part of a survey of several villages directed by Prof.Gilbert Slater, then Head of the Department of Economics, University of Madras.[3] It was subsequently surveyed again in 1936.[4] It was surveyed a third time in 1958 by the Agro-Economic Research Centre of the University of Madras.[5] The present survey being reported here took place between February and September of 1983. The availability of socio economic data obtained through direct surveys and pertaining to the same village at four different points in time spread over a period of sixty seven years provides one a unique opportunity to study at a micro level the process of rural transformation.

It needs to be stressed, however, that the surveys carried out at different points in time have been rather different from one another in terms of methodology, coverage, techniques

of investigation, questions raised and so on. There are therefore problems of comparability. Nonetheless, a broad picture of the social and economic change that has taken place can certainly be obtained. The present report seeks in part to do this. It also seeks to examine the economy of the village as it is at present on its own terms.

Methodology

The present survey, as already stated, took place between February and September 1983. The field work was carried out in the months of February, March, April, August and September. Mr.R.Vidyasagar and Mr.A.Chellaiah were in the field throughout and carried out the field work. The present writer visited the village and spent a few days in the field twice, and otherwise guided the investigation through periodic consultations with the field investigators.

The study was conducted in two stages. At the first stage, a simple houselisting schedule seeking information on demographic composition of the household, land ownership, ownership of livestock and ownership of other assets and durable consumer goods was canvassed, on a census basis, with every household in the village. The information gathered in this census stage provided the basis for designing and carrying out at the second stage intensive inquiries on specific aspects such as costs of cultivation, tenancy, forms and economic conditions of agricultural labour etc., on a sample basis. The economic inquiry at both the stages was supplemented by the collection of data on social aspects, specifically health, education and implementation of government programmes such as the noon-meal scheme. Use had also been made of relevant and available secondary data.

Overview

Over the long span of sixty seven years, from the time of the first survey in 1916 to that of the present one in 1983, there have been significant social and economic changes in Vadamalaipuram. The changes relate, among other things, to the caste structure, the occupational distribution of the labour force, the importance of non-agricultural sources of income, the techniques of production and the composition of output in the agricultural sector, tenancy, and forms of agricultural labour. This report outlines and discusses some of these changes in the following chapters. We begin with an examination of demographic changes. Then the occupational structure is reviewed. This is followed by a study of the social infrastructure and an examination of the production techniques and costs of cultivation in agriculture. We then turn to the distribution of land and other assets. This is followed by a study of the changing conditions of agricultural labour. We conclude, after a look at social relations in the village, with a brief review and some reflections on the issues thrown up by the resurvey.

This study has been made possible by a grant from the Indian Council of Social Science Research, which I gratefully acknowledge. I am deeply indebted to R.Vidyasagar and A.Chellaiah for their excellent work in the field. I am also much obliged to government officials for the assistance rendered by them in the conduct of the study.

Helpful comments were made on an earlier draft of this paper by S.Guhan, C.T.Kurien and K.Nagaraj of the Madras Institute of Development Studies. I am extremely grateful to them for their comments, but since I have not been able to take all their suggestions into account, the usual disclaimers apply with even greater force.

I am grateful for secretarial assistance to J.Robinson and R.Gnanaprakasam of the Madras Institute of Development Studies.

Last, and by far the most important is my debt to the people of Vadamalaipuram who gave freely of their time, patiently answered our questions and provided excellent hospitality.

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1/ C.T.Kurien, (1981), Dynamics of Rural Transformation Allied Publishers, Madras.

2/ For a summary of the theoretical literature, see John Harriss, 'Contemporary Marxist Analysis of the Agrarian Question in India', Working Paper No.14, Madras Institute of Development Studies (1980).

3/ The surveys were published in: Gilbert Slater (ed), Some South Indian Villages (Madras, 1918). The survey of Vadamalaipuram was carried out by K.Ramachandran (hereafter Ramachandran).

4/ The resurvey of Vadamalaipuram was carried out by S.Thirumalai (hereafter Thirumalai), and his report was published in: P.J.Thomas and K.C.Ramakrishnan (ed), Some South Indian Villages: A Re-Survey (Madras, 1940).

5/ Village Survey Report No.48, A.E.R.C., University of Madras, (1961), (unpublished typescript). See also M.Haswell, Economics of Development in Village India, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1961.

Chapter II : Population Trends

Vadamalaipuram is a Panchayat village. It is part of the revenue village of Kizhathiruthangal in Sivakasi Panchayat Union.[1] Its population at present is around 1300. The village is located in Sattur taluk, and is largely dependent on the monsoon for irrigation. There is practically no river irrigation and the tanks are mostly rain-fed. Although there is a fair amount of Thottam i.e., well-irrigated cultivation using electric pumpsets to draw water from wells, the near - total dependence on rains for irrigation renders agriculture a precarious business. Haswell noted in 1961 that the introduction of pumpsets would make possible both higher yields of millet crops and a diversified cropping pattern. It is true that the village exhibits a diversified cropping pattern with paddy, cotton, chillies, banana and various millets being the major crops. However, the more important diversification has been into non-agricultural activities. Even the 1958 AERC survey had remarked: 'Almost all the families are agriculturists and are depending on land either directly or indirectly..... There is no subsidiary industry in the village.....' Our survey in 1983 reveals, however, that out of a workforce of 722 persons, as many as 222 were employed in manufacturing.

Social structure

The Naidus constitute the dominant caste in the village both numerically and economically. Next in economic importance are Konars, also referred to as Edayars or Yadavas in earlier surveys. The poorest caste Hindu community is the Thevar community. Thevars supply the bulk of caste Hindu agricultural labourers. Harijans form a significant proportion of the population, and are divided into Pallars and Chakkiliars. The latter are by far the poorest community, being entirely landless.

There are two hamlets-Vadamalaipuram and Anna Colony-which together comprise the village of Vadamalaipuram. Naickers and Konars live in Vadamalaipuram. So do Chakkiliars and Pallars but segregated from the caste Hindu streets and from each other. Thevars reside mostly in Anna Colony, which is adjacent to Vadamalaipuram hamlet, but closer to the main road.

Population

The population of the village in February 1983 was 1321. The trends in population from 1901 to the present are summarised in Table-1. The inter-censal variations in the population of the village are compared with those of Ramnad district for the period 1951 to 1981 in Table-2.

A preliminary remark may be made before going into the details of the table. The village population figure for 1961 is rather odd as it shows 650 men as against 450 women. This must most likely have occurred as a consequence of including the two hundred or so male students, enrolled at the teachers' training school, but drawn in reality from various southern districts in the census figures for the village. When this is adjusted for, the population figure for 1961 becomes 886 with 450 males and 436 females. This tallies well with the figure of 808 consisting of 404 males and 404 females reported in the 1958 survey. The picture that then emerges is that the population of Vadamalaipuram declined from 1916 till 1941, rose in the period 1941 to 1951, declined again in the 'fifties , but has shown a steady rise since 1961. In the absence of data on birth and death rates, it is difficult to provide a detailed analysis of the trends. It seems reasonable to suggest, however, that significant emigration might have taken place both during the period between the two world wars and during the 'fifties. This hypothesis is strengthened, as far as the 'fifties are concerned, by the

Table 1: Population of Vadamalaipuram

1901 - 1983, Selected Years

YEAR	No. of HHs.	M	F	Total	Of which SCs M	F	Total
1901	254	592	603	1195	na	na	na
1911	na	na	na	780	na	na	150
1916	165	371	440	811	70	71	141
1936	166	312	356	668	51	54	105
1941	145[a]	304	326	630	na	na	101
1951	242	541	579	1120	na	na	na
1958	189	404	404	808	na	na	109
1961	201	650[+]	436	1086	59	62	121
1971	236	579	524	1103	117	107	224
1981	na	656	669	1325	115	96	211
1983 Feb.	299	644	677	1321	121	100	221

a : No of occupied houses.

+ : This figure appears to be the result of including the students of the all male teachers' training school in the village, the strength of which is reported to have averaged around 200 persons in the early sixties.

fact noted in the 1958 survey that the net birth rate for the period 1954-57 was around 2.5 per cent p.a. It seems plausible to argue that much of this emigration might have been of educated offspring of Naidu households in the wake of the expansion in educational and employment opportunities in the decade immediately following independence. This appears to be corroborated by the fact that the number of Naidu households remained practically stagnant between 1936 and 1958.

The important point that emerges from the data is the high degree of instability in the level of population right upto the end of the fifties. This contrasts with the relatively stable population trend for Tamil Nadu as a whole from 1921 onwards. As can be seen from Table 2, the population trend for Ramnad district is also fairly stable, with a significant acceleration since 1951. Sattur taluk shows somewhat greater instability, especially in the period 1951 to 1981. The heavy population losses suffered by the taluk between 1951 and 1971 might reflect emigration to more rapidly industrialising and more advanced areas outside the taluk. The rapid industrial growth in and around both Sivakasi and Sattur as well as the extension of the green revolution to the taluk would appear to account for the population gains made by the taluk between 1971 and 1981. While one would certainly expect a higher degree of demographic instability at the level of a village than at a district or state level, instability appears to be particularly marked in Vadamalaipuram. Thirumalai / suggests the cholera outbreak of 1925, permanent emigration of some Vellalas and the complete extinction of some Naidu and Harijan families as being among the reasons for the decrease in population from 1916 to 1936. One might add that both the Great Depression and world war II might have led to emigration in search of employment or for duty in the war, and thus contributed to the decline in population between 1916 and 1941. The subsequent rise upto 1951 would in turn be

Table 2: Decadal Variations in Population, 1901-81

(Per cent)

Year	Vadamalaipuram	Sattur Taluk	Ramnad Dt.
1901	--	--	--
1911	-34.72	15.65	9.17
1921	na	-0.63	3.27
1931	na	6.08	7.02
1941	-6.41[a]	5.25	7.62
1951	77.77	12.93	4.52
1961	-3.03	na	16.33
1971	1.5	-21.40[b]	18.11
1981	20.12	85.66	16.44

a : decadal average over the period 1911 to 1941.

b : decadal average over the period 1951 to 1971.

na : not available

partly explicable in terms of the return of those who emigrated to serve in the war. However, all this is rather speculative. What seems to be clearly suggested by the population trends is an underlying instability in the agrarian economy of the village. In the sixties, and seventies, two distinct factors have operated to reduce the instability of the village economy. One is the growth of productive forces in agriculture specifically brought about by the use of pumpset irrigation, high yielding seeds and chemical fertilisers. The other has been the growth of non agricultural activities, especially the employment provided by the mill and the match factories.

Caste composition

A clearer picture can be obtained by looking at the changes in the caste composition of the village over the years. The caste wise distribution of households and persons in 1983 is presented in Table 3. The changes in the caste composition of the population over the period 1936-1983 are shown in Table 4.

The caste structure does not show any significant change between 1936 and 1958, except for the decline in the share of Harijans in the population from about 16 per cent in 1936 to 13.5 per cent in 1958. But the period 1958-83 is one during which two significant changes are seen. One is the nearly fourfold increase in the Thevar population raising its share in the village-population from 9 per cent in 1958 to 15 per cent in 1983. The other is the increase in the share of Harijans (and especially of Pallars) from 13.5 per cent to 16.7 per cent, resulting from their absolute numbers more than doubling between 1958 and 1983. The data clearly suggest considerable in-migration of Thevars and to a lesser extent Pallars in this period. This is confirmed by our inquiries on migration as part of the household census, the results of which are presented in Table 5. While the

Table 3: Castewise distribution of households and population in Vadamalaipuram (1983-Feb)

Caste	No. of HHs	Population		
		Males	Females	Total
Naidus	143 (47.83)	278	339	617
Konars	32 (10.70)	74	72	146
Thevars	47 (15.72)	98	101	199
Pallars	30 (10.03)	82	69	151
Chakkiliar	15 (5.02)	39	31	70
Pillai	5 (1.67)	13	14	27
Nadar	2 (0.67)	7	4	11
Reddiar	3 (1.00)	5	5	10
Chettiar	4 (1.34)	10	9	19
Asari	4 (1.34)	10	5	15
Dhobi	7 (2.34)	18	16	34
Barber	5 (1.67)	8	5	13
Brahmins	2 (0.67)	2	7	9
	299	644	677	1321

Note: The figures in parantheses denote percentage of all households.

Table 4: Changes in caste composition, Vadamalaipuram 1936-1983

Caste	1936	1958	1983
Naidu	414 (103)	483 (104)	617 (143)
Konar	55 (9)	73 (17)	146 (32)
Thevar	32 (8)	49 (11)	199 (47)
Pallar	72 (20)	69 (18)	151 (30)
Chakkiliar	33 (11)	40 (10)	70 (15)
Brahmin	9 (2)	13 (4)	9 (2)
Reddiar	-	1 (1)	10 (3)
Chettiar	-	2 (2)	19 (4)
Pillai	-	7 (4)	27 (5)
Nadar	-	-	11 (2)
Asari	22 (6)	35 (7)	15 (4)
Vannar	14 (2)	12 (3)	34 (7)
Pandithar (Barber)	3 (1)	5 (1)	13 (5)
Pandaram	3 (1)	7 (2)	-
Semman	10 (2)	-	-
Sathani	1 (1)	-	-
Chattadi	-	5 (1)	-
Saliyar	-	1 (1)	-
Padayachi	-	1 (1)	-
Sathar	-	1 (1)	-
Christian	-	1 (1)	-
Total	668 (166)	805 (189)	1321 (299)

Notes: 1) The caste composition for 1916 has not been given here because the data reported for the same in the survey report for that year are erroneous. See footnote 1 cf this chapter.

2) Figures in parentheses refer to the number of households.

3) The total for 1958 excludes three permanent labourers.

Table 5 : Caste and immigration in Vadamalaipuram

(year of in migration)

Caste	No. of Households which migrated into Vadamalaipuram during:					
	Period before 1950	1951-60	1961-70	1971-80	Period after 1980	Total
Naidu	3	2	6	17	11	39
Thevar	2	5	4	19	4	34
Konar	-	-	2	2	2	6
Dhobi	-	1	3	2	-	6
Barber	-	1	4	-	-	5
Chettiar	-	-	1	3	-	4
Pillai	-	-	-	4	1	5
Reddiar	-	-	2	1	-	3
Asari	-	-	-	1	1	2
Brahmin	-	-	1	1	-	2
Nadar	-	-	-	2	-	2
Pallar	-	6	2	6	1	15
Chakkiliar	1	-	2	1	-	4
Total	6	15	27	59	20	127

number of Thevar households rose from 11 in 1958 to 47 in 1983, an increase of 36, twenty seven Thevar households migrated into the villages between 1961 and 1983. Similarly the increase in the number of Pallar households from 18 in 1958 to 30 in 1983 is matched by the immigration of 9 Pallar households between 1961 and 1983.

The data on migration also indicate significant in-migration of Naidus between 1961 and 1983 which does not square with the decline in their share in the population from nearly 60 per cent in 1958 to 46.7 per cent in 1983. This suggests that there must have been considerable emigration of Naidus from the village. Our enquiries revealed that this was in fact the case. While whole Naidu households do not seem to have left the village on any significant scale, what has been happening is that a large proportion of the educated offspring of Naidu families are settling down in urban areas (including one family in New York City!) in various professional and other non-agricultural occupations. Some idea of this phenomenon can be had from the fact that of the fifty six non-resident members belonging to Vadamalaipuram households in 1983, forty two are Naidus of whom twenty seven persons have professional qualifications and are in urban employment.

The exit of many Naidu youngsters from agriculture has led to increased employment of hired agricultural labour, a factor which seems to be partly responsible for the immigration of both Thevars and Pallars.[2] The other important 'pull factor' for migration into Vadamalaipuram was the starting in 1967 of a textile mill located very near the village on the trunk road to Virudhunagar. Twelve, five and six respectively of the Naidu, Thevar and Pallar households have migrated into Vadamalaipuram as a result of the availability of employment in the mill.

Taking Tables 4 and 5 together, certain interesting facts come to light. The (numerically) minor castes consist almost entirely of immigrants. In 1983, of the 32 households belonging to castes other than Naidu, Konar, Thevar, Pallar and Chakkiliar, all but one have migrated into the village after 1950. Of these, all but two-- one Vannar and one Pandithar household--have migrated after 1960. In the case of the artisanal castes--Asari, Vannar and Pandithar--the immigrants mostly practise their traditional work, but there is some diversification as well. The head of one of the two Asari households is working as a pannaiyal while that of one of the Pandithar households is working as a casual agricultural labourer. The women of some of the immigrant artisan households have found work in match factories. The heads of all four Chettiar households are working in the mill while none of the five Pillai household heads do so.

A look at the reasons for migration shows that while the presence of the mill nearby has been an important 'pull factor', two other causes--the 'push' of drought elsewhere and the 'pull' of relatives at Vadamalaipuram--have also been important. A caste-wise analysis shows the mill to be the most important pull factor for Pallars, while in the case of Thevars and Naidus all three factors have been significant. The artisans have migrated mostly from villages closeby. The increase in the number of Vannar and Pandithar households appears to be associated generally with the growth in population, and more particularly, with the growth in non-agricultural--especially salaried-employment. By contrast, the Asari population in 1983 has declined to less than half of the 1958 figure, partly as a consequence of the changes in agrarian technology.

A couple of remarks can be made about the time profile of immigration. First, 79 of the 127 immigrant households have migrated into village after 1970. Of these, work in the mill has been the reason in twenty five or nearly one third

of the cases. Secondly, it might appear somewhat surprising that despite significant immigration in the 'seventies, the sex ratio has gone up between 1971 and 1983. But a sex-wise breakdown of persons belonging to the households which in-migrated from 1971 onwards shows that these consisted of 148 males and 158 females. So what has been taking place is immigration of whole households and not of male earners. While immigration has thus not contributed to any relative increase in the male population, other tendencies already at work such as emigration of educated upper caste male youth have contributed to an increase in sex ratio.

Sex Ratios

The sex ratios for the village calculated as females per 1000 males for various years from 1901 to 1983 are presented in Table 6. Figures are given for Harijans separately.

Table 6 : Sex ratios for Vadamalaipuram - Females per 1000 males 1901-1983

Year	Sex Ratio		Immigrant HHS	Nonimmigrant HHs
	Overall	Harijans		
1901	1017	na	-	-
1916	1189	1014	-	-
1936	1141	1059	-	-
1951	1073	na	-	-
1958	1000	na	-	-
1961	671*	1051	-	-
1971	905	915	-	-
1981	1020	835	-	-
1983	1051	826	1007	1082

*If we assume 200 of the 650 males enumerated to be students of the teachers' Training school not belonging to any of the households of the village, the ratio becomes $\frac{436}{450} = 969$. To the extent that some of these students might have been Harijans, the sex ratio for Harijans would have to be revised upward.

The overall figures do not show any clear trend. An agewise analysis of the sex composition figures for 1916 and 1936 shows the excess of females over males to be largest in the age group 25-50. This may reflect the impact of world War I for 1916, emigration of males in search of a livelihood in the depression year 1936, and the somewhat greater longevity of women. However, available evidence does not permit a deeper probe.

The sex ratio seems to have gradually declined between 1936 and 1958, perhaps reflecting the restoration of normal conditions of life after World War II and some economic consolidation in the immediate post independence period 1950-58. The figure of 671 for 1961 is obviously absurd, resulting from the inclusion of about 200 male teacher trainees studying in the teacher training institute located in the village. The adjusted figure of 969 and the figure of 905 for 1971 show that the declining trend continued upto 1971. Apart from the influence of other demographic forces at work, this might in part have been the result of migration into the village of 27 households between 1961 and 1970, many of whose female members might have joined their menfolk only later. Once again, however, in the absence of more detailed information, this can only be a conjecture.[3/]

The increase in the overall sex ratio between 1971 and 1983 appears to arise mostly from a significant exodus of younger males of Naidu households to urban areas. This is evident if one looks at the castewise sex ratios for 1983 presented in Table 7. The sex ratio for Naidus is as high as 1219. Further, among the Naidu households, in the age group 10-29, there are 89 males and 145 females. The largest difference occurs in the age group 20-29, with 37 males and 71 females. In the age group 30-59, there are exactly 96 males and 96 females. In the age group 60 years and above,

females once again out number males by 40 to 31. Thus, emigration of Naidu male youth in search of education and jobs, and the relatively greater longevity of females account for the very high sex ratio for Naidus.

Table 7: Castewise sex ratios : Females per 1000 males

Vadamalaipuram 1983

Caste	No. of HHs	Sex Ratio
Naidus	143	1219
Konars	32	973
Thevars	47	1031
Pallars	30	841
Chakkiliars	15	795
Others*	32	890
Overall	299	1051

* Consists of 7 Vannar, 5 Pillai, 5 Panditharr, 4 Chettiar, 4 Asari, 3 Reddiar, 2 Nadar and 2 Brahmin households.

It is striking that the sex ratio for Harijans has shown a pattern directly opposite to that for the overall population. It has declined between 1936 and 1983. However, since we do not have figures for 1951 and 1958, let us look at the period 1961-1983. The sex ratio for Harijans has declined steadily over this period. The absence of male emigration together with some male immigration related to the starting of a textile mill near the village in 1967 is one factor behind this trend. The ten Harijan households

Table 8: Caste and household size : Vadamalaipuram 1936, 1958 and 1983

Caste	Household Size		
	1936	1958	1983
Naidu	4.02	4.64	4.31
Konars	6.11	4.29	4.56
Thevar	4.0	4.45	4.23
Pallar	3.6	3.83	5.03
Chakkiliar	3.0	4.00	4.67
Others*	4.13	3.24	4.31
Average	4.02	4.28	4.42

* This group consisted in 1936 of 6 Asari, 2 Vannar, 2 Semman, 2 Brahmin, and 1 each of Pandithar, Pandaram and Sathani households.

In 1958, this group included 29 households broken down castewise as follows: Asari 7, Chetty 4, Pandaram 2, Chattadi 1, Brahmin 4, Vellala 4, Saliyar 1, Padayachi 1, Reddiar 1, Sathar 1, Vannan 3, Pandithar 1, Christian 1. In 1983, this group consisted of 7 Vannar, 5 Pillai, 5 Pandithar, 4 Asari, 3 Reddiar, 2 Nadar and 2 Brahmin households as already shown in Table 7.

which migrated into Vadamalaipuram after 1967 consist of 24 males and 16 females. An analysis of the agewise distribution of Harijan males and females for 1983 suggests another. In the age group 0-4 there are 21 males to 9 females. Similarly in the age group 40 years and above, there are 25 males to 17 females. In the age group 5-39, there are 75 males to 74 females. These figures clearly suggest that the child mortality rate is significantly higher for females than for males, and that women also have a lower chance of survival beyond the age of 40 than men. These factors might go to explain the lower sex ratio among the Harijans.[4]

Age Distribution

The age distribution of the population castewise is shown in Table 9.

If we take the population in the age group 15-59 as the economically active segment of the population, we find that this forms 56.09 per cent of the whole population, varying between 60.13 per cent for the category 'other castes' and 50.34 per cent for Pallars. The high figure for 'other castes' reflects the fact that these are mostly recently arrived immigrant households, with twenty seven of the 32 households having migrated since 1960, two between 1951 and 1960, and only three being 'native' households. As a result the proportion of persons 60 years and above is as low as 3.74 per cent for this category. The proportion of population in the age group 15-59 is of course not a very accurate measure of the economically active segment of the population, especially when the male-female ratio deviates sharply across castes in this age group. In the case of Naidus, women outnumber men 101 to 62 in the age group 15-29 while the two sexes are almost equally matched in the

Table 9: Caste and age distribution, Vadamalaipuram 1983

Age group years	Share of Population (%)						
	Naidus	Konars	Thevars	Pallars	Chakkiliars	Others	Total
0-4	7.94	13.01	11.56	12.58	15.70	12.32	10.45
5-9	11.51	14.38	11.06	17.88	11.43	11.59	12.49
10-14	11.51	15.75	14.07	13.25	12.86	12.32	12.72
15-19	8.91	6.85	9.05	8.61	8.57	11.59	8.93
20-29	17.50	17.81	16.08	16.56	12.86	23.91	17.64
30-39	11.51	15.75	12.06	15.23	12.86	10.87	12.49
40-49	11.18	8.90	11.56	5.30	10.0	10.14	10.14
50-59	8.43	3.42	8.04	4.64	8.57	3.62	6.89
60-69	6.65	3.42	4.02	2.65	2.86	2.90	4.84
70 and above	4.86	0.71	2.50	3.30	4.29	0.84	3.41
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

the age group 30-59. Among Konars, men outnumber women 42 to 35 in the age group 15-59. But the two sexes are evenly matched in the case of Thevars, Pallars and Chakkiliars. It is interesting to note (see Chapter III, Table 16) that the female workforce participation rate is significantly higher for Thevars and Chakkiliars compared to Naidus and Konars.

Household Size

The average household size has risen slowly over the period 1936 to 1983. This conceals, however, different trends exhibited by different castes. While Naidu and Thevar households have shown no dramatic change in average household size, the average size of Harijan households has risen sharply while that of Konar households has declined. The significant increase in the size of Harijan, and especially of Pallar, households and the fact of these being above the overall average in 1983 are at variance with *a priori* considerations which would suggest smaller household size for the largely landless agricultural labour households which comprise the Harijan population. To some extent, this may be the outcome of a delayed occurrence among Harijans of the general decline in death rates which has been taking place for several decades now. In the absence of recent evidence on birth and death rates overall or caste-wise, it is not possible to examine this phenomenon further, nor is it possible to analyse the decline in size of Konar households, though here a part of the explanation might lie in improved economic and educational status having led to a decline in birth rates.

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1/ There has been some confusion about the population figures for 1916 in one of the earlier reports. Tirumalai had reported a figure of 701 for 1916 on the basis of a castewise count shown in the 1916 survey. This count, however, was a defective one. The data given in the 1916 survey report on age composition of the caste village and on the numbers of Harijan men, women and children /Slater (1918), pp 30-317 give a figure of 811, the figure also reported earlier in the same report.

2/ Ramachandran reported in 1916 that even the richest Naidu landowner participated physically in cultivation. By contrast, a major chunk of Naidu landowners - among the yough almost all-did not participate physically in cultivation in 1983. This decline in physical participation on the part of Naidu youth appears to be another factor leading to increased employment of hired labourers in agriculture.

3/ An analysis of the sex composition in 1983 of households which migrated into the village between 1961 and 1970 shows them to consist of 63 males and 56 females. However, we have no information on the sex composition of these households in1971.

4/ It must of course be borne in mind that data on age of respondents are not always entirely reliable. However, enough care has been taken in the collection of data on age that one feels reasonably confident of using them for proposing tentative hypotheses of the sort proposed in the text.

CHAPTER III : OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE

There have been significant changes in the industrial composition of the work force in Vadamalaipuram over the last several decades. While the 1916 and 1936 surveys do not contain much information on classification of the work force by industry, both these surveys and the more detailed 1958 survey make it clear that agriculture-either own cultivation or agricultural labour for others - was almost the sole occupation except for some traditional arts and crafts. The picture in 1983 is very different as we shall see below.

Worker participation ratios are not available for 1916 and 1936. Nor are they available for census years before 1961. The available evidence relate to 1958, the three censuses 1961, 1971 and 1981 and 1983. The data for these years is presented in Table 10. Definitional differences make comparison rather difficult.[1/] The glaring differences between the figure for 1958 and those for 1961 seem puzzling and are perhaps largely the result of definitional differences and different survey methodologies. The participation rate for females reported in the 1958 seems a bit low. It would also appear that 1971 and 1981 census figures are underestimates, especially for women. However since the figures for 1981 refer only to "main workers", the differences between 1981 and 1983 figures are rather exaggerated.

Keeping in mind the problems involved in comparing the data for various years, one can still get an idea of the broad changes in occupational structure between 1961 and 1983. The data are presented in Table 11. The most striking change between 1961 and 1983 is the phenomenal increase in the share of the work force employed in manufacturing, processing servicing and repairs from 1.6 per cent in 1961 to 30.75 per cent in 1983. In absolute terms while only 7 persons were

Table 10: Workforce participation rates Vadamalaipuram 1958-1983

Year	Population			Workers			Ratio of Workers to population per cent		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
1958	404	404	808	216	97	313	53.5	24.0	38.7
1961	650	436	1086	238	199	437	36.6*	45.6	40.2
1971	579	524	1103	272	163	435	47.0	31.1	39.4
1981	656	669	1325	352	205	557	53.7	30.6	42.0
1983	644	677	1321	388	334	722	60.25	49.34	54.70

M - Male

F - Female

T - Total

* If 200 male students of the local teachers' training school are excluded, the male participation ratio becomes 52.89 per cent.

Table 11 : Chnages in occupational structure, Vadamalaipuram - 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1983

Year	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Livestock etc	Mining & Quarrying	Manufacturing Processing servicing & repairs. Household industry	Others	Construction	Trade & Commerce	Transport Storage and Communications	Other Services	Non Workers
1961	162 (37.7)	173 (39.59)	6 (1.37)	8 (1.83)	-	7 (1.60)	-	10 (2.29)	2 (0.46)	69 (15.79)	649
1971[1]	98 (22.53)	172 (39.54)	11 (2.53)	-	-	67 (15.4)	-	22 (5.06)	6 (1.38)	50 (11.49)	668
1981	85 (15.26)	161 (28.9)	na	-	3 (0.58)		308 (55.26)				768
1983	49 (20.64)	177 (24.52)	27 (3.74)	-	14 (1.94)	208 (28.81)	3 (0.42)	42 (5.82)	12 (1.66)	90 (12.47)	599

1 Data for nine women workers is missing.

NOTE : Figures in parantheses are percentage shares of the respective categories to the total workforce for the year.

reported as working in this sector in 1961, as many as 222 persons were engaged in this sector in 1983. Equally significant, this figure of 222 is divided exactly equally between males and females. With the sharp increase in the share of this sector, the shares of the workforce reported as 'cultivators' and as 'agricultural labourers' have declined sharply. The absolute number of cultivators has itself declined from 162 to 149 while that of agricultural labourers has shown only a marginal increase from 173 to 177.

Given the inherent difficulties in comparing census data both across censuses and more especially with our survey data, we shall not pursue this any further. Instead, we shall look at the picture for 1983 more closely, and confine comparison largely to the 1958 figures.

Occupational Structure 1983

The detailed caste wise occupational structure, separately for males and females, is presented in Table 12, which also shows the consolidated totals in the last three columns.

The 1958 survey report does not follow the census occupational classification. It is, however, possible to make a comparison of 1983 with 1958 using a common, abridged classification scheme. This is done in Table 13.

The changes between 1958 and 1983 are indeed remarkable. The absence of significant non-agricultural employment opportunities in 1958 meant that agriculture accounted for the overwhelming proportion of useful employment, being as high as 91.86 per cent for the female work force. Manufacturing employment was practically non-existent. Not surprisingly worker participation ratios were low, and especially so for females. There was also a close correspondence between caste and occupation, with caste Hindus being mostly cultivators and Harijans being agricultural labourers, although even in 1958 there were some agricultural labourers among caste Hindus, and Thevars were completely landless with over 80 per cent of them being agricultural labourers.

Table 12: Castewise occupational structure - Vadamalaipuram 1983

Occupations	Naidus		Konars		Thevars		Pallars		Chakkiliars		Others		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
1. Cultivators	53	60	12	12	3	3	3	3	-	-	-	-	71	78	149
2. Agricultural labourers	10	19	8	10	24	31	15	18	13	14	-	-	78	99	177
3. Livestock etc.	1	-	2	-	7	-	9	5	3	-	-	-	22	5	27
4. Mining and quarrying	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Manufacturing, processing servicing and repairs	36	49	11	5	21	22	18	7	5	3	20	25	111	111	222
6. Construction	1	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
7. Trade & Commerce	22	12	1	-	5	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	28	14	42
8. Transport, storage and communications	8	-	3	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	12	-	12
9. Other services	35	16	2	-	10	3	-	-	-	-	16	8	63	27	90
10. Nonworker (including money lending)	112	183	35	45	26	40	37	36	17	14	29	25	256	343	599
Total	278	339	74	72	98	101	82	69	39	31	73	65	644	677	1321

Table 13: Share of workforce in different occupations - Vadamalaipuram 1958 and 1983

Occupation	Share of Workforce % (males)		Share of Workforce % (females)	
	1958	1983	1958	1983
Cultivator	40.74	18.30	18.56	23.35
Agricultural labourer[1]	30.56	25.77	73.20	31.14
Arts and crafts[2]	3.24	2.62	0.0	2.69
Manufacturing, processing, servicing and repairs[3]	3.70	28.61	1.03	33.23
Other services[4]	21.76	24.69	7.22	9.59

1/ Includes livestock tending.

2/ For 1958 this category includes leather, basket making, carpentry, blacksmithy and goldsmithy. In 1983, there were only 3 occupations-laundry work, carpentry and tailoring-which could be included in this category. They have been included.

3/ Includes household industry which is of negligible importance in 1983. The 1958 report speaks only of 'non-agricultural labour' all of which, on generous presumption, have been included under this this category in the table.

4. Of these, twenty one persons including one woman, constituting 6.71% of the workforce were teachers in 1958. In 1983, thirty persons (ten of whom were women) constituting 4.15 per cent of the workforce were teachers.

The picture is dramatically different in 1983. For facilitating comparison, we have constructed Table 14 which shows the castewise occupational structure of heads of households for 1958 and for 1983. Further we have used the information in Table 12 to develop tables 15 and 16. Table 15 shows for each caste, separately for males and females, the percentage of the share of workforce in each group of occupations in 1983. Table 16 presents the workforce participation rates disaggregated by sex and caste for 1983. Several changes are to be noted from Tables 10 to 16. First of all, there is the much greater rate of female workforce participation. Nearly half the female population has entered the workforce in 1983. Secondly the occupational structure shows greater diversity than in 1958 in the case of all castes. In the case of Naidus and Konars this has meant a decline in the share of cultivation and of agricultural labour, and a very significant increase in the share of the workforce employed in manufacturing. In the case of Naidus the decline in the share of cultivation as an occupation is very steep, and the diversification has been not only into manufacturing but also into 'other services', especially into professional ones requiring educational training. As many as 28 of the 30 teachers in the village are Naidus. Thevars, who were predominantly agricultural labourers in 1958, are now employed in manufacturing and in services to a much greater extent than before. They have also managed to gain some, though still marginal, access to land. Pallars have also diversified from being almost entirely agricultural labourers but only into manufacturing and, to a lesser extent into cultivation. Among the major castes, Chakkiliars show the least change in occupational structure, with dependence on agricultural labour for a livelihood having in fact increased as a result of the destruction of their traditional occupation consequent upon the arrival of electric pumpsets and tractors, and urbanisation leading to the use of city made footwear. Employment opportunities in manufacturing have enabled some but not much diversification.

Table 14: Castewise occupational structure of heads of household Vadamalaipuram 1958 and 1983

Caste	% share of Heads of Households of the given caste pursuing				
	Cultivation	Agricultural labourers	Manufacturing etc.	Arts & Crafts	Other Services
Naidus					
1958	67.80	17.31	0.96	0.0	14.43
1983	34.81	11.85	17.77	0.0	35.57
Konars					
1958	47.06	29.41	5.89	0.0	17.64
1983	33.33	27.27	24.24	0.0	15.16
Thevar					
1958	0.0	81.81	11.11	0.0	7.08
1983	6.52	52.17	17.39	0.0	23.92
Pallar					
1958	11.11	88.89	0.0	0.0	0.0
1983	20.0	40.0	40.0	0.0	0.0
Chakkiliar					
1958	0.0	70.0	0.0	30.0	0.0
1983	0.0	86.67	13.33	0.0	0.0
All HHs					
1958	42.33	31.75	2.12	3.17	20.63
1983	23.18	28.37	21.45	2.08	24.92

Notes: 1) Of 299 heads of households in 1983, ten reported themselves as idle. Of the 289 usefully occupied household heads, there were 135 Naidus, 33 Konars, 46 Thevars, 30 Pallars, and 15 Chakkiliars.

2) In 1958 there were 189 heads of households. There were, among these, 104 Naidus, 17 Konars, 18 Pallars, 11 Thevars and 10 Chakkiliars.

Table 15: Castewise occupational structure Vadamalaipuram 1983

Caste	Share of occupation in total caste workforce per cent				
	Cultivation	Agricultural labourers	Manufacturing etc.	Arts & Crafts	Other services
Naidu					
Male	31.96	6.63	21.69	0.0	39.72
Female	38.46	12.18	31.41	0.0	17.95
Konar					
Male	30.77	25.64	28.21	0.0	15.38
Female	44.44	37.04	18.52	0.0	0.0
Thevar					
Male	4.17	43.06	29.17	0.0	23.60
Female	4.92	50.82	36.07	3.28	5.01
Pallar					
Male	6.67	53.33	40.0	0.0	0.0
Female	9.09	69.70	21.21	0.0	0.0
Chakkiliar					
Male	0.0	72.73	22.73	0.0	4.54
Female	0.0	82.35	17.65	0.0	0.0
Others					
Male	0.0	18.18	45.45	22.73	13.64
Female	0.0	17.50	62.50	17.50	2.50
Total					
Male	18.30	25.77	28.61	2.63	24.69
Female	23.35	31.14	33.23	2.69	9.59

Table 16: Castewise workforce participation rates, Vadamalaipuram

Caste	WPR %
Naidu	
Male	59.7
Female	46.02
Konar	
Male	52.70
Female	37.5
Thevar	
Male	73.47
Female	60.40
Pallar	
Male	54.88
Female	47.83
Chakkiliar	
Male	56.41
Female	54.84
Others	
Male	60.27
Female	61.54
Total	
Male	60.25
Female	49.34

It is interesting to note that women too have entered employment in the manufacturing sector on as large a scale as men. In fact, a third of the female workforce is in manufacturing as compared to 28.61% of the male workforce. It is also to be noted that the entry into manufacturing is a general phenomenon involving men and women of all castes.[2/]

The rise of manufacturing

The survey report for 1916 had pointed out there were no subsidiary industries in the village beyond the necessary artisan crafts needed for repairs. The situation remained practically the same in 1937, with preparing and selling of ghee being the only subsidiary industry mentioned in Thirumalai's report. Nor were things very different in 1958. The survey report mentions the traditional crafts of leather work, blacksmithy, goldsmithy and carpentry and trade, transport, catering and services (mainly teaching) as being more or less the only non agricultural occupations. The report observed: "Sivakasi, a well-known centre of matchworks, is only five miles away from the village, but its influence is not felt on the village. Only four of the non-agricultural workers are employed in these match factories." The survey also reported that, in response to questions, 65 persons had suggested setting up of match factories and fireworks and 41 had prophetically suggested setting up of spinning mills to provide non-agricultural employment! Now in 1983, the nearby Swamiji Mill employs 70 male workers from Vadamalaipuram. There are 4 match factories which employ 124 persons, of whom 101 are females.

The Mill was started in 1967. The various match factories seem to have been started mostly in the seventies. It appears that more match factories and other industrial establishments may emerge in the near future, as many of the

owners of match and fireworks factories in Sivakasi are buying land lying by the side of the main road at high prices.

The increased factory employment, especially in the Swamiji Mill, has led to some social changes as well, such as in the attitude to caste, which we shall take up later on. To complete this brief discussion on the important phenomenon of a significant growth in employment in manufacturing the following observations may be made. While men alone have found employment in the mill, women predominate among match factory workers. Equally striking, while child labour is practically absent in the mill (there being only one worker below 15 years of age among 70 villagers employed in the mill), child labour (51 girls, 13 boys) accounts for a little over half of the match factory workers of the village. The castewise breakdown shown in Table 17 is also interesting. Naidus and Pallars contribute 25 and 17 respectively of the 70 mill workers, while Naidus and Thevars among the major castes account for the bulk of the portion of the village workforce employed in match factories.

The character of female participation in manufacture is obviously quite different from those of males. Of the 79 adult males, 69 are in the modern mill and only 10 are in the backward, labour intensive match "manufactories", where conditions are highly exploitative and pay is very low. By contrast, all the fifty adult women are employed in the match sector with long working hours and low wages.

Other Non-Agricultural Employment

These include construction, trade and commerce, transport, storage and communications and other services. 106 men and 41 women are employed in these occupations of whom 30 (20 men and 10 women all but two of whom are Naidus) are

Table 17: Workers in mill and in match factories

Caste	Match factories		Mill
	Male	Female	Male
Naidu	5(2)	39(14)	25
Konar	1	5(4)	8
Thevar	8(7)	20(15)	9
Pallar	1(1)	7(5)	17(1)
Chakkiliar	1(1)	3(2)	3
Others	7(2)	27(11)	8
Total	23(13)	101(51)	70(1)

Note: Figures in parantheses represent child workers included in the total indicated.

teachers. Apart from teachers, there are about 45 other salaried employees mostly employed in government institutions such as bank, post and telegraphs, nutrition meal centres, health centre etc. Traditional arts and crafts have continued to decline in importance.

The Agricultural Workforce

Let us now look at the workforce in agriculture. These consist of cultivators (71 males, 78 females) and agricultural labourers (100 males, 104 females). In 1916 there were 53 permanent labourers - all males - and about 100 temporary labourers (45 males, 50 to 60 females). However, except for the permanent labourers and some artisans, every one is reported to have had and worked some land. So the

share of cultivators in the agricultural workforce must have been quite high. Thirumalai reports that in 1937 there were 148 cultivating landowners, 22 non-cultivating landowners, 14 pure tenants and 85 agricultural workers who neither owned nor rented land. The figures for 1916 and 1936 are not strictly comparable with those for 1958 and 1983 since the figures for cultivators in the two earlier surveys refer to the number of pattadars including non-resident pattadars. However the figures for 1916 and 1936 are useful in indicating trends. The trend clearly seems to have been towards an increase in the number of landless agricultural labourers.

In 1958 there were 106 cultivators (88 males, 18 females) and 137 agricultural labourers (66 males, 71 females). In 1983 we have 149 cultivators (71 males, 78 females) and 177 agricultural labourers (78 males, 99 females). The shares of both agricultural labourers and cultivators in the total workforce have, as already noted, declined sharply between 1958 and 1983. It would seem, however, that the division within the agricultural workforce as between agricultural labourers and cultivators has changed only marginally. But this conceals the fact that the number of women reporting themselves as cultivators has increased dramatically from 18 in 1958 to 78 in 1983. Most of the increase is accounted for by Naidu women, sixty of whom report themselves as cultivators in 1983. This is again a reflection of both the emigration of educated male youth of the Naidu community to urban areas and of the diversification of these remaining into other occupations, especially manufacturing, and professions such as teaching.

As in 1958, Naidus account for the bulk of the cultivators with 113 out of 149 cultivators in 1983 being Naidus. Thevars contribute the largest share to agricultural labour with 55,

out of 177 agricultural labourers being Thevars. Harijans as a whole contribute 60, but this is divided into 33 Pallars and 27 Chakkiliars. Thus while occupational patterns are no longer strictly caste determined, it still remains true that Naidus (and to a lesser extent Konars) are the dominant landholding community while Thevars and Harijans from the bulk of the agricultural labourers. It also remains true that Harijans are still by and large only marginally present in services and salaried employment (despite reservation), with some involvement in local factory employment.

Non-Workers and child workers

According to the present survey there are 599 non-workers in a total population of 1321 constituting 45.3 per cent. Of these students account for 252 persons (19.8%) and other dependents for the rest. Castewise, Naidus account for 295 of the 599 non-workers (49.25%) while contributing 322 out of 722 workers (44.6%).

Table 18 gives the number of workers per household and the dependency ratios (defined here as the ratio of non-workers to workers) castewise. Thevars have both the highest number of workers per household and the lowest dependency ratio. Konars represent the other extreme in respect of both variables. Among the Naidus, most of the non-student dependents are female (107 females to 38 males).

The low dependency ratio for Thevars results at least partly from the significant incidence of child labour. The incidence of child labour (workers below the age of 15) is shown castewise in Table 19. Among male child workers, Thevars and Pallars account for the lion's share. Match factory work and cattle tending are the main occupations for

Table 18: Workers per household and ratio of non-workers to workers, castewise, Vadamalaipuram 1983

Caste	Workers per HH	(Nonworkers) (Workers)
Naidu	2.25	0.92
Konars	2.06	1.21
Thevar	2.83	0.33
Pallar	2.60	0.94
Chakkiliar	2.60	0.80
Others	2.63	0.64
Overall Average	2.41	0.83

Table 19: Child workers, Vadamalaipuram, 1983*

Caste	Male	Female
Naidu	3	14
Konar	2	4
Thevar	11	15
Pallar	9	7
Chakkiliar	1	2
Others	3	11
	29	53

*Workers below the age of 15 are taken as child workers.

the male child workers. Incidence of female child labour is almost double that of males. This must be one of the factors contributing to lower female literacy rates. Thevars once again account for the major share, followed very closely by Naidus and then by Pallars.

The relative incidence of child labour whether we take males and females separately or together is the highest for Pallars and Thevars. 19.55 per cent of Thevar workers and 20.51 per cent of Pallar workers are child workers. Similarly, of 47 Pallar children in the age group 5-14, 16 work (34.04%), and of 50 Thevar children in the same age group, 26 work (52%).

These figures show that, in terms of being the victims of deprivation and economic exploitation, Thevars rank along with Harijans. Thus, deprivation cuts across the caste Hindus-Harijan divide. However, these does exist significant correlation between caste and economic as well as occupational status. The upper castes consisting of Naidus and Konars are significantly better off than the lower castes consisting of Harijans and Thevars. In terms of occupations, most of the landowners and professional and salaried strata belong to the upper castes, while Thevars and Harijans are mainly agricultural labourers and factory workers.

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1/ The definition of worker has varied from census to census. These definitions are also different from those used in the survey of 1958 and in the present one. In our survey, the status of an individual with respect to participation in the workforce was determined on the basis of his or her response to the questions on primary and secondary occupations. For an exposition of the differences in the definition of worker in recent censuses, see V.K.Ramachandran, 'Agricultural Labourers in the Working Population in Tamil Nadu,' Bulletin of the MIDS, Vol.X. No.3, March 1980.

2/ The lower female workforce participation rate for Pallars as compared to Thevars and Chakkiliars seen in Table 16 is striking. A close look at the data for the Pallar households shows non-participation of females in the workforce to be characteristic of households where the head is a mill worker. This is an interesting phenomenon for sociological investigation.

CHAPTER IV : THE SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

In this chapter we shall briefly review the present situation with regard to the provision of various social services and the status of the population with regard to health, education and housing. Where data is available, comparisons will be made with the state of affairs in the earlier survey years.

Education

One may begin with literacy. Table 20 presents data on literacy rates for various years between 1916 and 1983 for males and females separately. Figures for the scheduled castes are also shown separately whenever they are available. While definitions of literacy have differed from survey to survey as also between surveys and censuses, the trend towards increased literacy is unmistakable. This trend holds for men as well as for women, for the Harijans as well as for the population as a whole. The rate of progress, however, has not been uniform over time. The decline in literacy rates between 1937 and 1951 is much too steep to be accounted for by definitional differences alone. Linking this decline with a near-doubling of the population of the village between 1941 and 1951 (vide Table 1) and a decline in the sex ratio, one is tempted to suggest selective immigration of illiterate males as a possible reason for the decline in literacy. It is equally plausible that immigration of illiterate households (and not merely males) together with selective out-migration of literate males could have brought about this decline. The period 1951 to 1961 shows the most rapid rate of increase in literacy. However, with respect to the figures for 1961, it must be pointed out that a jump in male literacy rate from 48.5 per cent in 1958 to 68.3 per cent in 1961 was in all likelihood a consequence of the fact (referred to earlier)

Table 20: Literacy rates in Vadamalaipuram 1916, 1937, 1951 1961, 1971, 1981 and 1983

Year	Percentage of Literates					
	Males		Females		Overall	
	General	SCS	General	SCS	General	SCS
1916	12.7	7.1	1.8	0	6.8	3.5
1937	46.8	na	15.2	na	29.9	na
1951	25.9	na	7.9	na	16.6	na
1958	48.5	na	20.3	na	34.4	na
1961	68.3	na	22.9	na	50.1	na
1971	71.3	na	43.7	na	58.2	na
1981	59.1	na	39.0	na	49.0	na
1983	69.7	42.1	56.1	31.0	62.8	37.1

that the nearly 200 male students of the teachers' training school located in the village had been included in the population count. This seems obvious especially since the 1958 and 1961 figures for the female literacy rate are quite close to each other. But this is not to deny the unmistakably significant rise in literacy rates between 1951 and 1961. Literacy rates continue to rise between 1961 and 1971, with female literacy nearly doubling. But a most puzzling decrease in literacy occurs between 1971 and 1981, a decrease which is especially sharp for males. A plausible partial explanation would be that the significant in-migration that took place between 1971 and 1980 brought in a substantial number of illiterate adult males into the village. This cannot however be a complete explanation since the comparable literacy figures for 1983 at 69.7 per cent for males and 56.1 per cent

for females, are a good deal higher than the figures for 1981. A part of this discrepancy is perhaps explicable in terms of definitional differences. We assumed all those who had some schooling to be literate. Our definition would overestimate literacy to the extent that it fails to capture the relapse into illiteracy. There is also another factor at work. The census year of 1981 being a drought year, and this village being relatively more advantageously placed with respect to both agricultural and non-agricultural employment than surrounding villages, there might have been some illiterate foot loose population component in the village in 1981. The fact that the 1983 population figure is almost the same as that for 1981 would appear to lend some indirect support to this argument. In summary, one can say that literacy rates for males grew most rapidly between 1951 and 1961, but have tended to increase rather slowly since then, while literacy rates for females have risen consistently and rapidly throughout the period 1951 to 1983. It is also clear that this village is considerably above average as far as literacy rates are concerned.[1/]

Caste and literacy

Increase in literacy rates have, however, been highly uneven across castes. Castewise literacy rates are not available for 1958, but they are available for all major castes except Pallars for 1937. The changes in literacy rates castewise between 1937 and 1983 are brought out in Table 21. Even allowing for problems of comparability, the results are striking. Female literacy shows significant increase for all castes, though in absolute terms it is low for Harijans and Thevars even in 1983. The increases recorded by Naidu and Konar castes are phenomenal. With regard to male literacy, however, the record is less impressive. While male literacy among Konars has increased substantially, it has remained practically stagnant among Thevars. A comparison of

literacy rates--both male and female--between Thevars, Pallars and Chakkiliars shows that literacy is closely correlated with economic status.

Table 21: Castewise changes in literacy, Vadamalaipuram 1937 to 1983

Caste	Literacy Rate in per cent			
	1937		1983	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Naidus	60.8	21.1	86.3	70.2
Konars	25.0	3.7	74.3	65.3
Thevars	53.3	0.0	57.1	27.7
Pallars	na	na	42.7	34.8
Chakkiliars	12.5	11.8	41.0	22.6
Overall	46.8	15.2	69.7	56.1

We may conclude our brief discussion of literacy by examining the future prospects as regards literacy among various castes. Table 22 presents data on number of children in the school-going age and children actually attending school for various castes in Vadamalaipuram during 1983. The figures once again confirm the enormous distance between Naidus and Konars on the one hand, and Thevars, Pallars and Chakkiliars on the other. An examination of the incidence of illiteracy among Thevars and Harijans would very likely show that it is mostly agricultural labour households whose members are illiterate. The data on school going children together with the data on child workers shows quite

Table 22 : School going children in the age group of 5-16

Vadamalaipuram, 1983

Caste	Total children in the age group 5-16		Children attending school in the age group 5-16		Children not attending school		No. of working children in the same age group	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Naidu	78	81	67 (85.9)	62 (76.5)	11	19	5	15
Konar	21	27	18 (85.7)	21 (77.8)	3	6	2	4
Thevar	29	26	13 (44.8)	11 (42.3)	16	15	13	15
Pallar	28	25	15 (53.6)	11 (44.0)	13	14	12	7
Chakkiliar	11	7	7 (63.6)	4 (57.1)	4	3	1	3
Others*	18	21	11 (61.1)	9 (42.9)	7	12	4	8
Total	185	187	131 (70.8)	118 (63.1)	54	69	37	55

clearly that the availability of employment in the four match factories is the main reason for children-especially female children-not going to school. Considering the miserable wages that the children get in match factories, the significant incidence of child labour is a testimony to the desperate economic situation of the Thevar and Pallar households.

*Include Pillai, Chettiar, Reddiar, Asari, Vannar, Pandithar, Nadar and Brahmin.

Note: Figures in Parentheses are percentages to the total in the age group.

Caste and Education

While, in terms of literacy, the Konars have nearly caught up with the Naidus, leaving the others far behind, the Naidus are still far ahead in terms of educational attainments. Detailed information for 1983 on the educational levels of persons above the age of 16 years broken down by caste is presented in Table 23. A fifth of Naidus and a third of Konars have had no schooling at all, but the corresponding figures for Thevars and Pallars is close to two thirds, and for Chakkiliars, it is as much as three fourths. At the other end, of the 29 persons with graduate or post graduate degrees, 22 are Naidus, 5 are Konars, and only one is a Thevar. Even these figures somewhat understate the distance between Naidus and others, since many educated non-resident members of Naidu households are either in jobs or pursuing higher education in urban areas. Of 56 non-resident members of Vadamalaipuram households, 31 had completed P.U.C. or higher secondary school or ITI training. 27 of these were Naidus. Of the 25 who held at least a bachelor's degree or were studying for it, 24 were Naidus (11 post graduate, 4 engineers, 8 with under graduate degrees and 1 B.V.Sc.). Eight of these 24 Naidus were females.

School Facilities

In 1916 Vadamalaipuram had an elementary school, with two teachers providing free instruction upto the fourth standard. It was financially supported by the co-operative society which was then flourishing. The students were given practical training in the management of co-operative societies. There was a library with 40 volumes, and a museum as well. Only 25 boys and 5 girls were studying in the school, but it is noteworthy that among these were some Harijans as well. Attendance, however, was poor especially as parents took children away to the fields whenever there was work.

Table 23: Educational attainments of persons aged 16 years and above : Vadamalaipuram 1983

Caste	No Schooling		Upto 5th Standard		6th to 8th Standard	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Naidus	14	76	54	63	42	43
Konar	15	14	13	9	12	9
Thevar	32	48	17	8	7	3
Pallar	21	32	12	5	4	2
Chakkiliar	12	19	5	1	2	-
Others	40	44	13	11	11	5
Total	134	233	114	97	78	62

Caste	9th to 11th Standard		Post High School		Of which Graduates & Post Graduates		Total		
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	T
Naidus	51	29	26	25	14	18	187	236	423
Konar	3	1	4	3	3	2	47	36	83
Thevar	5	3	1	-	1	-	62	62	124
Pallar	3	1	2	-	-	-	42	40	82
Chakkiliar	1	-	-	1	-	-	20	21	41
Others	7	3	1	1	1	-	72	64	136
Total	70	37	34	30	19	20	430	459	889

With the dissolution of the co-operative society, the school was taken over by the Panchayat board in 1927. In 1936, 70 caste Hindus (33 boys, 37 girls) and 5 Harijans (4 boys, 1 girl) were attending school. The problem of children being taken away for work in the fields persisted. Meanwhile the number of volumes in the library had grown to 384, with 81 English books. Besides the headmaster, there were two teachers. In 1937 it was decided to appoint a lady teacher, and open a kindergarten for girls. In 1956, the District Board set up a higher elementary school in the village. Many children in the school going age group of 5 to 16 years were, however, not going to school in 1958. According to the 1958 survey only 89 out of 150 children or 59.33 per cent in the age group 5-12 years were attending school. Among agricultural labourers, artisans and craftsmen, the figure was as low as 40 per cent. The corresponding figures for 1983 in Table 22 earlier cited show that the picture has not changed very much. As for 1983, there were altogether 155 boys and 138 girls studying in the school (which offers instruction from the first to the eighth grade). Of these, 38 boys and 19 girls were from the scheduled castes, one girl belonged to a scheduled tribe and all the rest, except for two girls, belonged to the so-called Backward castes. Dropout rates for the years 1980-81, 1981-82 and 1982-83 worked out from data on enrolments in October and April of each academic year, average around 9 per cent for boys and 7 per cent for girls.

There is a Teachers' Training School in the village since 1951. This imparts a two year training programme to persons who have completed secondary school, at the end of which a diploma in teachers' training is granted. Enrolment used to be close to 200 in the sixties, but seems to have declined sharply in recent years. At present there are less than 30 students in this school. The school has a library with nearly

1500 volumes, but is greatly lacking in other facilities such as laboratory facilities, furniture etc. The school is privately managed, but is financed to the extent of two thirds by government grant.

There is a village library located in the centre of the caste village. Two hundred and twenty four persons, nearly three fourths of them men, are members of the library which has been functioning since 1966. It has 850 books and it subscribes to fourteen periodicals, all of them in Tamil except for The Hindu. On an average forty persons visit and use the library everyday.

Government Meal Scheme

The Chief Minister's nutritional meal scheme is being operated by the village school under which 145 children (70 males, 75 females) between the ages of 5 and 10 receive lunch. Since 1.7.82, the Chief Minister's scheme also feeds 82 children (50 male, 32 female) aged between 2 and 5 years. Of these, 22 children are Harijans. There is a third centre providing a noon meal for under weight infants and pregnant women. This one is run with World Bank assistance. While our inquiries in the village showed that children and parents were generally happy with the scheme, the staff in charge of the nutritional meals scheme narrated some problems they faced such as not being entitled to any leave and being compelled to supply at least one family planning case per month under threat of suspension.

Housing

In 1916 and 1937, all residents owned the houses they lived in. But with the influx of salaried employees from outside the village related to the community development and national extension service programmes, it was found in the 1958 survey that 30 households were residing in rented

dwellings. By 1983, this figure had risen to 55. The increase in percentage terms is however marginal at 18.4 per cent in 1983 as against 15.87 per cent in 1958.

Housing conditions have improved a great deal over the years, at least among the caste Hindus. This is brought out in Table 24, which also highlights the uneven pace of progress in this regard. The period 1936-1958 presents a picture of relative stagnation, while there has been significant progress between 1958 and 1983. Especially striking in this last period is the improvement in the conditions of the houses of Harijans, over half of which had tiled or terraced roofs in 1983 as compared to barely 7 per cent in 1958.

The castewise picture for 1983 with respect to housing is shown in Table 25. The data relate only to owner-occupied dwellings. The pattern is rather similar to that observed with regard to literacy and levels of educational attainment. Only 7.56 per cent of Naidu households and 14.3 per cent of Konar households live in thatched houses whereas the figures for Thevars, Pallars and Chakkiliars are 57.9 per cent, 36.7 per cent and 73.3 per cent respectively. More or less the same pattern is observed with regard to electrification, where the extreme poverty of Chakkiliar households is dramatically brought out by the fact that only one of the fifteen Chakkiliar dwellings is electrified. In the village as a whole, 186 out of 299 households (62.3%) are electrified.

Health, Sanitation and Water Supply

While noting that the village on the whole was quite healthy the 1916 survey had also stated: 'medical assistance, beyond the home receipes known to most Hindu mothers, is not available in the village'. Absence of a drainage system had earlier caused sanitary problems, but a major investment made partly from the communal income of the village in 1915 provided

Table 24 : Improvement in housing since 1916

Year	Thatched	Tiled	Terraced	Two storied	Tin roof etc.	Total
In Caste Village						
1916	68 (64.76)	5 (4.76)	32 (30.48)	-	-	105 (100.0)
1936	49 (36.3)	26 (19.26)	53 (39.26)	2 (1.48)	5 (3.70)	135 (100.0)
1958	42 (31.34)	48 (35.82)	42 (31.34)	2 (1.50)	na	134 (100.0)
1983	56 (22.05)	79 (31.10)	102 (40.16)	3 (1.18)	14 (5.51)	254 (100.0)
In Harijan Colonies						
1916	29 (100)	-	-	-	-	29 (100.0)
1936	30 (96.8)	1 (3.2)	-	-	-	31 (100.0)
1958	26 (92.86)	-	2 (7.14)	-	-	28 (100.0)
1983	22 (48.9)	18 (40.0)	5 (11.1)	-	-	45 (100.0)

Note: Figures in paranthoses are percentages of the respective row totals.

Table 25: Caste and housing (1983) Vadamalaipuram

Caste	Types of dwellings (own houses)							Houses electrified as % of total occupied houses*
	Thatched	Tiled	Terraced	Tin/ Asbestas	Two Storied	Electrified	Total Houses	
Naidus	9	36	66	5	3	91	119	74.1
Konars	4	7	13	4	-	20	22	65.6
Thevars	22	13	3	-	-	23	38	61.7
Pallars	11	17	2	-	-	13	30	43.3
Chakkiliars	11	1	3	-	-	1	15	6.6
Pillai	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	50.0
Nadar	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	
Reddiar	-	1	-	-	-	-	1	
Chettiar	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	
Asari	-	2	-	-	-	-	2	
Vannar	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	
Pandithar	4	1	-	-	-	1	5	
Brahmins	1	-	-	-	-	1	1	
Total	66	78	88	9	3	153	244	63.3

*'Occupied houses' include both owned and rented houses.

for a drain through the main street, and improved the sanitary condition. Disposal of nightsoil was not a problem, since there were no privies attached to houses and fields were used for the purpose. Drinking water was got from the river, but some also used the six wells in the village. It is interesting to note that even in 1916, one house had had a tubewell sunk and had arranged for water to be supplied through pipes for house hold and other purposes.

The 1937 survey report noted '.... the absence of any epidemic or endemic diseases like malaria, plague, tuberculosis, small-pox etc.'. The outbreak of cholera in 1925, which claimed 25 lives, prompted the stationing of a Health Inspector in the village. However, medical facilities remained poor, with no dispensary in Vadamalaipuram or nearby villages. One had to go to Sivakasi to obtain medical assistance. Unlike in 1916, practically all households in 1937 (save for the two brahmin households) used the water from the eight wells in the village (six in the caste village, two in the Cheri) for drinking purposes.

The survey report of 1958 does not provide us with much information on the health and sanitary conditions of the village. But it does tell us that the village had been provided with a dispensary and that drainage had been improved.

The situation in 1983 does not seem to have changed very much. The dispensary established in 1956 continues with a Siddha doctor visiting daily in the forenoons. The nearest primary health centre is eight kilometres away at Pudhupatty. There is another PHC at Sankaralingapuram, also eight kilometres away. There is a general hospital at Sivakasi. There is a maternity centre in the village, which is however not functioning for over a year now, since there is no trained person to take care of it.

The dispensary is quite actively used in the village. The average number of patients treated daily were 42, 36 and 36 in 1980, 1981 and 1982 respectively. The figure for the first quarter of 1983 is also 36. The dispensary is, however, poorly equipped. The annual grant of medicine is a meagre five thousand rupees, but even this is not always provided. There is also no bed and no water facilities.

Drainage facilities continue to be very inadequate, with only a portion of the Naidu street having good drainage. There are only three houses with their own toilets, but as in earlier years disposal of night soil presents no problems since the fields are used.

There has been considerable improvement in the provision of drinking water facilities. A big well has been constructed in the river bed, and water is pumped into a large overhead tank which has a capacity of 10,000 litres. In 1983 a new tank with a capacity of 15,000 litres has been commissioned at a cost of 1.2 lakh rupees under the self sufficiency scheme. Fourteen distributive points have been provided of which two are located in the Harijan streets.

Transport and Communications

The village is well connected by road and rail to the major industrial and commercial centres of Sivakasi and Virudhunagar. The train route from Quilon to Madras passes through the village. As already stated, the village lies along the eastern side of the trunk road from Virudhunagar to Sivakasi which is motorable right round the year, except when usually heavy floods raise the water level in the river Arjuna above the fairly low road level. This happens only very rarely.

The village got its post office only in 1952. In 1957 there was only a branch post office located at Thiruttangal which served fifteen villages. The survey report had noted 'a railway station, a branch post office and a dispensary are all immediate requisites of the village".

All three have now arrived.

The volume of business transacted by the post office has grown a great deal since 1937. The monthly sale of postage stamps for Vadamalaipuram was then estimated at Rs.4/-. In 1958, the figure was Rs.70/-. Now it is around Rs.300/-. On an average fifty letters are sent out and about fifty are received. About fifteen letters arrive from foreign countries such as Singapore, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Iraq and U.S.A.

While only three persons had savings bank accounts with the post office in 1937, there were 115 savings accounts with Rs.15,000/- deposited in them in 1983. 100 of these accounts belonged to residents of Vadamalaipuram.

There is also a telephone in the village post office connected to the Sivakasi telephone exchange.

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1/ According to data from the census of 1981, the average literacy rate for Tamil Nadu as a whole was 46.76 per cent and that for the district of Ramanathapuram was slightly lower at 45.32 per cent.

CHAPTER V : AGRICULTURE

At the outset, some obvious limitations of our study of agriculture in Vadamalaipuram may be stated. We do not have data separately for this village on land use patterns, irrigation, cropping pattern and cropping intensity. It has also not been possible for us to enquire deeply into shifts in the cropping pattern over the period since 1936 and the period of emergence of crops like bananas, chillies and onions. Nor have we been able to inquire at length into the impact of government programmes in the earlier periods such as the Grow More Food Campaigns of the 1940s, the Community Development Programmes of the 1950s and the IADP of the 1960s. We have gathered some information on the more recent schemes such as the IRDP which we have utilised in this and the next two chapters.

General Information

Agriculture is the major sector of the economy of the village. It is quite precarious, as well, there being no assured river irrigation. The greater proportion of cultivated area is rain fed. Lift irrigation is significant but its availability is also dependent upon the monsoons. Rainfall in Sattur taluk is generally scanty. Over the last two decades, the average annual rainfall in Sattur and Sivakasi stations has been of the order of 75 cms. The bulk of this rainfall occurs in the months of September, October and November. The soil in the village of Vadamalaipuram is largely ordinary black loam.

Detailed land utilisation data are not separately available for Vadamalaipuram. They are available for Keezha Thiruthangal, the revenue village of which Vadamalaipuram forms a part. The total geographical area of Keezha Thiruthangal is 5530.63 acres. Of these, the net cultivated area comes to 2555.34 acres for 1979-80. There are no forests or uncultivable wastes.

Cropping Pattern

Land held by pattadars of Vadamalaipuram as seen from patta records comes to 927.01 acres. This tallies fairly closely with data from our houselisting census which gives a figure of 962.13 acres. Most of the lands are owner-cultivated but there is also some leasing which we shall discuss subsequently. Data on cropping pattern from the G-returns are not available for Vadamalaipuram but only for Keezha Thiruthangal. Without going into details, however, one can state that the major crops in Vadamalaipuram are fodder cholam, ragi, cotton, chillies, cumbu and paddy. Banana is also cultivated as are vegetable crops such as bellary onions but these account for a very small proportion of area cultivated. The crop calendar for the major crops is shown in Table 26. One thing that is immediately evident from the crop calendar is that agricultural activity goes on right through the year, although the intensity varies somewhat. This implies the availability of employment in agriculture almost throughout the year, though the quantum of it does vary.

The cropping pattern has evidently changed over the years. Of the gross cropped area of around 2650 acres in Keezha Thiruthangal in 1916, millets (cholam and pulses, cumbu, varagu and ragi) together accounted for 1200 acres, cotton and other cash crops for 800 acres, senna for 400 acres, paddy for 50 acres, plantains and vegetables for 100 acres and tobacco for 30 acres. By 1936, the cropped area had declined to around 1100 acres, of which cotton alone accounted for 461 acres and fodder cholam for 315 acres, Senna had practically disappeared, and all other crops including paddy had declined in importance. Thirumalai traces the decline in gross cropped area to the steep decline in prices since 1931 on account of the depression, the liquidation of the village co-operative society in 1932, and continuous failure of seasonal rains for four years in a row.

The survey report for 1958 records the total cropped area for Vadamalaipuram as 911.91 acres. This area is not comparable with the figures for 1916 and 1936 since these latter refer to the revenue village of Keezha Thiruthangal as a whole. Of these 911.91 acres, cotton accounted for 335 acres, fodder cholam for 258 acres and chillies for 115 acres. Paddy accounted for nearly 50 acres, while millets accounted for 135 acres. In terms of value of output, cotton and chillies accounted for over 62 per cent sharing this more or less equally, paddy for 14.5 per cent and banana for 10.2 per cent.

As noted earlier, official figures on cropping pattern are not separately available from G-returns for the village since it is only a portion of the Keezha Thiruthangal revenue village. However, estimates have been obtained based on interviews locally and in particular with the persons responsible for the local commodity tax ("Mahimai") collection. A comparison between 1958 and 1983 with respect to acreage under various crops and their total output figures is provided in Table 26. Acreage under cotton, chillies and cumbu have all declined but on account of the considerable increases in their yields (of which more below) total output figures are significantly higher in 1983. Bellary onions and sunflower enter significantly into the cropping pattern in 1983. In 1958, onions were grown only as inter crop with chillies, while sunflower was not reported as being cultivated. These two have made up partly for the decline in areas under cotton and chillies. Acreage under fodder cholam, a rain-fed crop has marginally increased, perhaps reflecting the poor monsoon of 1982. The cropping pattern in 1983 is more diversified. It also reflects a greater degree of commercialisation as we shall subsequently observe.

Table 26: Cropping Pattern in Vadamalaipuram 1958 and 1983

Crop	1958 Acreage cropped	1958 Output (kgs)	1983 Acreage cropped	1983 Output (kgs)
Cotton	334.53	52600	150	75500
Fodder cholam	258.33	504*	300	825*
Chillies	115.12	31600	65	44400
Cumbu	69.44	21200	60	54600
Paddy	48.23	47600	40	67000
Ragi	16.87	10200	60	60600
Banana	15.50	16800**	18	na
Groundnut	4.22	1082	--	--
Sunflower	-	-	100	12000
Onions	na.	na	20	120000

*Cartloads

**Number of bundles.

Notes: 1. Some minor crops have been excluded

2. Acreage figures for 1983 are estimates based on local enquiries.

3. Output estimates for 1983 have been worked out by multiplying estimated area under crop by average yields obtained from sample data.

4. Figures for 1958 are from the Report of the 1958 survey.

Irrigation

Lift irrigation is almost the sole form of irrigation in the village, even though the river Arjuna flows through the village. Ramachandran reported in 1916 that some of the villagers felt that if the bed of the river could be raised, this water could be used for irrigation. Thirumalai found in 1937 that, 'the villagers are of the firm view that the water during the flood season, if stored in tanks, would be able to irrigate not less than 3000 acres of land. It is really a pathetic sight to see the fields parched up and the wells being worked late hours in the night, when water flows all along in the river a furlong off'. But to this day no efforts have been taken to tap the river water for irrigation purposes, except for a pumping scheme launched in 1958 which was irrigating about 12 hectares of land in 1961.

The survey report for 1916 states that there were 120 wells in the village irrigating 558 acres, of which 50 were double cropped and eight triple cropped. These figures refer not to Vadamalaipuram proper, but to the whole of Keezha Thiruthangal village plus some other hamlets. Thirumalai reports that there were 62 irrigation wells in 1937. By 1958, this number had declined to 48, of which, twenty were operated with electric pumpsets. Haswell reports that 45 wells had been energised with pumpsets by 1961, which is somewhat intriguing. But the 'pumpset revolution' has certainly had its impact on this village. In 1983, we found that 87 wells were energised with electric pumpsets, and that there were six oil engines as well. Thus both the number of wells, and the number energised had gone up remarkably between 1958 and 1983.

Of the 962.12 acres reported as being owned by residents of Vadamalaipuram, 388.11 acres or 40.3 per cent received irrigation from wells, the greater part of this being from energised wells. Another 30.65 acres or 3.18 per cent received tank irrigation while 543.37 acres or 56.48 per cent of land held was rain-fed.

Table 26: Crop calendar (Avani-Adi) Vadamalaipuram

Month	Major activities
Avani (Mid August to Mid-September)	Sowing of paddy (both Ponni and IR20), chillies, fodder cholam and bellary onion. Harvesting of hybrid cumbu.
Purattasi (Mid September to Mid-October)	Sowing of bellary onion.
Aippasi (Mid October to Mid-November)	Transplanting of paddy (both Ponni and IR20) and chillies; planting of banana.
Karthigai (Mid November to Mid-December)	Weeding for paddy (Ponni and IR20) and hybrid cumbu.
Margazhi (Mid December to Mid-January)	Weeding for paddy (Ponni) and hybrid cumbu. Harvesting of paddy (IR20).
Thai (Mid-January to Mid-February)	Harvesting of paddy (Ponni), fodder cholam and bellary onion. Harvesting of Banana planted sixteen months earlier.
Masi (Mid-February to Mid-March)	Sowing of cotton. Harvesting of paddy (Ponni), chillies, fodder cholam and bellary onion.
Panguni (Mid-March to Mid-April)	Harvesting of chillies and fodder cholam.
Chithirai (Mid-April to Mid-May)	Sowing of hybrid cumbu.
Vaikasi (Mid-May to Mid-June)	Transplanting of hybrid cumbu.
Ani (Mid-June to Mid-July)	Harvesting of cotton.
Adi (Mid July to Mid-August)	Sowing of fodder cholam Harvesting of cotton.

The Agricultural Calendar

A look at Table 26 shows that there is agricultural activity almost throughout the year in Vadamalaipuram. The intensity, naturally, varies. The period from the end of Ippasi to the middle of Margazhi (roughly from end of first week of November to end of December) would appear to be relatively lean.

Thirumalai had observed in 1936 that there was practically no unemployment but in fact a dearth of agricultural labour and that even the pattadars had to work throughout though they would be relatively free from hard work from mid March to early June. The survey carried out in 1958 also found that farm operations are spread more or less evenly throughout the year.

Changes in Technique

While the cropping pattern and the crop calendar have not changed substantially over the years, there have been at least two significant developments with respect to productive forces: The rapid growth in the use of pumpsets for irrigation and the introduction of the tractor. These two developments have had an impact on the number and composition of farm equipment and livestock as is evident from Table 28, which presents the relevant data for the various survey years. The numbers of plough bullocks and ploughs have both shown a sharp decline between 1958 and 1983. Practically all lift irrigation in 1936 was with animal power, and the greater part of it remained so in 1958. But by 1983, 'Kavalai' wells -- wells from which water is drawn using bullock power -- were in a small minority. There were only 13 households which reported having a well without a pumpset. Even among these, only some possessed the bullocks needed to operate a kavalai. Similarly, the number of ploughs owned has dropped to about two fifths of the 1958 figure, mainly on account of the availability of tractors for hire locally.

Table 28: Livestock and farm equipment in Vadamalaipuram

1916-1983

Year	Bullocks	Cows	She-buffaloes	Young stock	Sheep & Goats	Ploughs	Carts	Electric pumpsets	Tractors
1916[a]	200	100	120	100	1200	na	na	nil	nil
1936	94	48	120	144	484	29[c]	na	nil[d]	nil
1958	96	15	71	71[b]	226	57	18	20	nil
1983	43	67	103	107	425	23	15	87[e]	3[f]

Note: a) The data refer to Keezha Thiruthangal.

b) Includes 10 He-buffaloes.

c) Thirumalai reports that the practice in 1936 was to hire ploughs from Keezha Thiruthangal. He estimates that 150 ploughs were required to till the lands of Vadamalaipuram.

d) Thirumalai reports that oil engines were tried for a few years by five persons but discontinued after 1931. In 1936 four of these had been disposed off and the fifth was being used only rarely.

e) In 1983 there were also six oil engines in use.

f) All three tractor owners also possessed trailers. One had a power tiller as well.

Modern inputs such as chemical fertilisers have been in use for a long time in the village. While in 1916 chemical fertilisers were not used, and cow-dung was the chief manure, the picture has changed by 1936. Thirumalai reports that while all the cattle dung continued to be used as manure, for almost all lands '.....chemical manure (sulphate of ammonia) is used and is got from Sivakasi'. It was found in 1958 that:

'More than three quarters of the cultivators report application of fertilisers. Application of fertilisers is however, limited to the three crops which yield the highest gross values in the village, namely plantain, paddy and chillies'.

We found in 1983 that chemical fertilisers were being applied to all irrigated crops by all classes of cultivators, although naturally the amounts vary according to both the crop and the means of cultivator. Farm yard manure continues to be important. A major source of organic manure is that obtained from penning of goats and sheep, which is a service rendered for a fee by persons who specialise in this activity and raise flocks on a lease basis.

As far as pesticides are concerned, Ramachandran reported in 1916: 'Inspite of the fact that there are so many pests, and that these pests appear pretty often, the villagers take absolutely no preventive measures against them. Nor do they seek to remedy it when a disease or pest actually destroys the crops. They take it as their lot and blame their fate...'.

The situation had not materially changed in 1936. Thirumalai reports:

'The agricultural Department was not consulted on the pest on cotton. There is no initiative on the part of the ryots to seek the help of the Department as they doubt the usefulness of suggestions regarding the pest. No demonstrator

had visited the place, and there is no channel here through which agricultural knowledge can be disseminated to the ryots.'

By 1958, however, things had changed dramatically, and the cultivators were quite familiar with pests and pesticides. In 1983, pesticides were being used by all cultivators, and to all irrigated crops.

Tractor Economy

Of the three tractors, one was purchased by the biggest cultivator (in terms of operated area) way back in 1972 with a loan from a nationalised bank in Sivakasi. Another was purchased in 1978 with own resources of the buyer. All tractors are hired out for ploughing and threshing locally. Since they are all fitted with trailers, they are also used extensively for commercial transport. The hire charges are Rs.60 per hour for threshing, Rs.40 per acre for ploughing (Rs.100 for disc plough) and Rs.200-250 per day for transport. On an average, a tractor gets hired for 4 hours daily during the threshing periods, and for around 8-10 acres of ploughing during ploughing season. It is usually not idle for more than thirty to forty days in a year. Allowing for all expenses including maintenance, repairs, fuel, driver's wages and license fees, the annual net income works out to be of the order of twenty five to thirty thousand rupees.[1/] The proximity of Sivakasi and the demand for tractors with trailers to transport industrial materials for industrialists in Sivakasi would appear to be a major reason for such a substantial income since these conditions ensure near-full utilisation of the tractor throughout the year.[2/]

Yields

Available evidence on yields per acre of major crops is summarised in Table 29. The first survey contains little

Table 29: Yields of Major Crops 1936 to 1983

Crop	Unit	Average net yield per acre reported in			
		1916	1936	1958	1983
Paddy	Kgs.	na	1340	980	1670
Cotton	"	na	153	157	503
Chillies	"	na	na	301	683
Ragi	"	na	na	603	1010
Cumbu	"	na	350	300	910
Fodder cholam	"	na	na	273	275

Notes: 1. The data base for 1936 figures is not clear from Thirumalai's report.

2. The figures for 1958 are based on data from 93 cultivator households. But the number of observations in respect of each crop is not specified.

3. Figures for 1983 have been arrived at as indicated below:

a) Paddy - average of 8 cases
Max: 2670 kgs/acre
Min: 950 kgs/acre
Ave: 1670 kgs/acre

b) Cotton- Average of 8 cases
Max: 800 kgs/acre
Min: 150 kgs/acre
Avg: 530 kgs/acre

c) Chillies - Average of 6 cases
Max: 900 kgs/acre
Min: 400 kgs/acre
Avg: 683 kgs/acre

d) Cumbu - 5 cases
Max: 1200 kgs/acre
Min: 600 kgs/acre
Avg: 910 kgs/acre

e) Fodder cholam - 2 cases
Max: 300 kgs/acre
Min: 250 kgs/acre

f) Ragi - 5 cases
Max: 1400 kgs/acre
Min: 670 kgs/acre

evidence on yields. Thirumalai reports yield figures for 1936 but the data base for these figures is not stated. The figures for 1958 are based on a study of 93 cultivator households, but there is no information the number of cases for each crop. In our survey, we interviewed a sample of 12 cultivator households. Of these, one was purposively chosen- the biggest cultivator in terms of area operated, operating nearly 68 acres. The rest were drawn at random from various size classes as follows:

Size class (acres)	No. of HHs chosen
0.01-4.99	2
5.00-9.99	3
10.00-14.99	4
15.00-24.99	2

With the small number of cultivator households interviewed, and the diversified cropping pattern that prevails, we have not been able to get more than eight observations for any of the crops. So generalisations from the data presented could be hazardous. However, the observations that we have are based on quite detailed and careful investigation, and are to that extent reliable. With this background, we may now look at the evidence.

Between 1936 and 1958, crop yields seem to have either been stagnant or declined. By contrast, yields in 1983 exceeded those in 1958 by significant margins. The most remarkable increase has occurred in the case of cotton and cumbu, both of whose yields had hardly changed between 1936 and 1958. A substantial increase over 1958, is also the case with regard to chillies and paddy.

Paddy yields were generally reported at about 30 bags per acre or roughly 2100 kgs./acre, a good deal higher than our sample average of 1674 kgs./acre, which itself is nearly 75 per cent greater the 1958 figure and 25 per cent higher than the

1936 figure. It is also obvious that yields fluctuate a good deal. The maximum paddy yield at 2.67 tonnes per acre compares favourably with paddy yields elsewhere in Tamilnadu, but the low figure at 0.95 tonnes per acre is even marginally less than 1958 figure.

In the case of cotton, the minimum figure for 1983 at 1.5 is again more or less the same as the average reported in 1936 and 1958. The maximum is more than five times the minimum figure, but the sample average at 5.03 quintals generally reported in the village. The variation is somewhat less in the case of chillies, with the maximum being 9 quintals and the minimum 4 per acre. The average at 6.83 quintals corresponds quite well to the generally cited range of 6 to 7 quintals. Cumbu yields range from a low of 0.6 tonnes per acre to a high of 1.2 tonnes. It is only Nattu-Cholam, a rain fed fodder crop, whose yield has remained stagnant between 1958 and 1983.

In the case of all four crops-- paddy, cumbu, cotton and chillies- the substantial increases in yield would appear to have been largely the result of pumpset irrigation. New seed varieties must have helped, as also the somewhat greater dosage of fertilisers, but irrigation through pumpsets seems to be the crucial factor in the sense that apart from directly contributing to an increase in yield, it also made the use of high yielding seed varieties, fertilisers and pesticides possible, necessary and worthwhile. Thus, while the whole 'package' of inputs is responsible for the increase in yields, pumpset irrigation appears to be the major factor. This view was also expressed by practically all the cultivators interviewed in this regard.

Costs and Returns

Some evidence on costs and returns per acre is available for 1936 from Thirumalai's report. Similar data is not available for the years 1916 and 1958. So we confine ourselves to

the data we have collected for 1983, and a brief comparison with 1936. The evidence for 1983 is summarised in Table 29 and a comparison with 1936 figures is shown in Table 30.

The most striking aspect of the figures is the enormous variation in net returns per acre which we find with respect to every single crop. The variation reflects at least partly real differences in the intensity of cultivation as shown by the input patterns. But a part of it is also the result of respondent concealment or exaggeration which takes the form of under reporting of yields and prices received for produce and over reporting of costs incurred. One respondent has reported negative returns in the cultivation of chillies and cumbu. This result has arisen from a number of factors, important among which are underreporting of yields and exaggeration of costs by the respondent, and also the imputation of cost at ruling market wages rates for family labour expended in production. In the calculation of non-labour costs, land revenue and depreciation have been excluded but these are, in the context of this village, quite negligible. Also excluded is interest on working capital, more on grounds of absence of reliable data than on any theoretical basis. Non purchased non labour inputs such as, in some cases, farmyard manure, have been imputed the corresponding market cost, since markets do exist for such inputs locally.

On a per acre basis, banana is the most capital intensive crop but it is also the most profitable crop. The reason it is not more widely cultivated would appear to be constraints on finance, water availability and the time and skill involved in supervision and management of cultivation. It must be of course noted that the banana crop takes about sixteen months, a period during which could successively raise on the same land paddy, cotton and chillies. Thus on an annual basis, the profitablility difference is not high enough to compensate for the extra capital and effort, and quite possibly the extra risk.

Table 30: Average costs and returns per acre of some important crops, Vadamalaipuram 1983

Crop	No of observations	Average costs/acre Rs. Non-labour	Labour	Total	Sales revenue Rs.	Net Returns per acre Rs.	Share of wages in value added*
Banana	3	2312	1983	4295	8712	4417 (Max:6800 Min:2160)	0.31
Chillies	6	1547	1365	2912	4990	2078 (Max:4650 Min:145)	0.40
Paddy	8	1174	698	1872	3152	1280 (Max:3529 Min:320)	0.35
Cotton	8	763	743	1506	2493	987 (Max:2353 Min:483)	0.43
Cumbu	5	369	417	786	957	171 (Max:420 Min:11)	0.70

*Defined here as labour costs divided by value added, the latter in turn being defined as sales revenue minus non-labour costs.

The relative profitability of paddy cultivation seems to have improved a great deal between 1936 and 1983 although it needs to be remembered that 1936 was a Depression year. The picture is stagnant or nearly so for cumbu, especially when account is taken of the fact of 1936 being a Depression year. In fact, there is a decline, which suggests that input costs have increased pari passu with yields, and that the price of cumbu has not moved favourably.

Marketing of Agricultural Produce

In 1916, the cultivators went to Sattur and Virudhunagar to sell the cotton they had produced to agents of ginning companies. The other major commercial crops-tobacco, senna, chillies and sweet potatoes- were sold to merchants from Sivakasi who visited the village regularly.

Both in 1916 and in 1936, food grains were produced mostly for own consumption. But unlike in 1916, in 1936 all the cotton was reported to be sold to the biggest money-lender in the village, a person by the name of Thavasikonar. He was '....the sole financier of the ryots...' and '.... especially after the liquidation of the co-operative society, they feel obliged to sell the produce to him and none else....'. The ryots obtained what would in today's official terminology be called crop loans from Thavasikonar, and they were then obliged to sell him the produce immediately after harvest in order to settle accounts and to pay land revenue. Interestingly, the Konar did not pay the produce price in cash. Instead, '... he adjusts it to the loan account and if the ryot wants cash, it is taken as a fresh loan. Actually, therefore, the ryots do not get cash for their produce.' Other crops were sold to Sivakasi merchants when they visited the village, the same as in 1916.

Even in 1958, all food grain crops continued to be produced only for own use. The major marketed crops in 1958 in terms of value were chillies, cotton and plaintains. Unlike in 1936, there was no monopsonist purchase of agricultural produce by the village money lender. Instead, merchants from Sivakasi and Virudhunagar visited the village soon after the harvest, and made the necessary purchases, with the assistance of one or two local residents who acted as their commission agents. Post harvest farm prices for cotton and chillies were found to be less than prices recorded at the nearest marketing centre of Sivakasi by 20 per cent to one third.

A comparison between 1936, 1958 and 1983 with respect to production and marketing of some major crops is presented in Table 32. The most important changes are as follows. Firstly, foodgrains are marketed to a significant extent in 1983. Local enquiries revealed that while 90 per cent of paddy output is retained for own consumption, 50 per cent of the millets, cumbu and ragi are sold. Secondly, onions have become a commercial crop of considerable importance, with the quantity sold increasing enormously between 1958 and 1983. Thirdly, a new cash crop has entered the scene, namely sunflower. All in all, we find a greater degree of both diversification and commercialisation.

Local enquiries revealed that prices for farm produce show great variation even within a short period of time. In 1983, for instance, the price of chillies varied from a low of Rs. 350 per quintal to a high of Rs. 600 per quintal in a short period of six months between September 1982 and March 1983. Likewise, cotton sold at Rs. 666 per quintal in August 1982 but declined to Rs. 500 per quintal, by 1983 May. In the previous year, chillie prices had varied between Rs. 600 and Rs. 1250 per quintal. Onion prices had varied from Rs. 100 per 60 kg. bag in January-February to Rs. 225 in April-May. Similar but somewhat smaller variation in price was reported for Cumbu as well.

Table 31: Ratio of net returns per acre to operating expenses per acre 1936 and 1983

Crop	1936	1983
Cotton	0.56	0.66
Paddy	0.28	0.68
Cumbu	0.29	0.22
Chillies	na	0.71
Banana	na	1.03

Notes: 1) For 1983, under operating expenses, only the following have been included: labour, farmyard manure and chemical fertilisers, pesticides, and electricity charges, family labour has been imputed an equivalent wage cost. Depreciation and land revenue have been excluded. For 1936, land revenue has been included but depreciation and family labour expenditure have been excluded.

2) Corresponding data for 1916 and 1958 are not available.

3) Since crops vary with respect to duration, profitability comparisons between crops cannot be made directly from the above figures. This is particularly true in the case of the banana crop which takes sixteen months from planting to harvest.

4) Exclusion of family labour from costs in 1983 to make these comparable with 1936 figures would only rein force the point about the general increase in net returns per acre as a ratio of operating cost that has taken place over the last few decades.

Table 32: Production and marketing of crops, Vadamalaipuram 1936, 1958 and 1983

Crop	Unit	Production			Marketed quantity		
		1936	1958	1983	1936	1958	1983
Cotton	kgs	68900	52600	75500	68900	51800	75000
Chillies	"	na	31600	44400	na	33400	na
Banana	Bunches	na	16800	18000	na	16800	18000
Cumbu & Ragi	kgs	65800	31400	121600	Nil	Nil	60800
Paddy	"	33600	47600	67000	Nil	Nil	6700
Onions	"	na	na	120000	na	2640	120000
Fodder cholam	Cart-loads	1900	504	825*	Nil	114	na
Sunflower	kgs	--	--	12000	--	--	12000

*Qunitals

Note: 1) Figures on marketed quantity for 1936 and 1958 are taken from Tirumalai (1937) and AERC (1961) respectively.

2) Figures on marketed quantity for 1983 were obtained indirectly from 'Mahimai' accounts which provide a record of village tax levied on produce marketed, and from information on rates of tax for various marketed crops.

Trade in agricultural produce in the area is controlled by agents of merchants and commission mandi owners from Rajapalayam, Virudhunagar and Madras. Cotton trade is controlled by a big cotton merchant from Rajapalayam, chillies trade by a mandi owner from Virudhunagar and onion trade by a big trader from Madras. They operate through local trader agents. In Vadamalaipuram, there are three such traders who buy up most of the local produce.

While all three deal in most agricultural produce, onion trade is exclusively handled by one of them. Banana fields are contracted out, prior to harvest, to traders from Thiruthangal, Virudhunagar and other nearby market centres.

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1/ The calculations work out roughly as follows:

A. Income

i)	Ploughing, 30 days, 10 acres per day	: 30x10x40	= 12,000
ii)	Threshing, 100days, 4 hours per day	: 100x240	= 24,000
iii)	Transporting tank silt, Rs.250 per day, 40 days	: 40x250	= 10,000
iv)	Transporting sand and stone, Rs.200 per day, 150 days	: 150x200	= 30,000
	Total	:	Rs. 76,000

B. Expenditure

i)	Diesel, 20 litres/day, 340 days	: Rs. 23,800
ii)	Tyre (annual replacement)	: Rs. 12,000
iii)	Mobile oil, gear oil, break oil, grease, etc.	: Rs. 1,500
iv)	Spare parts	: Rs. 1,500
v)	License expenses every year	: Rs. 5,000
vi)	Repairs, depreciation etc.	: Rs. 5,000
	Total	: Rs. 48,800

Annual net income = Rs.(76,000-48,800) = Rs. 27,200

2/ The annual net income figure of Rs. 25 to 30,000 is substantially higher than the one of Rs. 15,000 reported by Guhan for Palakurichi. See S.Ghuah, (1983) Palakurichi: A Resurvey Working Paper No.42, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Madras.

CHAPTER VI : LAND AND OTHER ASSETS

Land is the most important asset for most households. Onwership of other assets is closely correlated with land-ownership. Let us first examine the distribution of land ownership in Vadamalaipuram.

Land Distribution

Table 33 shows the distribution of land ownership castewise and over all. The data refer to land owned by residents of Vadamalaipuram in the village and elsewhere, but exclude land held by non-residents. Of the 299 house-holds in Vadamalaipuram, only 133 own land. 15 households at the top, with holdingsabove 15 acres, account for a little over 40 per cent of the area owned. By contrast, more than half of the land owning households, with holdings not exceeding 5 acres, account only for one sixth of the area owned. As in most villages, land is thus very unequally distributed in Vadamalaipuram. The degree of inequality, however, is not as great as is often found in the canal irri-gated tracts of Tiruchirapalli and Thanjavur districts. For instance in 1983, 15 households out of 145 landowning house-holds in Palakurichi, with holdings of 15 acres, and above, accounted for 54 per cent of area owned; while nearly three quarters of landowning households, owning holdings below 5 acres accounted for less than one fifth of the area owned.[1/]

The land distribution figures reported in Table 33 do not, however, give a complete picture, since lands of various types (tank irrigated, well irrigated and rain-fed) have been lumped together. The distribution of land held, by size class and type, is provided in Table 34. It can be seen from this table that the fifteen households owning 15 or more acres each account for 45.28 per cent of the total area receiving well irrigation compared to 16.63 per cent received by the 70 house-

Table:33 DISTRIBUTION OF LANDHOLDINGS BY SIZE-CLASS AND CASTE(1983)

Caste / Size Class (acres)	Naidu No	Naidu Area (Acres)	Konar No	Konar Area (Acres)	Thevar No	Thevar Area (Acres)	Pallar No	Pallar Area (Acres)	Chakkiliar No	Chakkiliar Area (Acres)	Others No	Others Area (Acres)	Average size	Total no.of Holdings	Total area held (Acres)	Cumulative % of HHs	Cumulative % of land held
0.01-0.99	9	7.35	1	0.30	-	-	1	0.75	-	-	1	0.75	0.76	12	9.15	9.02	0.95
1.0-2.49	16	30.14	5	8.05	5	7.24	4	6.03	-	-	-	-	1.72	30	51.46	31.58	6.30
2.5-4.99	25	85.95	1	4.75	-	-	2	8.25	-	-	-	-	3.53	28	98.95	52.63	16.58
5.0-7.49	20	121.07	3	19.75	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	6.12	23	140.82	69.92	31.22
7.5-9.99	7	61.01	2	17.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.67	9	78.01	76.69	39.33
10.0-14.99	13	159.25	2	20.0	-	-	1	12.99	-	-	-	-	11.95	16	192.24	88.72	59.31
15.0-19.99	6	101.0	2	30.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	16.38	8	131.0	94.74	72.92
20.0-29.99	1	27.5	3	69.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24.13	4	96.5	97.74	82.95
30.0-49.99	-	-	1	41.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	41.0	1	41.0	98.50	87.22
≥-50 acres	2	123.0	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	61.5	2	123.0	100.00	100.00

NOTE: Figures of land owned refer to land held by residents of Vadamalaipuram both in the village and elsewhere.

Table 34: Distribution of land held, by size and type

Size Class (Acres)	Amount of Nanjai (Tank)	Amount of Thottam	Amount of Rainfed	Total
0.01 - 0.99	1.86	3.00	4.29	9.15
1.0 - 2.49	3.07	16.95	31.44	51.46
2.5 - 4.99	0.67	44.58	53.70	98.95
5.0 - 7.49	3.06	62.71	75.05	140.82
7.50 - 9.99	4.25	22.87	50.89	78.01
10.0 -14.99	11.24	62.25	118.75	192.24
15.0 -19.99	1.50	47.0	82.50	131.0
20.0 -29.99	1.5	36.0	59.0	96.5
30.0 -49.99	1.5	9.75	29.75	41.0
50.0 -70.00	2.0	83.0	38.0	123.0
Total	30.65	388.11	543.37	962.13
Per cent	(3.18)	(40.34)	(56.48)	(100)

Note: See note to table 33.

holds owning less than 5 acres. Thus the concentration of land ownership is higher if the differences in land type are taken into account. Table 35 shows the land distribution in 1916 and 1936. These would appear to refer to Keezha Thiruthangal rather than Vadamalaipuram. Thirumalai noted in 1937 that the average size of holding declined from 21.8 acres in 1916 to 9.25 acres in 1936. The figures for both years show that landownership was highly concentrated even then. In both years the top 6 per cent of holdings have accounted for about a third of the land owned.

Table 35: Land distribution, 1916 and 1936

Size of Holdings (Acres)	Number of holdings	Extent in acres	Number of holdings	Extent in acres
	1916		1936	
1 - 10	38	250	121	535
10 - 25	38	649	37	594
25 - 30	12	469	8	264
50 - 100	3	211	3	160
100 - 250	3	471	1	105
	94	2050	170	1658

The land distribution data for 1958 are shown in Table 36. The concentration of land is evident. The top 14 per cent of households, each owning 20 acres or more in size, account for nearly 40 per cent of the area owned. By contrast, households owning less than 5 acres each account for 28 per cent of all owning households but only 7.6 per cent of area owned.

A comparison of the figures for 1958 and 1983 shows a marginal increase in concentration. The number of holdings has increased by 43 per cent from 93 in 1958 to 133 in 1983. The average size of holding has gone down from 10.36 acres in 1958 to 7.23 acres in 1983. This decline, however, conceals a rise in the average size of holding in the upper size classes. The average holding size for the class of holdings 15 acres or more in size rose from 24.03 in 1958 to 26.1 in 1983. For the size range 5 to 15 acres, there was a marginal increase from 8.39 to 8.56 acres. But the average size of holding

Table 36: Land ownership in Vadamalaipuram, 1958

Size Group (acres)	No. of holdings	Area owned (acres)	Cumulative % of HHs	Cumulative % of land held
1.0 - 2.50	12	25.78	12.9	2.68
2.50- 5.0	14	47.15	28.0	7.57
5.0 - 7.5	16	94.03	45.2	17.33
7.5 - 10.0	13	101.89	59.1	27.90
10.0 - 15.0	17	190.05	77.4	47.63
15.0 - 20.0	8	123.22	86.0	60.42
20.0 - 25.0	5	120.29	91.4	72.90
25.0 - 35.0	6	180.11	97.9	91.59
	2	81.0	100.0	100.0
Total	93	963.52		

declined from 2.81 to 2.28 acres for holdings below 5 acres in respect of number of holdings as well, with 46 in 1958 and 48 in 1983. The number of holdings exceeding 15 acres declined from 21 in 1958 to 15 in 1983. But there was a great proliferation of holdings below 5 acres from 26 in 1958 to 70 in 1983. Their share in total area owned went up.

Caste and land ownership

Of the 133 landholding households in 1983, 99 are Naidus. Of the 143 Naidu households, 99 owned land. These 99 Naidu households between them owned 716.27 acres or 74.4 per cent which is also their share in the number of landowning households. The other major landholding community in the village is the Konar community. 20 Konar households out of 32 own

between them 209.85 acres or 21.81 per cent of total land owned while they account for 15 per cent of the landowning households. It can be seen from Table 37 that all other communities are either landless or relatively insignificant as landholders. In fact, but for one Pallar household owning 13 acres of land, all holdings exceeding 5 acres in size are held by Naidus and Konars. The fifteen Chakkiliar households are all entirely landless.

Table 37: Landownership and landlessness castewise, Vadamalaipuram 1983

Caste	Share in population %	Share in land held by residents of the village %	Landless HHs as a proportion of total no. of HHs in the caste %
Naidu	46.71	74.40	30.77
Konar	11.05	21.81	37.50
Thevar	15.06	0.75	89.36
Pallar	11.43	2.91	73.33
Chakkiliar	5.30	0.00	100.0
Others	10.45	0.08	96.88

Note: See note to Table 33.

Castewise land distribution data is not available for the earlier survey years. We only learn that there were 107 landowners among caste Hindus and six or seven among Harijans in 1916.[2/] Similar information is not available for 1936. In 1958, there were 93 land owners. Of these 81 were heads of

households, consisting of 70 Naidus, 8 Konars, 2 Pallars and a goldsmith. Chances are that the remaining 13 were drawn only from Naidus and Konars. Thus while detailed data on castewise land distribution is not available for the earlier survey years, the picture most likely would not have been very different from what we found in 1983.

Land sales and prices

The land market is not very active as far as the bulk of the cultivable land is concerned. There have been very few land transactions among cultivators in recent years. An occasional sale does take place, however. An indebted peasant sold 1½ acres of well-irrigated land without a pumpset for Rs.6000 last year. This sale confirms the figure of Rs.5000 per acre given as the value of such land in the course of our inquiry. The lower price of Rs.4000 per acre realised here reflects the element of duress. Inquiries revealed that rain fed land is generally valued at about 2000 rupees per acre while well irrigated land with an electric pumpset fetches around Rs.10,000 per acre. We have some fragmentary evidence on land values in earlier survey years. Ramachandran has reported values of Rs.600, 500 and 100 per acre respectively for wet (tank irrigated), dry (well irrigated) and dry (rainfed) lands in 1916. He also noted that land values were rising, most likely in anticipation of the railway line to be laid from Virudhunagar to Srivilliputhur which would pass within a mile of the village. By 1936, the Great Depression had brought down land values per acre to Rs.400 to 500 for wet land, and Rs.250 to 300 for well-irrigated land and Rs.45 to 60 for rainfed land. For 1958, we do not have land values listed separately for tank irrigated, lift irrigated and rain fed land. But we are told that the average value of land per acre was Rs.427. Also in the five years preceeding 1958, 25.02 acres are reported to have been purchased by the village ryots for

a total value of Rs. 17,450 which works out to roughly Rs.700 per acre. At the same time, 26.26 acres are reported to have been sold by them for Rs. 11,350, which works out to Rs.432 per acre. The picture for 1958 is thus a bit confusing. A likely explanation-apart from the normal tendency of respondents to overstate prices paid and understate prices received - is that lands sold might have been locationally disadvantageous while those purchased might have been better located. But this is rather speculative.

Our interviews with 14 cultivator households revealed that ten of them had bought or sold lands during the period between 1955 and 1983. Of the forty odd land transactions reported, about twenty five had taken place between 1970 and 1983 about ten had occurred between 1960 and 1970 and the rest between 1950 and 1960. The data suggest that an acre of rain fed land had risen in value from Rs. 100-300 in the 1950s to Rs.500-600 in the 1960s to Rs. 1000 in the early seventies to around Rs. 1500-2000 at present. Well irrigated lands equipped with pumpsets have risen in value from around Rs. 1200-1500 per acre in the sixties to around Rs.5000-5500 by the late seventies, and further to Rs. 10,000 in 1983. There is not much tank irrigated land for sale, but its value per acre seems also to have risen from around Rs.2500-3000 in the sixties and early seventies to around Rs. 10,000 to 12,000 now.

More active than the market for agricultural land for cultivation is the market for land to be used for setting up industrial units. The rapid growth of capitalist small and medium industry in Sivakasi town seems to have now entered a stage where capitalists are spreading out to neighbouring areas along either side of the main road from Sivakasi to Virudhunagar. This process has led to near-useless rainfed lands along the road-side belonging to residents of Vadamalaipuram being quoted at Rs. 25,000 to 30,000 per acre. Even within

the village, one acre of rainfed land has been sold to a match factory owner for Rs. 10,000 by a big landlord. It would appear that Vadamalaipuram is on the threshold of rapid urbanisation with consequent rise in land values and costs of living.

Land and other assets

A cross tabulation of land ownership with ownership of other assets is provided in Table 38. A summary picture showing the percentage shares of landless households and land owning households divided into 4 size groups is given in Table 39, which also gives the corresponding data for 1958 wherever available.

There are three tractors in the village. One, along with a trailer, is owned by the second biggest landlord who owns 53 acres and has leased in 16 acres from his son-in-law who is in Madras. The other two are owned by two sons of a big Konar landlord who is no more, but who owned around 200 acres in his time. This landlord is referred to in Thirumalai's report as the only financier and monopsonist buyer of farm produce in the village. The biggest landlord, owning 70 acres, had a tractor which he has disposed off.

Electric pumpsets are somewhat more widely distributed, but even here the degree of concentration is quite high. The biggest two landlords between them own 17 pumpsets or nearly 20 per cent of all pumpsets! Other farm equipment such as carts and ploughs are a little less unequally distributed, though not by very much.

Compared to farm equipment, livestock distribution shows a lower degree of concentration. This is particularly true of milch cattle. Evidently, dairying is an important subsidiary occupation of landless and small cultivator households.

Table 38: Land and ownership of other assets - Vadamalaipuram 1983

Size class (acres)	No. of HHs	Extent acres	Plough bullock	Milch cattle	Calves	Goat & sheep	Tractors	Electric pumpset	Carts	Ploughs	Radios	Bicycles
Landless	166	-	9	43	36	396*	Nil	Nil	3	3	49	55
0.01-0.99	12	9.02	nil	8	10	1	Nil	3/4	Nil	Nil	7	8
1.0 -2.49	30	51.46	6	34	17	10	Nil	6 5/6	2	3	13	11
2.50-4.99	28	98.95	6	20	16	8	Nil	12	1	4	17	21
5.0 -7.49	23	140.82	Nil	20	7	Nil	1[a]	14	Nil	Nil	15	16+
7.5 -9.99	9	78.01	7	9	3	Nil	Nil	5 11/12	3	4	6	5
10.0 -14.99	16	192.24	5	20	9	6	Nil	13	3	5	12	10
15.0 -19.99	8	131.6	4	5	1	1	Nil	10½	1	1	7	11
20.0 -29.99	4	96.5	4	8	7	1	Nil	7½	2	2	4	3
30.0 -49.99	1	41.0	Nil	Nil	Nil	1	1[b]	1	Nil	Nil	1	1
50.0	2	123.0	2	3	1	Nil	1[b]	17	Nil	1	2	2@
Total	133	962.13	43	170	107	424	3	87½[$]	15	23	133	143

@ Of these, one is a moped and the other a motorbike.

+ Excludes 10 bicycles owned by a HH whose main occupation is running a bicycle shop, and whose 7 acres of dry land is held in some other village.

$ There are in addition 6 oil engines in Vadamalaipuram.

* Of these 396, 365 are on varam.

Table 39: Land and other assets : A summary Picture (share in per cent)

Size group (acres)		House-holds	Area owned	Plough bullocks	Milch Animal	Tractors	Electric pumpsets	Carts	Ploughs	Radios	Bicycles
0.0	1958	50.79	0.0	n.a.	10.47	-	0.0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
	1983	55.5	0.0	20.93	29.17*	0.0	0.0	20.0	13.04	36.84	38.46
0.01-4.99	1958	13.76	7.57	8.33+	8.14	-	5.0	5.56++	12.28++	n.a.	n.a.
	1983	23.41	16.57	27.91	39.39*	0.0	22.4	20.0	30.43	27.82	27.97
5.0-9.99	1958	15.34	20.33	31.25+	18.60	-	0.0	22.22	36.84++	n.a.	n.a.
	1983	10.70	22.75	16.28	10.98*	33.33	22.77	20.0++	17.39	15.79	14.69
10.00-19.99	1958	13.23	32.52	31.25+	33.72	-	50.0	38.89++	22.81++	n.a.	n.a.
	1983	8.03	33.60	20.93	13.26*	0.0	26.86	26.67	26.09	14.29	14.69
20.0	1958	6.88	39.58	29.17+	29.07	-	45.0	33.33++	28.07	n.a.	n.a.
	1983	2.34	27.08	13.95	7.20*	66.67	29.14	13.33	13.04	5.26	4.20

P.S: See notes to Table 38.

++ Per cent of total owned by all landholders.

* Including calves

\+ Per cent of plough cattle held by all landowners.

Dairying seems to have received some impetus from the milch animals loan scheme under the IRDP, as also from the growth of a market for milk, in the nearby urban areas of Sivakasi and Keezha Thiruthangal.

Goats and sheep are almost the exclusive possession of landless households. Of 424 goats and sheep, an overwhelming proportion-365 out of 424- are held by landless households on 'varam' according to a system we shall describe later on. Of 59 goats and sheep owned, 31 are accounted for by 24 landless households and 19 are accounted for by cultivators holding less than 5 acres of land. The 365 sheep and goats held on Varam are held by eight varamdars, all of whom are landless.

Durable consumer goods such as radios and bycycles are, naturally, more evenly distributed than livestock and farm equipment. Even in this regard the landless households fare poorly with only a third of them owning a bicycle and only three in ten owning a radio.

The surveys of 1916 and 1936 did not go into the details of the distribution of non-land assets. Data on distribution of non land productive assets-livestock and farm equipment-is available for 1958, for land holding households. The ownership of plough cattle and milch cattle by landless households can be inferred from the data. There are some significant differences in the totals between 1958 and 1983 in respect of a number of important items. There were 96 plough cattle owned by land holders alone in 1958, while in 1983 only 43 plough bullocks are reported as owned by all households together, including landless households. There were 52 ploughs and 18 carts owned by landowners themselves in 1958 while the 1983 total, are 23 ploughs, and 15 carts, including those owned by landless households. By contrast

both the number of milch cattle and the number of electric pumpsets have increased a great deal between 1958 and 1983, the former from 86 to 157 (116 if we exclude milch cattle owned by landless households), and the latter from 20 to 87. Unfortunately, we do not have any data on the time profile and modes of financing of the pumpsets.

As for the distribution of these assets, the picture is summarised in Table 39. The apparently less unequal distribution of plough bullocks and ploughs in 1983 as compared to 1958 is largely a consequence of the sharp decline in the number of both, especially in the higher size groups of landholdings as a result of the arrival of tractors of which there were none in 1958. But the more even distribution of milch cattle is a real phenomenon which is a consequence of both State intervention and urbanisation in the neighbourhood of the village. Similarly, the nearly 20 pumpsets owned by landowners owning less than 5 acres is a reflection of the growth of intensive cultivation aided by State-assisted credit schemes for investment in pumpsets.

Tenancy

In 1916 there were no tenants. All cultivated lands were owner-cultivated. In 1936, however, as much as 138.7 acres out of a total cultivated area of 1070.95 acres were cultivated by tenants. Both crop sharing and the fixed rent system were present. The share rent was generally paid in kind, and the fixed rent in cash. Under crop sharing the tenant bore all the expenses of cultivation while the landowner paid the land revenue. The produce was shared equally while the by product such as paddy straw or dried stalks of cotton was taken by the tenant. If the landowner also supplied a part of the manure, he would get a half share in the by-product. Under the fixed rent system, the tenant would bear all expenses (including some times, the land revenue as well)

and pay a fixed money rent to the landowner. Whatever the tenancy system, it was apparently very difficult to get tenants in view of the uncertainities caused by '.....the vagaries of rainfall and insect-pests'.

By 1958, there had occurred a decline in tenancy, with only 43.12 acres forming 4.5 per cent of the area held by all resident cultivators. There were eleven tenants among 93 cultivators. Of the eleven, only one was a pure tenant. Three owned less than they leased in and seven owned more land than they leased in. Six of the tenants operated on crop sharing basis, four on a fixed cash rent basis and only one on fixed kind rent. As in 1936, cash rentals remained low in 1958, varying from Rs.10 to 50 per acre on dry lands, and from Rs.50 to 80 per acre on well irrigated lands. All costs were borne by the tenant. Under crop sharing both product and by product were shared equally between landowner and tenant.

In 1983, a total of 37 acres had been leased in by Vadamalaipuram households while 15 acres had been leased out by them. One respondent had mortgaged out 1.75 acres of well irrigated land. Of the 16.5 acres of Thottam and 20.5 acres of rainfed lands leased in, the bulk of 11 acres of Thottam and 12 acres of rainfed lands were accounted for by two well to-do landholders in the village, one of them being the second biggest landowner owning more than 50 acres of land. A scrutiny of the terms of lease in the various instances of tenancy shows that terms have not changed a great deal over the years. Cash rentals for rainfed land vary between 40 and 50 rupees per acre. The cash rentals for well irrigated land vary from Rs.250 per acre to Rs.500 per acre, while tank irrigated land fetches around 400 to 500 rupees per acre as annual cash rent.

Crop sharing tenancy seems to have declined over the years. We came across only one case of crop sharing tenancy by a lessor respondent and one by a lessee respondent. Subsequently we came across a couple of instances of crop sharing concealed from us during houselisting. Under crop sharing tenancy, the cost of seeds, ploughing and transport of farmyard manure are equally shared. Transplanting, weeding, bunding and irrigation costs are borne entirely by the tenant. The landlord bears the cost of farmyard manure, fertiliser and pesticides as well as land revenue. Harvest wages are paid out of gross produce, and produce net of harvest wages is shared equally. By products are also equally shared. It would appear that the terms for the crop sharing tenant have improved somewhat as compared to 1936 and 1958 when all costs except land revenue had to be borne by tenant, and the product was still shared equally.

Using net income per acre figures from Chapter V, one could express cash rent as percentage of net income. This would, however, also require some information on cropping pattern. Assuming a paddy-cotton sequence in one year on well-irrigated land, the annual net income works out to Rs. 2267. A rent of Rs.500 per acre then amounts to 22 per cent, while at the lower end of Rs.250, it amounts to 11 per cent. This is of course somewhat crude since interest, depreciation and land revenue have been excluded in our costing thus exaggerating the net returns per acre. Nonetheless, it serves as a rough indicator. It is not possible to compare this directly with crop sharing tenancy where the produce net of harvest wages is shared equally since in the latter case input costs are also shared, though not equally. However, it seems that the cash rent system is less onerous for the tenant on balance. But this has to be set against the risk borne by the cash rent paying tenant with regard to water availability, yield and prices of produce.

Overall, tenancy is not a significant phenomenon in this village.

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1/ S.Ghuan, "Palakurichi : A Resurvey", Working Paper No. 42, Madras Institute of Development Studies, Madras, 1983.

2/ Incidentally, the number of holdings reported for 1916 comes to only 94 (vide Table 35) while the number of landowners is reported as being about 114 or 113. It is possible that the holdings for which data is presented in Table 35 exclude the holdings of those owners who held land outside the village but not inside.

CHAPTER VII : AGRICULTURAL LABOUR

It was noted in 1916 that it was '....very difficult to find in the village people who own no land except the actual labourers and some of the artisan classes.' Among the labourers were '..... permanent labourers who work throughout the year under landlords.' They were 53 in number, and all males. There were also casual labourers -- 'about 45 males and 50 to 60 females.' Apart from these two categories, there were eight Padials who were tied to their landlord employer by debt-bondage. They were required to serve the creditor till the wages credited to them wiped out the debt. Casual labour was generally paid in cash while the permanent labourers were paid an annual cash wage in addition to being provided three meals a day.

By 1937, the system of Padials, had disappeared, although persons belonging to the Chakkiliyar community were reported to be working as attached labourers of landlords who used them mostly as domestic servants,but also used them occasionally for field labour. Tirumalai asserted that wages for various categories of permanent servants were usually paid in kind, and it was only for seasonal field labour -- casual labourers-- that wages were paid in cash. Further, such labour was largely recruited from outside.

In 1958, there were 140 resident agricultural labourers; besides 34 non-resident attached labourers. All but three of the 140 resident agricultural labourers were casual workers. Only three were attached workers. Wages continued to be paid both in cash and in kind. Twenty four holdings maintained thirty six attached permanent farm servants including a cowherd. They were paid only cash wages. Kind wages were absent and perquisites negligible.

Things had thus changed a great deal since 1916. The system of padials had disappeared. Along with it had disappeared the practice whereby labourers were provided meals by the landlord. The mode of wage payment had undergone an interesting change. While in 1937 permanent workers were paid mostly in kind, in 1958 they were paid in cash. But kind payment continued in respect of casual labourers, especially on large farms. With permanent farm servants, it was the other way around with farms below 15 acres accounting for all kind payment.

In 1983, there were fewer permanent labourers-not more than twenty - which was to be expected in view of the decline in the number of large holdings. In 1958, holdings exceeding 15 acres in size had accounted for twentynine of the thirty six pannaiyals. In 1983, there were far fewer holdings of this size. The increase in the intensity of cropping between 1958 and 1983 had led to an increase in the demand for agricultural labour. At the same time, the emergence of non-agricultural employment opportunities such as in the nearby spinning mill and in the match factories tended to draw labour away from agriculture. These developments made casual labour a more attractive proposition for the workers. Even in 1958, 32 out of 42 casual workers who answered a question on whether they would wish to be permanent farm servants answered it in the negative, mainly citing the absence of freedom and of any limitation on the hours of work for permanent workers. At present, permanent farm servants are hired mainly for the tasks of cattle tending, irrigating, ploughing and watching of crops.

The mode of wage payment is somewhat complicated. Some permanent farm workers receive a monthly salary of Rs. 210/- but no other perquisites except a set of dresses at Deepavali. Such farm workers are generally responsible for all field

tasks and for taking care of livestock. Some work as "pangu-neerpaychis" responsible for irrigation and watching of crops. As the term suggests, such workers receive a share of the crop, usually one tenth (net of harvest wages), the share being paid in money in the case of commercial crops. The same workers may work partly on a share basis and partly on a cash wage basis, usually a cash wage of Rs.8/- per working day. We have for instance one case where the worker working for a landlord with 8 acres takes up irrigation work on a share basis on 3 acres where grain is grown, and on daily cash wage basis on 5 acres where other crops are grown. There are also instances of a permanent farm worker receiving only 50 rupees a month, but receiving as perquisites three meals a day. Most permanent farm workers receive a set of dresses for Deepavali but no other perquisites.

Most of the 177 agricultural labourers are casual labourers. Both cash and kind wages are paid to casual workers. For harvesting, wages are paid in kind. Even for harvesting of cotton, it is not unusual to find kind payment. The kind wages received are locally sold by the workers and thus converted into cash. For operations for which women are employed such as sowing, weeding and transplanting, kind wages- usually millets such as ragi or cumbu-are paid. For most operations in which men are employed such as ploughing, bunding, banana field weeding etc., cash wages are paid.

Duration of employment

There is not much information on duration of employment for agricultural labourers in the 1916 and 1937 surveys. Presumably in 1916, the eight padials and 53 permanent labourers must have worked throughout the year. The female casual workers numbering 50 to 60 would traditionally have been employed in sowing, weeding, transplanting and harvesting.

But we have little evidence on the quantum of employment that these women or the forty five or so male casual labourers would have obtained. Tirumalai stated that in 1937, the labourers '..... have work throughout the year and there is no unemployment as such. On the other hand there is dearth of labour.' But this is stated more as a general observation and no systematic evidence is presented. In fact, discussing a labourer's family budget, Tirumalai assumed only 250 days of employment per year for a household with two earners. The permanent labourers, however, were given work throughout the year.

In 1958, there were sixty five male and seventy two female casual labourers. The average number of days of employment per year worked out to 237 days or nearly 8 months for males and 205 days or 7 months for females. The permanent workers worked the year around.

For 1983, we do not have systematic evidence on duration of employment for casual labour. We have collected data on employment operation-wise for 5 female and 6 male workers. For the men the duration varied from 155 days to 255 days, the average being 200 days of employment. For the women, the figures varied from 135 days to 360 days with the average around 215 days. While one cannot claim that these estimates are an accurate reflection of the employment situation, they are probably not far off the mark as indicators of the broad orders of magnitude.

While the data are too crude for us to arrive at definitive conclusions, some tentative suggestions seem plausible. The decline in average casual employment for male workers from eight months to 200 days appears to be related to the tractorisation of much of ploughing work. The significant increase in average duration of female casual employment between 1958 and 1983 appears to be the outcome of more intensive cropping and

higher yields arising therefrom. The greater part of female employment is in harvesting and threshing which accounts for nearly 65 per cent of total female casual labour days in our sample.

Wages and working conditions

Ramachandran reported in 1916 that the permanent labourers - all male - received three meals a day and wages at usual rates. As long as his debt exceeded the wages credited to him, he was bound to the master and could not leave his service. Casual labourers generally received money wages at the rate of five to eight annas per day for males and four to six annas per day for females. Where wages were paid in kind, males received two Madras measures of grain and a midday meal, while the women got the same amount of grain but not the midday meal. At the then prevailing price of Rs.9 to 10 for one Kotah (=141.8 kgs = 96 Madras measures) of cumbu or ragi, the kind equivalent of male cash wage rates work out to 3 to 5 Madras measures of millets and that of the female cash wage rates to 2½ to 3¾ Madras measures of millets. If we assume that three meals a day were equivalent to one Madras measure of grain (with 1 MM = 1.46 kg of cumbu or ragi, this is quite generous), and take the daily equivalent of the annual cash wage of 50 to 60 rupees into account, the permanent labourers and padials were then getting a total grain equivalent of not more than 3 Madras measures per day. Thus the casual daily wage rate was generally higher than the pannial's daily wage equivalent.

Thirumalai has reported that the customary wage in 1937 was 3 measures of grain per day. There is, however, no data on cash wages for casual workers, which according to Thirumalai fluctuated frequently. Thus wages in real terms seem to have remained constant between 1916 and 1936 for permanent workers who were usually paid in kind.

In 1958, the daily wage for a permanent farm servant was very close to one rupee a day. Twenty seven out of thirty six permanent farm servants were reported as having received their wages entirely in cash. In the case of the other nine, though there were no kind wages, perquisites amounting on an average to a cash equivalent of eighty two rupees per worker per year had been received. The annual cash equivalent of the wages of the thirty six permanent farm workers varied between 328 rupees and 360 rupees i.e., between 90 paise and one rupee per day. The daily wage of casual workers in terms of cash equivalent worked out to just about one rupee for males and sixty paise for females. At the then ruling price of 50 paise per Madras measure of ragi, cholam or cumbu, the real wage rate per day in terms of any of these grains thus amounted to two Madras measures for all male workers-casual and permanent - and to only 1.2 Madras measures for female workers. Thus real wages in 1958 were significantly lower than in 1916 and 1936.

In 1983, male casual workers engaged for ploughing, bunding, spade work etc. were paid between 7 and 8 rupees a day. This was also the wage rate paid to those 'semi permanent' workers --- those over whom a landlord had the right of first call, and who were usually employed for watering and crop watching --- when they were engaged in field operations. Further the monthly cash wage quoted by several permanent farm servants amounted to Rs.210 per month which works out to Rs.7 per day. Cash wages paid to female casual labour varied between 3½ and 4 rupees per day. Kind wages when paid were mostly paid in ragi or cumbu, and amounted to 2 Madras measures for women and 3 Madras measures for men. The price of cumbu was Rs.1.80 per kg in 1983, or approximately Rs.2.65 per Madras measure. This means that the real wage rate for men works out in terms of cumbu to 2.65 to 3 measures per day. For women the grain equivalent of the daily cash wage

rate comes out to be 2 to 2.2 measures of cumbu. Thus, compared with 1958, real wage rates were higher in 1983. However, they were no higher than what they had been in 1916 and for casual labourers, definitely lower than in 1916.

The main factor behind the increase in real wage rates between 1958 and 1983 has been the growth of non agricultural employment opportunities in the form of the spinning mill and the local match manufactories. Women workers in the match units could earn, on piece rate basis, about 4 rupees a day. Male workers in the spinning mill would on confirmation earn a good deal more per month than the permanent farm worker's salary of Rs. 210/- per month. A mill worker with 15 years of experience in the mill was getting Rs. 964/- per month. The availability of such avenues of employment together with the increase in the intensity of cultivation and the emigration of a large number of educated off spring of Naidu households, appear to have led to a relative increase in the demand for agricultural labour and a marginal improvement in the bargaining position of the farm worker.

Conditions of work differ quite significantly between permanent workers and casual labourers. Typically the working day for a permanent worker would begin at 5.30 or 6.00 a.m. He would collect the dung and urine from the cattle shed. He would then have a break for breakfast for about half an hour, and the next task would be field work commencing around 8.00 or 8.30 a.m. He would be in the field till about 3.00 to 3.30 p.m. with a short break for the mid day meal. At the end of the field work, he would fetch fodder for livestock and go home for a short rest. He would return around 4.00 p.m. and once again engage in cattle shed cleaning and other livestock related work till about 6 p.m. Thus the minimum length of the working day for a permanent labourer

is twelve hours. Some times he might have to put in longer hours, such as when transporting the employer's produce for sale to Virudhunagar or Srivilliputhur. On days when there is no work in the fields (e.g. due to rain), the permanent worker would nonetheless have to come and clean the cattle shed, clear the cattle night soil, feed the cattle and milk the milch animals, in the morning and in the evening. For this work, he would not be paid anything. Some of the so-called permanent workers are allowed to accept outside employment on such days. These days usually do not exceed 3 to 4 days in a month. Thus the permanent worker mostly works long hours, and does so without getting paid for some of the hours worked.

Casual labourers work only in the fields, and from around 8.00 to 8.30 a.m. till around 3 p.m. with a break for the mid day meal.

Annual earnings

While wage rates might have generally risen for agricultural labourers, the same need not necessarily be true for annual earnings, since the quantum of employment might have moved in the opposite direction. The evidence on duration of employment reviewed earlier suggested that the average number of days of employment in a year for casual workers was around 200 days for males and 215 for females, representing a decline of 40 days in the case of males and an increase of 10 days for females. As we noted earlier, the two elements of mechanisation - tractorisation and the introduction of pumpsets- have mainly cut into the demand for male agricultural labour, while the operations for which women are usually employed such as weeding, transplanting and harvesting have not been mechanised. Demand for female labour has in fact marginally increased on account of the greater cropping intensity made possible by the pumpset.

The average annual earnings of a casual male agricultural labourer in 1983 work out, on the basis of sample data, to Rs.1400 to Rs.1600. For a female casual worker, the annual wage income is between Rs.750 and Rs.860.

In 1983, there were 166 landless households. Of these, thirty three households (which included eight one-person households) depended almost solely on agricultural labour for their livelihood. For these households, the average number of workers per household was 1.74. The average annual wage income of such a household works out to roughly 90 per cent of Rs.2300 i.e., 2070 rupees. In per capita terms this amounts to about Rs.740 in 1983 prices which is significantly below the rural poverty line norm. Most landless agricultural labour households would thus be well below the poverty line if they had no other source of income. Some of them in fact do not have any additional source of income. Some try to supplement their earnings by non agricultural employment such as in road construction or match works or by raising sheep and goats on a lease basis. The situation of agricultural labourers is thus not very different from what it had been earlier. For Thirumalai had observed in 1936 that, 'It will be fairly correct to say that a landless labourer's family gets only about two thirds of the income necessary for subsistence even on a low standard.' And the survey report for 1958 had stated: 'The position of the agricultural labour household is not desperate, only because of a larger number of workers- an average of 2.3 workers per household'.

Supplementary income

Not surprisingly agricultural labour households try to supplement their income through other activities. Eight of the thirty three households referred to own milch cattle mostly acquired under government sponsored schemes. 60 of the 166 landless households are non-agricultural, with 33 of

these being entirely dependent on mill work. Six households combine mill work with work in the match factory or in agriculture. The residual sixty seven landless agricultural households generally combine agricultural labour with some non agricultural employment such as in match units or with sideline activities such as raising of milch cattle and selling of milk obtained therefrom.

Twentynine landless households own milch cattle. Eight of these are from among the thirty three households already referred to as being otherwise entirely dependent on agricultural wage labour. Another eight are mill worker households.

Eight landless households are involved in leasing in on a share basis goats or sheep. Of these one is otherwise dependent entirely on agricultural wage income. The system of lease works as follows. The owner of goats leaves a certain number of goats with the lessee. The lessee has to tend the stock, and within the specified contract period return to the lessor the same number of goats (or goats with equivalent value). The stock that remains would be shared equally by the lessor and lessee. Though no explicit interest is charged on the value of the stock initially leased out, there is often an implicit interest element in the low price received by the lessee for goats sold to the lessor. Net income from this activity consisting of rentals received by providing the goats for penning in the fields overnight, and of income from sale of the animals, appears to be marginal, and would probably not make a great deal of difference to the income levels of these landless labour households. The eight landless households owning milch animals but otherwise solely dependent on agricultural labour are very likely somewhat better off, since there is a guaranteed market for milk, and loans for purchase of livestock are available from private and government sources.

More important for most landless agricultural labour households as a source of supplementing income is work in the local match factories (and the ones in Thiruthangal and Sivakasi to a lesser extent). An idea of how desperate the heads of some of these households are to get additional income from such work can be obtained from the fact that they have pledged their children to work in these factories for even such paltry loans as a hundred or two hundred rupees.

Non-Agricultural Occupations

We shall conclude this chapter with a brief discussion of non-agricultural occupations.

We had noted in Chapter III that between 1958 and 1983, the classification of the Vadamalaipuram workforce by industry had changed a great deal. The share of manufacturing in the total workforce was negligible in 1958. In 1983, 222 workers out of a workforce of 722 were employed in manufacturing activity. Non-agricultural employment as a whole had expanded significantly, accounting for 396 workers. The two most important sources of non-agricultural wage employment were the match factories and the nearby spinning mill employing 124 and 70 workers respectively.

The match factories employed 101 women and 23 men. The mill employed only male workers. 64 of the 124 persons employed in the match factories were children, 51 of these being females. Wages in the match factory were paid on piece-rate basis. Working hours varied. On an average, a worker would earn between Rs.3/- and Rs.4/- per day by working for eight to ten hours. Children as young as six and seven years of age are found to work earning even less.

Mill workers are all adult males, with the exception of one fourteen year old boy. Wages at the mill are low

to begin with. The worker is initially taken on as a casual labourer and is paid anywhere between three and five rupees daily. On being made permanent, the worker is placed on a monthly basic pay of Rs.125/- plus dearness allowance. One worker with 16 years of experience was getting Rs.964/- per month, very likely the highest wage since this worker had been in the factory since its inception and was also the leader of the management sponsored union.

There are 28 workers in manufacturing other than those in the mill and the match factories. They are scattered over several industries such as fireworks, printing presses, some chemical units etc.

Dairying

Apart from manufacturing, the major non agricultural activity is dairying. As noted earlier, while there has been a sharp decline in the number of plough bullocks in the village between 1958 and 1983 consequent upon the introduction of pumpsets and tractors, there has on the other hand been a significant increase in the number of milch cattle from 86 in 1958 to 170 in 1983. Further, landless and small cultivator households accounted for the greater shareof milch cattle. In 1958, landless and small cultivator households owning upto 5 acres possessed less than a sixth-14 out of 86-of the milch cattle in the village. In 1983, the same group accounted for more than half- 34 out of 67-of the cows, and nearly seventy per cent-70 out of 103 of the she-buffaloes in the village. Examining the ownership of milch cattle castewise, we find that Harijans fare significantly better than they do in relation to other assets. Pallars own nearly a fourth -17 out of 67 - of the cows, and a little over a third-35 out of 103 she-buffaloes. The increase in ownership of milch animals by small cultivators and landless labourers-the latter owned 43 out of the 170 milch cattle in 1983 as

compared to 9 out of 86 in 1958, and of Harijans among them especially, is in part due to government programmes for provision of loans and subsidies to agricultural labourers and small farmers to purchase milch animals.[1/]

In 1936, there was no sale of milk in the village although ghee was produced for sale on a large scale. In 1958, annual milk sales were reported at 34,250 litres, which works out to about 94 litres a day. In 1983, there were seven major dealers in milk including a co-operative society. Milk was procured from more than a hundred buffaloes and cows and it amounted to at least 300 litres a day. There was thus at least a three fold increase in the quantum of daily milk sales. The prevailing arrangement was as follows. The private milk dealers would advance money to the households owning milch cattle and secure their supplies. The loan is generally around Rs.500 per milch animal, and is recovered in weekly instalments of Rs.20/-. The loan is thus settled at the end of six months but the amount thus recovered would be loaned out again to others. The milk supplying household would receive between Rs.2.50 and Rs.2.70 per litre while the dealers would sell the milk mainly to teashops and hotels in Thiruthangal and Sivakasi for Rs.2.80 to Rs.3.00 per litre. The margin should of course not be reckoned at Rs.0.30 per litre since literally much water would flow in between these two transactions! For the supplying household it appears that the margin of net income per animal varies anywhere between three and five rupees per day.

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1/ Some of the caste Hindu landlords resented the loans given to landless - especially Harijan-households for purchase of milch animals. They argued that in the absence of own land or common pasture land, the milch animals of the landless households were being taken on the sly to graze on the fields of the landowners,

even when there were standing crops. One of them argued that for the scheme to work, the landless who purchase milch animals availing the subsidy must also be given an acre of land for grazing. But he hastened to add that he was not in favour of this at all, and that the subsidy scheme could be much more efficiently used by landowners like himself!

CHAPTER VIII : SOCIAL RELATIONS

The preceeding chapters have reviewed the demographic and economic changes that have occurred in Vadamalaipuram over the last sixty odd years. In this chapter we briefly review the social relations prevailing in the village, noting in the process the changes that have occurred.

Oppression against Harijans

Contrary to the assertions made by Thirumalai and Haswell, discrimination against Harijans was and continues to be a feature of the social life of the village.[1/] Subtle changes have, however, occurred over time. Our inquiries in the village revealed that it is mostly the Naidus who insist on practising untouchability. In a conversation with us, a respondent from the Chakkiliyar community said that Konars, Thevars, and Pallars were like relatives but the Naidus were different. A Pallar respondent narrated many instances of discrimination practised by the Naidus. We were informed that up until a few years ago, Harijans could walk through the Naidu street only if they were bare-footed. In recent years, with the entry of Pallars into employment in manufacturing, especially in the nearby mill, Pallars have to a certain extent asserted themselves. Today they walk wearing sandals, and ride on bicycles through Naidu streets. Until a few years ago, the Pallars as a matter of village custom were required to perform certain services whenever a caste Hindu died. These included burying of the corpse and bringing back the cot on which the corpse had been carried. Then a mill worker whose turn it was to do this work on one occasion refused. The Naidus threatened various punishments, but the mill worker stood firm. Since then, only the Chakkiliars perform these services. They appear to be still economically and numerically too weak to assert

their rights. Even now, Chakkiliars do not ride their bicycles through the Naidu street, although they now walk through the street wearing sandals. Chakkiliars are also required to perform certain other services under what is known as the "pagadai" system.

"Pagadai System"

Under this system, all landowning households other than Chakkiliars are divided into twelve groups of as nearly equal size as possible and in such a manner that each group includes big, medium and small land owners. The households of each group are listed on separate chits of paper. There are twelve main families among Chakkiliars and each family draws a chit. For the households listed in its chit, the working members of the Chakkiliar family must perform the following services. They must clean the threshing floor. They must collect the harvested crops from the field and bring it to the threshing floor using carts supplied by the landowner. They must help in winnowing and threshing along with other workers engaged by the landowner, pack the grain in bags and deliver it to the landowner's house. They must clean the threshing field after threshing. For the harvest-related work, a wage equal to 1/12 of the produce net of harvest wages is paid. The family is also responsible for watching and guarding the crops at night. It should fetch hired labourers from neighbouring hamlets when needed for specific farm operations like harvesting.

The working women of the Chakkiliar household are also required to perform the labour of manuring the fields with farmyard manure, a service for which they are not paid. If some one dies in the landowner's family, the head of the Chakkiliar household -- known as "Pagadai" - has to act as a messenger and convey the news to all their relatives.

Among the earlier studies of this village, only Thirumalai's refers to the "Pagadai" system. Comparing his account with the present situation, one finds that some changes have taken place over the years. Earlier the Pagadais had to make footwear and stitch the mhotes required for raising water for irrigation from the wells for the landowner families assigned to them. They no longer do this. Also, in an interesting indication of the increasing commercialisation of the rural economy, two Chakkiliar mill workers have leased out their Pagadai rights to other Chakkiliar households for an annual lease of Rs.200/- each.

Caste Relations

As noted earlier, the Naidus are both economically and numerically the dominant caste in the village. This has been the case throughout, from 1916 to 1983. Over the years, a process of "caste consolidation" has taken place in the sense that a number of (numerically) minor castes have disappeared, and we now have five major castes: Chakkiliar, Konar, Naidu, Pallar and Thevar. The most significant change that seems to have taken place with respect to caste relations is the breakdown of a corporatist village community characterised by the dominance of Naidus. A number of agricultural labourers of the Thevar community had earlier been staying in makeshift premises located in the cattlesheds of Naidu landowners, which provided the latter an indirect control over the labour of the former. Nearly a decade ago, these labourers moved out and built themselves huts in poramboke land (i.e., government land) near the main road between Virudhunagar and Sivakasi. This settlement is what has become "Anna Colony". Initially, the Naidu landowners tried to prevent the regularisation of these settlements and to get them demolished. A social boycott of the Thevar labourers was also sought to be organised. The

labourers were prevented from purchasing their provisions from the local shops. However, the landowners had to give up these efforts as a result of both economic and political forces at work. There was a laour shortage and the people of Anna Colony managed to get the support of the ruling party MLA. Despite being forced to accept the existence of Anna Colony, the landowners have continued in various ways to harass the residents of the colony. They have, for instance, blocked the provision of pipe connections to the colony from the new water tank that has been completed, and is to provide water for domestic use.

Yet another indicator of the erosion of a social consensus under the leadership of the Naidus is provided by the breakdown in the system of collection of tax on local agricultural produce taken out of the village for sale. The system known as "Mahimai" used to be common to the village as a whole. The system also provided for nominal taxes on provision and other shops and commercial establishments in the village. The right of collecting the taxes would be auctioned each year to the highest bidder, with ceilings on tax rates imposed by the panchayat board. The amount collected was mainly spent on two temple festivals. Harijans and Thevars were of course all along marginal to this system of taxation since they had little land and did not usually have any surplus produce for sale. Thus, "Mahimai" was essentially an arrangement involving the Naidu and Konar households. A few years ago, however, a dispute arose between these two communities in relation to "Mahimai", as a consequence of which Konars broke off from the common Mahimai and set up their own separate Mahimai. Now there are two Mahimais in the village, each specific to a caste.

Village Administration

Earlier surveys have referred to the degree of social cohesion and local initiative that marked out Vadamalaipuram from most other villages. Thirumalai remarks that '.... few villages in South India have attained the reputation for corporate activities of every kind that Vadamalaipuram had done and maintained for about twenty years.' The co-operative society which flourished at the time of the first survey in 1916 was considered a model, though by 1936 it had collapsed and gone into liquidation. As early as 1916, the village had an actively functioning administration which was in the hands of a panchayat board of sixteen persons. The members of the board, we are told, were appointed by the villagers and retained their membership until their death except in cases of grave misconduct. With the benefit of hindsight, one would probably be correct in presuming that the board did not include Harijans and might have even been solely composed of Naidus. Nonetheless, the fact that an 'elected' panchayat was functioning, that it met regularly twice a month, that it had the farshghtedness to provide for the running of a local school out of the profits of the co-operative society--all these testify to the cohesive character of the social life of the village then. Even in 1936, although the co-operative society had gone into liquidation, an elected panchayat board as well as an elected panchayat court were functioning. The board members were elected once in three years, and carried on the administration of the village with the assistance of the Karnam and the Munsiff. The board met at least once a month. Among the achievements of the village listed by Thirumalai were the starting and working of the first co-operative society in the district, opening of a grain lending institution, introduction of compulsory education, a well organised system of tax collection, and expenditure on local amenities such as lighting of streets, library etc.

By 1958, however, much of this had disappeared. An elected panchayat continued to exist, and according to Haswell, had one Harijan member. The inclusion of the village in the N.E.S. Block in 1952 helped provide the village some additional economic and social overheads such as better roads and improved drainage. But the process of disintegration of the community as a corporate entity that had set in earlier continued. The co-operative society was never revived. The introduction of pumpset irrigation led to a further strengthening of individual economy. These trends have continued. While there was at least an elected panchayat in 1958, even this no longer exists. With the destruction of whatever was left of democratic institutions at the panchayat level and the breakdown in social cohesion earlier enforced by the dominant landed gentry drawn from the Naidu and Konar communities, the earlier tradition of social cohesion and local initiative seem to have more or less disappeared.

CHAPTER IX : THE CHANGING FACE OF VADAMALAIPURAM AN ASSESSMENT

In the foregoing chapters, we have attempted to review the economic and social changes that have taken place in Vadamalaipuram between 1916 when it was first surveyed and 1983. The aspects of demographic change, shifts in occupational structure, social infrastructure, the state of agriculture, ownership and distribution of land and other assets, the conditions of agricultural and non-agricultural labour and social relations have been dealt with in succession. A comprehensive review and comparison of the specific aspects at four different points in time-1916, 1936, 1958 and 1983 has not been possible on account of differences in scope and in the methodologies adopted in the various surveys. Nor has it been possible to provide an exhaustive picture of the social and economic life of the village in 1983 in view of the limited coverage of our survey and constraints of time, data and resources. Nonetheless, enough evidence has been put together to enable us to attempt, in this chapter, an assessment of the changes that have occurred. Our focus shall be mainly on the period 1958-83.

The demographic changes described earlier highlight the fact that the village achieved some degree of demographic stability only towards the end of the 'fifties, with a steady growth in population since 1958, which accelerated in the 'seventies. This appears to have been made possible by two developments. One was the introduction of the new technology in agriculture, particularly the rapid spread of motorised lift irrigation, which made the use of high yielding variety seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides worthwhile and also contributed to an increased intensity of cropping. The other development was the emergence of industry in and near the village, specifically the spread of match industry from

nearby Sivakasi to the village with five match units functioning in the village now, and the starting of the Swamiji Spinning mills two kilometers from the village on the road to Virudhunagar. While in the absence of vital statistics and in view of the very limited data available, it is not possible to provide a systematic and conclusive demographic analysis, the data on migration certainly support the hypothesis advanced above. A third development should also be noted. This is the growth of an educated workforce, consisting especially of trained teachers and clerical employees in government and private service, but also of a number of unemployed youth. The rise of education has led to some emigration, in the absence of which the rate of growth of population would have been greater.

The period between 1958 and 1983 has witnessed a decisive and dramatic change in the economic life of the village. While agriculture was almost the sole activity in 1958, a remarkably diversified occupational structure had come to prevail by 1983. The share of manufacturing in total employment rose to 30.75 per cent by 1983 from as low a figure as 1.6 per cent in 1958. The major contributions have come from the spinning mill and the match factories. The occupational structures of all the major castes show a greater diversity in 1983, but the degree of change is unequal and the character of it different. Thevars and Pallars have mostly got into employment in manufacturing, while Naidus have also diversified considerably into educated and professional employment. The Chakkiliars have benefited the least. The increased availability of employment opportunities in manufacturing has led to increased female participation in the workforce, and a greater proportion of the female workforce is in manufacturing than is the case for the male workforce. But male workers in manufacturing are mostly in the relatively modern mill while all the female workers in manufacturing are employed in the

technically backward match units located within or very near the village. The mill workers are organised into unions while there are no unions in the match sector.

The mill and the match units have also had an impact on social relations-especially caste relations-in the village. Harijans now walk through the caste-Hindu streets where the match units are located and work side by side with them in the factories. The significant employment of Pallars in the mill and their exposure to and involvement in union activity has led them to assert their democratic rights. They-especially the youth among them-are far less subservient to the dominant landowners belonging to Naidu and Konar castes. However, caste oppression has by no means been eliminated. Even among the Pallars, quite a few serve as pannaiyals to Naidu landlords, and are subjected to various forms of discrimination. In the case of Chakkiliars, their continued near-total dependence on agricultural labour for a livelihood makes them almost entirely dependent on the landlords. Even today they continue to serve as 'pagadai' and must observe the traditional norms of subservience to caste Hindu landlords.[1/]

The emergence of employment opportunities in manufacturing has been a positive aid to the Thevar households in breaking out of their servitude to Naidu landlords. With the rise of a demand for labour from the mills, the local match units, and match and other industrial units which came up rapidly in nearby Sivakasi and Thiruthangal during this period, there was a relative labour shortage. This created a situation where the landowners could not muscle the labourers into submission when the Thevar households managed to move out of the cattle-sheds of landlords to huts near the main road from Virudhunagar to Sivakasi.

Even in 1916, Vadamalaipuram was a relatively 'modern' village with a flourishing co-operative society, an elementary school offering free instruction, a drainage system and a functioning village administration. Over the decades, there has been considerable progress in social infrastructure. Schooling upto the tenth standard is now available in the village. A far higher proportion of children in the school-going age group attend school now than in earlier years, among both caste Hindus and Harijans. Electricity has come to the village. The post office with telephone connection to the Sivakasi exchange highlights the improvement in communications. The advance in literacy and education has been remarkable. This is particularly true of female literacy. The advance in literacy has of course been uneven, and literacy levels remain low for Thevars and Harijans. Even more uneven has been the progress at higher levels of education, these being almost entirely monopolised by the Naidu and Konar landowning households.

The agrarian economy of the village has been modernised rapidly since Independence, and more particularly in the last twenty five years. Even in 1916, commercial crops formed part of the cropping pattern of the village. Commercialisation has since then increased a great deal, with paddy and millets also being produced for the market now. The technical modernisation in the form of pumpset irrigation, and use of tractors, high yielding variety seeds, chemical fertilisers and pesticides, has led to more intensive cropping and higher yields. Between 1958 and 1983, yields of all major crops - paddy, cotton, chillies, ragi and cumbu-have increased substantially. The yields are also higher than the average for Tamil Nadu for each of these crops.[2/] However, with the substantial increase in costs, per acre returns in real terms have probably not increased by very much.

With the introduction of pumpsets and the advent of tractors, there has been a sharp fall in draught cattle stock between 1958 and 1983. The use of tractors has also meant a displacement of male agricultural labour engaged for ploughing even as it has led to enormous incomes for the handful of tractor owners. The increase in cropping intensity and yields have led to increased female employment in transplanting, weeding and harvesting.

Land distribution in Vadamalaipuram-as practically everywhere else in India- is highly unequal. This has been the case throughout. But what is new is that the modernisation of agriculture between 1958 and 1983 has led to a marginal increase in the degree of concentration of land and other assets. Nearly 80 per cent of households in 1983 were either landless or held less than 5 acres of land as compared to only around 65 per cent in 1958. Real wages for agricultural labour have hardly increased between 1916 and 1983. However, while real wages had declined substantially between 1916 and 1958, the period 1958 and 1983 was one of a rise in wages of agricultural labour, a rise largely brought about by an increase in employment opportunities in manufacturing activity. However, since this increase has been accompanied by a decline in the number of days of employment for males, annual earnings have remained more or less the same over the last twenty five years. The per capita annual income of households solely dependent on agricultural labour works out to be around Rs.740, well below the poverty line in 1983. Many agricultural labour households seek supplementary income from livestock raising and employment in match factories in the village and in nearby Thiruthangal.

The overall picture that one gets is thus of some major structural changes in the economy of the village, of which the most important are the modernisation of agriculture and

the rise of manufacturing activity. However, these changes have taken place within the constraints of a highly unequal distribution of land and other assets, and of political and social power as well. The new technology has made agriculture profitable for the dominant landowners while the small cultivators have been caught in the trap of increasing costs on the one hand, and unremunerative and sharply fluctuating prices for produce on the other. The bigger landowners have also been able to cushion themselves to some extent against the vagaries of nature and the product market by diversifying into professional employment. The biggest among them have found a lucrative new source of income in the business of hiring out tractors. For the landless agricultural labourers, the new strategy has been of little benefit with a decline in number of days of employment offsetting the increase in wages.

The rise of manufacturing has been a positive factor in enabling many agricultural labour and small cultivator households to survive, both directly by the employment it has provided and indirectly by inducing a rise in wages of agricultural labour.

The ongoing process of modernisation assisted by state intervention has helped improve social infrastructure, but here again the major beneficiaries have been the landowning strata consisting of a section of Naidu and Konar households. A significant degree of correspondence continues to exist between caste and occupation, with Naidu and Konar landowner households monopolising the professional and educated occupations, and Thevar and Harijan households mainly engaged in agricultural labour, and to a lesser extent in manual employment in match factories and the mill. The process of modernisation has led to a breakdown of social cohesion and the social consensus earlier imposed by the dominant landed gentry. A positive element in the process, however, has been the elimination

of some of the more crude forms of caste oppression, at least as far as the Pallars are concerned. But even this is far from complete and has been resisted by the Naidu landlords. Particularly disturbing in this regard is the persistence of caste ideology among the youth of the village, many of them educated.

To sum up, there has been considerable economic growth and modernisation in Vadamalaipuram over the sixty odd years since it was first surveyed in 1916, but it has failed to significantly improve the standards of living of the mass of the population. Through all the changes that have occurred, the bigger landowners have kept their position in tact and have enriched themselves. This should of course be hardly surprising since the changes have taken place within the context of a prior distribution of the ownership of means of production, and on the basis of the rules of the game that protect and reinforce the ownership structure. State intervention too has scrupulously respected the rules of the game, and more often than not, actively intervened on behalf of the economically and socially dominant stratum.

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1/ An incident that occurred while we were doing an interview in the Chakkiliar street illustrates this point. A Naidu landlord passed by on a pathway going around the Chakkiliar settlement. Immediately our respondent, a young man, stood up, and did not sit down until after the landlord had disappeared from our view. When I asked the respondent the reason for his action, he said that there had been fines imposed on the Chakkiliars whenever this form of respect was not shown.

2/ The yield for paddy at 1.67 tonnes per acre for instance, is substantially higher than the average for Tamil Nadu which is around 1.3 tonnes per acre.