

Chapter II

SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE OF SELECTED VILLAGES

2.1 Location and environment - the district and the taluk

Ramanathapuram is one of the coastal districts of Tamil Nadu. It lies on the eastern sea coast of the southern sub-continent of India with a projection into the wedging between Madurai and Tirunelveli districts (Map 1). According to the District Gazetteer¹, the district as constituted at present was formed in 1910. Earlier to the formation of the district, the eastern region of the district was mainly covered by the Zamins of Ramanathapuram and Sivagangai. Being one of the drought prone regions of the state, it may be considered as broadly typical of other backward regions in Tamil Nadu. The economy of the district is also no exception to that of the state, as it is predominantly agricultural with 65 per cent of its total working population dependent on agriculture as cultivators or labourers (as per 1971 Census)². The Techno-economic Survey Report on Madras State³ identified this district as a region with low development due to its low agricultural productivity. It was estimated that the man-land ratio in the district viz., 0.69 acre per man (1955-56), was the highest in the state and was higher than the corresponding state average of 0.49

acre per man. Viswanatha Murthi et.al.⁴ observed that Ramanathapuram is one of the dry districts in the state. Though agriculture provides employment in large measure, it is not prosperous. A large part of land is barren and uncultivable. C.T. Kurien⁵ found that within the state of Tamil Nadu, Ramanathapuram is one ^{of} the two districts which showed the greater out-migration trends. Yeshwant⁶ goes further and remarked that Ramanathapuram is one of the districts where outmigratory tendencies from rural tracts are found to be of importance. He identified Muslims, Christians, and Nadars as being the more migration-prone communities from this district. Das Gupta⁷ et. al. observe that among the villages of Tamil Nadu, the villages in Ramanathapuram district are highly migration-prone villages.

Sivaganga is one among the northern taluks of Ramanathapuram district. It is bounded on the east by Tiruvadanai taluk, on the south by Paramakudi taluk, on the north by Thirupathur taluk of Ramanathapuram district. Madurai district forms the western boundary (see Map 2). It is almost a rural taluk of 126 villages with only 2 urban centres and spreading into an area of 1144 square kilometers. With weak urban influences coupled with the poor state of roads, transport and communication, there are problems of marketing and supply of essential inputs in this area. This taluk is a labour surplus region. Nearby

agriculturally prosperous regions and distant urban centres provide employment opportunities to labour from this taluk. Out-migration during off-season is sizeable.

The climate in Sivaganga taluk is generally hot and dry with a low degree of humidity. The district gets a major portion of the rainfall from the north-east monsoon during October-December. Rainfall is often late irregular and scanty. If the rains fail, crops cannot be raised. It happens more often than not. A few scattered showers also occur in the district during the hotter months of March to July. Table 2.1 shows that over the 10 years from 1972-1981, the rainfall has ranged between 471 to 1067 mms. per annum in Sivaganga taluk.

Table 2.1

Annual rainfall in Sivaganga Taluk - 1972-1981

Year	Rainfall in m.m.
1	2
1972	570.8
1973	673.1
1974	471.7
1975	475.6
1976	753.7
1977	1067.4
1978	356.3
1979	1067.3
1980	790.4
1981	1010.4

Source: Statistical Office, Sivaganga Division.

The soils of Kananthapuram district consist chiefly of black sand or loam or red sand. In Sivaganga taluk soils are partly red laterite, red clayey loam and partly black clayey loam. In the clayey loam soils in tank fed areas, wet land crops like paddy, sugarcane and banana are cultivated. In the laterite soil, dry crops like millets and oil seeds are cultivated.

The irrigated area in the region depends almost entirely on rainfed tanks and water is available from them for two to three months. The district may aptly be described as "the land of tanks". There are 3824 irrigation tanks in the district. The irrigation system in the district consists of a number of minor tanks fed partly from their independent catchment and partly from the diversion of river waters and jungle streams through canals. Sluices are provided to these tanks with vents. The flow is regulated by still. The water from the tanks are drawn for irrigation through natural flow. When the water level recedes beneath the sill level, manual drawing of water is resorted. Due to paucity of water only a small proportion of the cultivated area can sustain more than one crop a year. The shortage of water leads to dependence on low yielding and less water requiring crops. Scarcity of grasses on pasture land and cultivable waste land, and lack of regeneration on forest land, ultimately result in low productivity as a common phenomenon in this region.

2.2 Location and environment - the selected villages

The field research on which this study is based was carried out in two villages of Sivaganga taluk. They were selected by purposive stratified sampling procedure. Care was taken to choose them in such a way that they were not too close to each other, and further that they were situated away from urban centres. The general features of the villages are mostly captured by observation and the detailed survey conducted in the months of May 1981 and February 1982 through a questionnaire.

The village, Silandagudi, herein after known as the first village, is situated on the northern most border of the Sivaganga taluk. (Its Census code number is 17) (Map 3). It is connected by a kutcha road of 0.5 km. length to Madurai-Kallai main road. It is surrounded by bigger villages like Madagupatty, Paganeri and Chokkanathapuram in different directions, which have better infra-structural facilities. The village is at a distance of 5 kms. from the state highway. The taluk head quarters is located at a distance of 20 kms. The other basic facilities such as health centre, cooperative credit society, revenue office, high school, telegraph and telephone office, police station are all situated at Madagupatty at a distance of 4 kms. The nearest bus halt to the village is situated at a distance of 0.5 k.m. and the railway station is away by 15 kms. at Kallai.

The other village, Siriyur, herein after indicated as the second village, is located in the south eastern extreme of the taluk (Map 4). (Its census location code number is 195). It is away from Kalayarkovil - Ilayangudi main road by 4 k.ms. The connecting road is crude sandy cart track winding through tanks and embankments. Nearest developed village with various facilities such as health centre etc., is Maravanangalam, situated at a distance of 4 k.ms. Though this village is surrounded by towns like Kalayarkovil, and Ilayangudi, it is isolated from them due to poor communication facilities. To get a bus, the people of this village have to trek a distance of 4 k.ms., while the railway station is located at a distance of 20 k.ms. at Mattarasankottai.

The availability of various infrastructural facilities for the number of villages and the proportion of population is presented in table 2.2 for Ramanathapuram district as well as Sivaganga taluk. It is a good pointer to the relative backwardness of the district and taluk. Similarly the availability of various facilities, their locations and distances from the survey villages are presented in table 2.3. The relative distance is a good indicator of the relative remoteness of the villages.

Table 2.2

Availability of amenities in Ramanathapuram district
and Sivaganga taluk.

Amenities	Ramanathapuram district		Sivaganga taluk	
	No. of institutions per 1000 population	Percentage of villages with such facility	No. of institutions per 1000 population	Percentage of villages with such facility
1	2	3	4	5
<u>Education</u>				
Primary school	0.7217	-	0.7967	-
Middle school	0.1227	-	0.1640	-
High school	0.0050		0.0219	
College & Other educational institutions	0.0003		0.0035	
Library and reading room	0.0640		-	
<u>Medical</u>				
Hospital	0.0122		-	
Health Centre	0.0103		0.0110	
Dispensary	0.0283		0.0549	
Maternity and child welfare centre	0.0433		0.0275	
Power supply		53.37		35.71
<u>Drinking water</u>				
Tap		4.63		-
Well		75.05		80.16
Tank		14.95		17.46
Tubewell		0.14		-
River		0.28		-
<u>Communication</u>				
Pucca Road		42.17		39.60
Kutcha road		21.05		60.79
Post Office		34.94		29.37
Telegraph office		2.91		2.53

Source: District Census Handbook, Part X-A, 1971.

Table 2.3

Location and accessibility of various facilities
for the survey villages

Purpose of visit from village	Name of place	Mode of trans- port	Dis- tance in k.ms.	Location	Size of town/vi- llage by popula- tion
1	2	3	4	5	6
<u>1. Milandagudi</u> (the first village)					
1. Secondary education	Madagupatti	Walk/ cycle	4.0	Sivagam- ga taluk	2643
2. Medical and health	Alavakottai	-do/ cart	6.0	"	2527
3. Small purchases	Madagupatti	-do-	4.0	"	2643
4. Bulk purchases	Tirupathur	Bus	20.0	Tirupathur taluk	15,310
5. Purchase of agri- cultural inputs	Madagupatti	walk/ cycle	4.0	Sivaganga taluk	2643
6. Agricultural marketing	-do-	-do-/ cart	"	"	2643
7. Cooperative and bank work	Togoneri	Bus	9.0	"	3399
8. Revenue and court work	Sivaganga	Bus	20.0	Taluk head quarters	4797
<u>2. Siriyur</u> (The second village)					
1. Secondary education	Marava- manga	walk	4.0	Sivaganga taluk	2193
2. Medical and health	-do-	-do/ cart	"	"	"
3. Small purchases	-do-	-do-	"	"	"
4. Bulk purchases	-do-	-do-	"	"	"
5. Purchase of agri- cultural inputs	-do-	-do-	"	"	"
6. Agricultural marketing	-do-	-do-/ cart	"	"	"
7. Cooperative and bank work	-do-	-do-	"	"	"
8. Revenue and court work	Sivaganga	Bus	30.0	Taluk Head quarters	4797

Source: Information collected during the Survey. Population figures (Col.6) are based on Census, 1971.

The first village is electrified and is provided with a government primary school. Besides one grocery shop, a potty shop and a part-time tea stall, there is one civil supplies rationshop. It distributes the monthly quota of rice, sugar and kerosene at fair price. The village common-place is a tiled building with a raised platform-like construction and is used as a community centre in the evenings. It is equipped with a community radio set provided by the village panchayat, which is well utilised by the villagers. Like other primary school children in the state, here also, the school going children are provided with free mid-day meals under the government sponsored scheme. The village panchayat has provided one well and two hand pump operated bore wells for drinking water. In addition to this, the village has got a tank exclusively for drinking water. The post man from Madagupatty comes daily to the village to deliver letters and to clear the post box kept in the village common place. He also vende postal stationary to the villagers. Though most of the houses are thatched ones, they are well maintained and look clean. There are a few tiled and terraced houses also. The houses are well laid out in parallel rows with good street formation. Consumer durables like cycles, transistor radios, steel folding chairs, torch lights are found to be in use with a good number of households.

In the second village, the houses are scattered into

three clusters according to caste group formation. The Mar^avar households live in the main village. The Christian Eadar households live in a separate cluster nearer to the main village. The scheduled caste population live in a separate cluster further away from the village. There is no orderliness in street formation and the space between houses is irregular and untidy. Though it is an electrified village, not many houses have domestic connection. A privately owned rice and flour mill is functioning in the village. It caters to the neighbouring villages also. Due to the non-availability of a village common place, the panchayat radio is kept idle in the rice mill. There are no shops worth mentioning. To post a letter, to get their monthly ration of essential commodities from the fair price shop and even to drink a cup of tea, the villagers have to walk a distance of 2 k.ms. to the neighbouring village, Usilangulam. During the first survey, it was observed that due to severe drought, even to take bath, people had to depend upon the tank in Usilangulam. The Christian parish of nearby village, Sooranam, runs the village primary school and here also the school children are provided with free mid-day meals. The visit of the post man to the village is not regular, as their outside contact is limited and frequency of delivery of letters is much limited. One homeopathic doctor has established private practice in the village. The drinking water well

provided by the parchayat has become unusable and they draw water from a spring dug out in the nearby channel.

2.3 Population and household characteristics

Table 2.4 shows that the number of households were 106 and 113 in the first and second village respectively with a population of 559 and 535 in 1971 (Census 1971). Hence the average size of the household worked out to be 5.27 for the first village and 4.73 for the second village, whereas the district and taluk average was 4.6. The density of population for the district was 227 per sq.kms. and 159 for the taluk. For the survey villages it was reported to be 130 and 141 respectively (Census 1971). It appears that though the average size of the family in the first village was higher, the density of population was relatively smaller as compared to that in the second village. The labour-force participation ratios for the district and taluk were 35 per cent and 32 per cent respectively, whereas for the survey villages it was around 30 per cent. In conformity to general pattern the sex ratio was also adverse for the villages.

Considering these demographic features derived from the 1971 Census, it appears that the survey villages are of medium size with a population around 500 and reflect the general characteristics of the taluk and the district. Hence they were preferred for this study as sample villages.

Table 2.4

Demographic particulars of the survey villages, the taluk and the district as per Census 1971

Name	Area in hectares	No. of house-holds	Population		Persons		Scheduled Caste	
			Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
			4	5	6	7	8	9
<u>Village-1: Nilandagudi</u>	491.39	106	263	296	559	0	0	0
<u>Village-2: Siriyur</u>	373.03	113	260	275	535	69	92	101
<u>Sivaganga Taluk</u>	1144.00	39252	88391	93496	181887	12774	13294	26060
<u>Ramanathapuram Dist.</u>	1257900	616932	1400335	1459372	2860207	227739	231077	459616

Name	Literates		Persons		Workers		Non-workers		Density of population per sq.km.
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
<u>Village-1: Silandagudi</u>	91	19	110	163	7	170	398	130	
<u>Village-2: Siriyur</u>	126	26	152	165	3	168	367	141	
<u>Sivagangai Taluk</u>	45947	19482	65423	40807	10166	58573	122314	159	
<u>Ramanathapuram Dist.</u>	766476	370153	113623	761876	253469	1020345	1839062	227	

Source: District Census Handbook, Part X-B, Volume 1, 1971.

When the first survey was conducted in May 1981 in the two sample villages, 104 households were found to be living and present in the first village and 86 households were living and present in the second village. All these households were interviewed. These figures were slightly less than the figures reported in 1971 Census. Though it was our intention to survey all the households, some of the households were reported to have migrated for seasonal jobs outside the village and their houses were locked. At the time of the second survey in February 1982, the actual number of families surveyed happened to be exactly the same as in the first survey in both the villages, i.e., 104 in the first village and 86 in the second village. However, ⁱⁿ some of the households who were not present at the time of the first survey were present now and were interviewed, while some of the households interviewed in the first survey had gone away for seasonal work. For the analytical convenience and uniformity, only those households which were interviewed in both the surveys were taken up for the study. Thus, the number of common households who were interviewed in both the surveys comes to 77 for the first village and 72 for the second village. The population of surveyed households was 421 in the first village and 360 in the second village. The average size of the household turned out to be 5.46 and 5.00 for the first and second village respectively. These are slightly higher than

the 1971 Census figures. Here also, the first village was found to have bigger family size in comparison to the second village. The labour force participation ratio was 53 per cent for both the villages. This is much higher than what was reported in 1971 Census. This may be due to the variation in the definition of a worker based on his status and activity. In the survey, irrespective of age and sex, any one who was employed for few days in the preceding year, i.e., by usual status and priority criterion was reckoned as worker. This is inclusive of unpaid family farm worker also. Use of this concept of worker, gives a higher labour force participation ratio.

As far as the educational attainment of the population is concerned, table 2.5 shows that the incidence of illiteracy is higher in the first village than in the second village.

Table 2.5

Educational Status of population and labour force
in survey villages

<u>Village</u> <u>educational</u> <u>status</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Labour</u> <u>force</u>	<u>Percentage to total</u> <u>population</u>	<u>Labour</u> <u>force</u>
<u>1. Silandagudi</u>				
Illiterates	270	144	64.13	64.57
Primary level	102	51	24.23	22.87
Middle level	35	22	8.31	9.87
Secondary & above	14	6	3.33	2.60
All	421	223	100.00	100.00
<u>2. Sirigux</u>				
Illiterates	214	118	59.44	61.73
Primary level	114	47	31.67	24.61
Middle level	25	20	6.94	10.47
Secondary & above	7	6	1.94	3.14
All	360	191	100.00	100.00

Source: The household survey conducted for the purpose of this study. It will hereafter be referred to as "The household Survey 1981-82".

One-fourth of the population in the second village is Christians, and the local primary school is managed by Christian parish. This is an added advantage. It may be noticed that the percentage of population educated above middle school level was comparatively higher in the first village. This might be due to the fact ^{that} there is a high school in a nearby village which is accessible by a good road.

2.4 Socio-cultural features

In the first village there are different caste groups of Hindus. Among them 34 per cent belong to a single caste group known as Valayers. They are also known as Thevarar or Ambalam. Basically they are hunters with bow and arrow and also skillful snake catchers. The farming community of Vellalas constitute 9 per cent of the population. Other caste groups like Mudaliar, Mutharaiyer, and Agamudiar were in minority. This village does not have any scheduled caste population.

In the second village, Hindus constitute 75 per cent of the population. The rest are Christians. 70 per cent of Hindus are Maravars, a sturdy race of people. They are also identified as 'Thevar'. The Asari community which is about 12 per cent of Hindu population in the village, is mainly a craftsman caste engaged in carpentry and smithy. The scheduled castes form the remaining 10 per cent. They are known by their occupation.

For example Chakkiliyan will be engaged as Cobblers. Pallans are mostly wage paid agricultural labourers. Parayana are engaged as scavengers and also to perform funeral rites at the burning ghat. Vadanans serve as the washermen of the village. Besides their primary occupation, the men, women, and children of the scheduled caste households also go for agricultural operations as wage labourers in the busy season. The Christians are Nadars by community. Their main occupation was palmyra climbing for teddy tapping. In addition to this, they take to farming also.

In these two villages, the communities represented in the population are almost backward communities as recognised in other places. Since these villages are remote and situated in backward regions, forward communities such as Brahmins are not found. Due to predominance of numbers and control over sizeable portion of land, Valayars in the first village and Maravars in the second village have emerged as dominant social groups.

It is generally believed that the distinction between class and caste is very narrow. Hence the occupation oriented class distinctions also merge with social caste groups. Based on the primary occupations, the households in the survey villages were grouped into six distinct economic categories such as marginal farmers, small farmers, medium farmers,

agricultural labourers, artisans and the residue as 'others'.

In the first village, though predominant occupation of the households is farming, such other occupations like mat weaving, basket making, fishing, broom making were taken as secondary occupations in the off season. In the rainy season Valayars go to Kerala State for snake catching, which will be sold to tanneries engaged in unauthorized export of snake skins to western countries. Snake catching for this purpose is unlawful. Despite the risk involved in this job and illegality, these people take to it due to the lure of money in it. Some of the households in the village owe their affluence to this. As they were afraid of the law, most of them did not make any mention about this subsidiary occupation, when they were interviewed for the survey.

At the time of the first survey, though prohibition policy was in force throughout the state, the Christian Nader households reported that their primary occupation was toddy tapping. Due to non-availability of sufficient numbers of palmyra and coconut trees in the vicinity of the village, these people migrate with their families to nearby Tanjore district, where their skills are in demand. When they engage in their traditional occupation, their women and children go for wage-paid agricultural operations.

The way of life in the first village is comparatively found to be better off. The lay out of the village, structure of the houses, the use of radios, bicycles etc., indicate their awareness and consciousness for development. The village is not so much isolated and is connected with various infra-structural facilities of nearby places by a good road and frequent bus service. Moreover, majority of the migrants from this village have gone to metropolitan towns in the distant northern states and some have even gone to neighbouring countries. Their exposure to the outside world widens their horizons. When they visit their native village, they bring some influences and it improves the way of life and attitude of the people.

The second village is rather remote. It is difficult to avail of the infra-structural facilities available in the nearby places due to lack of good connections. Further the majority of migrants from this village are seasonal agricultural labourers to neighbouring district. Their impact on the general village life is insignificant.

In the first village a single community, viz., Valayar, constitute the sizeable portion of the population. At the same time, the other minority caste groups are not that inferior in in social hierarchy. Hence the social differences between the communities are not felt much. There is cohesion and cooperation

among the caste groups. An elderly person from the dominant caste group is accepted as the village leader. All matters connected with the general interest of the village were decided on the basis of decision taken in the village meetings. Such meetings are held at village common place. The village elder presides over the meeting. Though discussions are allowed on the matter of dispute, the decision of the village elders is final and binding. The villagers abide by that. Matters relating to money, government and matters external to the village are decided on the basis of the opinion of a relatively more educated person (belonging to a richer family of secondary community). Due to good mutual understanding and cooperation prevailing in the village, certain norms of conduct are adhered to strictly. For example, smoking and consumption of intoxicants within the village is forbidden by the village community. Similarly revealing one's own affiliation to political parties, public meetings by political parties, erection of party flag posts within the village etc., are forbidden. Any one violating these norms is fined and if he repeats, he is liable to be evicted out of the village. The interaction between different communities in the village is smooth and sound. There does not seem to be any conflict or clash of interest among the different caste groups of the village.

The picture of community living is not so bright in the second village. Different caste groups live in distinct

clusters. The scheduled caste population in the village are engaged in agricultural operations as wage paid labourers. But they are not treated on par with others. For example, a Harijan cannot walk across the village with his footwear or turban on, and has to keep his shoulder-cloth in hand. A Harijan cannot go through the village sitting in a bullock cart. Though the village rice mill is catering to neighbouring villages, local Harijans cannot make use of it and have to take recourse to hand pounding of the grains. Christian Nadars and Asaris also are not considered as equals by the dominant, Maravars. Though the Christian Nadars and Asaris are economically prosperous, they are smaller in number and are not able to claim equal status with Maravars. There is little understanding and cooperation among the village communities. This gets reflected in the deterioration of village life. When the village drinking water well became unusable, it was left without making any efforts to renovate it. Village womenfolk go over a long distance to bring drinking water. There is no village common place. So the community radio set is remaining idle. The absence of commercial establishments such as tea shops lead to isolation and lack of interaction among different communities.

The way of life has not changed much in terms of conditions of houses, sanitation facilities, the use of consumer durables, dress etc., Poor communication facilities keep the village more

isolated and free from much of outside influences. Generally, the scheduled caste population accept the superiority of the Maravars without any resentment. This arises out of their economic dependency on Maravars for their livelihood.

2.5 Economic characteristics

The rural economy is influenced by the nature of agricultural production. Land and its allied characteristics ultimately determine the nature of economic activity in the villages. The soil in the first survey village is of Red laterite variety with lesser fertility. There are four rainfed tanks which provide the irrigational facility to the village lands. These four tanks viz., Periya kannoi, Chiriya kannoi, Nachiyar kannoi, Kudikathan kannoi together provide irrigational facility to the extent of 66 hectares. Besides these tanks, private wells with pump sets are in use. The location of the tanks, frequent failure of monsoons and the soil conditions result in lesser retention of water. As a result, mostly the land remains unirrigated except for small strips. The cost of well irrigation is very high due to hard terrain and poor groundwater potential. The survey reveals that 77 households own a total land area of 41.35 hectares. Out of which only 21 per cent of the land is irrigated and is used to raise wet crops like paddy.

The soil in the second village is red clayey loam in nature. Its moisture retention capacity is relatively higher. But the groundwater is totally unusable and the tanks are the only source of irrigation. Sooragudi Kannaol, Kunakodai Kannaol, Viriyur Big Kannaol, and Small Kannaol are the four irrigational tanks in the village with a capacity to irrigate about 141 hectares. As the groundwater is unusable, failure of monsoon results in complete paralysation of agricultural operations. However the fertility of the soil is relatively high. The 72 households surveyed from this village reported a total land holding of around 59 hectares, of which 88 per cent are wet lands and used for paddy cultivation. Depending upon the availability of water in the tanks, they raise second crop also.

Table 2.6 shows the land utilisation particulars in the survey villages and Sivaganga taluk. In the first village, out of the total area available, only 22 per cent is cultivated. Nearly 60 per cent of land is remaining fallow, due to paucity of water in the tanks, prohibitive cost of well irrigation and difficult terrain.

In the second village 39 per cent of total land area is cultivated. 10 per cent of the cultivable land is remaining fallow. The proportion of uncultivable land which is put to non-agricultural use is much higher. Nearly 51 per cent of the

Table 2.6

Land utilisation details of survey villages and taluk

Land use	1. Silendagudi		2. Siriyur		Sivaganga Taluk	
	Area in hectare	Percent- age to total	Area in hectare	Percent- age to total	Area in Hec- tare	Percent- age to total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I. Uncultivable land						
Forests	3.31	0.77	0.00	0.00	4944.4	4.56
Barren	0.00	0.00	4.94	1.30	937.6	0.92
Non-agricultural use land	73.37	17.04	186.70	49.27	30125.6	27.77
Sub-total	76.68	17.81	191.64	50.57	36067.6	33.25
II. Cultivable but not cultivated						
Cultivable waste	0.00	0.00	36.03	9.52	6436.0	5.93
Permanent pasture	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	109.2	0.10
Land under miscellaneous tree crops	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	330.0	0.30
Current fallows	0.63	0.16	1.17	0.31	1744.0	1.61
Other fallows	256.99	59.62	1.61	0.42	27658.4	25.43
Sub-total	257.67	59.78	38.86	10.25	36277.6	33.43
III Net area sown	96.16	22.33	140.44	39.17	36149.6	33.32
Total	430.51	100.00	376.94	100.00	103494.8	100.00

Source: Season and crop report - G Returns

Taluk office, Sivaganga, June 1980.

total land area is put to non-agricultural use. But it is being used as grazing land for the village cattle. Wild thorny, "Secchai karuvela" trees grow in large number. Periodically these trees are cut and burnt to make charcoal in large quantity. This is sold out to distant urban

centres, where it is used as fuel charcoal making and selling business is owned by people from neighbouring towns. The local poor are employed in operations such as felling of trees, burning of wood, loading of trucks etc.

The cropping pattern in both the villages is more in favour of food crops (Table 2.7). In the first village nearly

Table 2.7

Cropping pattern in the survey villages for the year
1979-80

Sr. No.	Crop	1. Silandagudi		2. Siriyar		Mode of Irrigation
		Area under cultivation in Hec-tare	Perce-n-tage to total	Area under cultivation in Hec-tare	Perce-n-tage to total	
1		2	3	4	5	6
<u>Food</u>						
1.	Paddy-traditional	66.16	68.80	94.50	63.66	Tank
2.	Paddy-high yield-ing variety	00.00	00.00	50.39	33.95	"
3.	Ragi	11.30	11.75	00.00	00.00	"
4.	Varagu	8.96	9.32	1.19	0.80	Rainfed
5.	Jowar	0.00	0.00	0.63	0.42	"
6.	Kudiraivali	0.00	0.00	0.93	0.63	"
7.	Bengalgram	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.05	"
8.	Hordegram	3.50	3.64	0.64	0.44	"
	Sub-total	89.92	93.51	148.36	98.95	
<u>Non-food</u>						
9.	Gingelly	0.00	0.00	0.03	0.05	"
10.	Banana	0.22	0.23	0.00	0.00	Well
11.	Sugarcane	0.33	0.34	0.00	0.00	"
12.	Groundnut	3.29	3.42	0.00	0.00	Rainfed
13.	Cocunut	1.36	1.93	0.00	0.00	Well
14.	Cashewnut	0.42	0.44	0.00	0.00	Rainfed
15.	Vegetables	0.12	0.12	0.00	0.00	Well
	Sub-total	6.24	6.49	0.03	0.05	
	Total	96.16	100.00	148.44	100.00	

Source: Season and crop report - 6 returns.
Taluk Office, Sivagangai, June 1980.

94 per cent of the total area-sown is used for food crops. The rest is cultivated with garden crops. Despite limited irrigational potential, paddy is cultivated in substantial area. Dry crops are also raised in nearly 25 per cent of the total area cultivated. The 7 per cent of land used for other crops are well irrigated. The high yielding varieties of paddy require assured supply of water with good crop management practices. The farmers in the village prefer traditional varieties due to resource constraints.

In the second village, almost the entire land area is used for the cultivation of food crops. Paddy is extensively cultivated in a wider area. Nearly one-third of the paddy cultivated is with high yielding varieties. Only 3 per cent of land is used to raise dry crops. The area under non-food crop is insignificantly small. Sufficiently large quantity of land can be taken up for cultivation as the fertility of the soil, is better. Inadequacy of storage capacity of the tanks, frequent failure of monsoons, and salinity of ground water are the limiting factors.

The crop production pattern is also reflected in food consumption pattern of the population in the survey villages. The main item of the staple food in the first village is constituted equally by rice and millets, whereas in the second village, the main item of food is rice.

Table 2.8Distribution of land for the survey villages

Land size in Ha.:	No. of households	Percentage of HH. to total
1	2	3
<u>1. Silendagudi</u>		
Landless	15	19.48
0.01-0.50	51	40.25
0.51-1.00	21	27.27
1.01-1.50	6	7.79
1.51-2.00	3	3.90
2.01+	1	1.29
All	77	100.00
<u>2. Siriyur</u>		
Landless	8	11.11
0.01-0.50	20	27.78
0.51-1.00	25	31.94
1.01-1.50	8	11.11
1.51-2.00	10	13.89
2.01+	3	4.17
All	72	100.00

Source: The household survey 1981-82.

Table 2.8 presents the distribution of landholding in the two villages. In the first village, nearly 20 per cent of survey households are landless, nearly 60 per cent of households are with holdings in the range of 0.1-1.00 hectares, and about 12 per cent of the households with land size between 1-2 hectares. An insignificantly small proportion of households are holding land more than 2 hectares.

In the second village, the distribution of land appears to be relatively better. Only 11 per cent of the household are without any land, 60 per cent of households are with land holding of less than 1 hectare for 25 per cent of households land size varies between 1-2 hectares, and 4 per cent of the households have more than 2 hectares each.

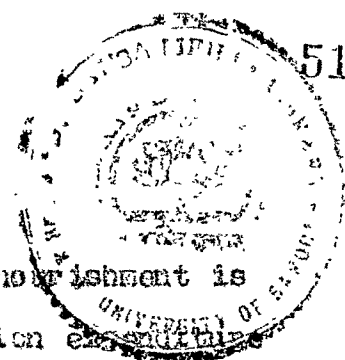
For purposes of further analysis, we propose the following economic classification of households. The families with less than 1 hectare of land may be called marginal farmers. Households with 1-2 hectare of land may be identified as small farmers. Those with more than 2 hectares may be called as medium farmers. Among the non-farming households, those who are engaged primarily in wage paid agricultural operations are classified as agricultural labour households. The village craftsmen like smiths, carpenters etc. are called artisans. The households which does not get covered under any of the above categories can be grouped as 'others'. Table 2.9 shows that 65 per cent of the households in the first village are constituted by landless agricultural labourers and marginal farmers, a vulnerable group, whereas the percentage of such a group in the second village is less than 30%. Medium farmers households make only a small group in the first village but a sizeable group in the second village. The percentage of agricultural labour households in the first village is nearly

twice that of the second village. The percentage of non-farmer households with 'residuary category' of occupation is less in the first village than in the second. Thus, in terms of distribution of assets and economic class formation, the first village is adversely placed in comparison to the second village. The incidence^{of} undernourishment in the first village is also relatively higher.

Table 2.9
Demographic details of survey villages for different economic classes

Village Economic Classes	No. of Popu- house lat- holds ion		Labour force	No. of migra nts	Percentage to total			
	House hold	Popu- lation	force	nts	House hold	Popu- lation	Labour force	Migra nts
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Silandagudi								
I. Marginal farmers	23	143	73	13	29.87	33.97	32.74	30.91
II. Small farmers	9	54	23	9	11.68	12.83	12.56	21.45
III. Medium farmers	4	21	13	3	5.19	4.98	5.83	7.14
IV. Agricultural labourers	27	141	75	9	35.06	33.49	33.63	21.42
V. Artisans	3	21	11	5	3.89	4.99	4.93	11.90
VI. Others	11	41	23	3	14.23	9.74	10.31	7.14
All	77	421	223	42	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.0
2. Siriyur								
I. Marginal farmers	8	42	26	4	11.11	11.67	13.61	9.30
II. Small farmers	15	65	36	2	20.83	13.05	18.85	4.65
III. Medium "	19	106	51	2	26.39	29.44	26.70	4.65
IV. Agricultural labourers	13	54	30	10	13.06	15.00	15.71	23.26
V. Artisans	3	15	9	0	4.17	5.00	4.71	0.00
VI. Others	14	75	39	25	19.44	20.83	20.41	55.14
All	72	360	191	43	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.0

Source: The Household survey - 1981-82.



In the second village, the incidence of malnourishment is not that severe. Considerable amount of consumption expenditure is apportioned to toddy consumption. In some household, its proportion is more than half of the total food consumption expenditure of the household.

In the first village, farming is the primary occupation. This gives rise to employment to the labour force in the village for about four months in the year. An important subsidiary occupation of the majority of the workers in the village is snake catching, for which they go to Kerala in the rainy season for about two months.

In the second village, farming occupies prime of place as occupation for subsistence. In addition to that toddy tapping is a subsidiary occupation. The Christian Nadars who are in substantial number in the village population engage in toddy tapping. These occupations provide employment opportunity to the villagers to a maximum of six to seven months.

Nearness of the first village to state highway and bus and railway transport facility, induces migration. This has been further enhanced due to the limited nature of job opportunities within the village due to difficult terrain and inadequate irrigation facilities. Mostly male youth migrate to urban centres for a long duration. Some even have gone out of the country to Gulf regions, and Malaysia. They send remittances

home, and periodically visit their native village also. This migration from few households and its relative affluence induces further male youth migration. The type of migration resorted to is over long distance and for a longer duration. Usually females do not migrate. They remain at home in the village. The impact of migration is quite reflected in the way of living of the villagers. The use of various consumer durables is a common sight.

In the second village, the scheduled caste population migrate to Tanjore seasonally for short duration. There they work as wage paid farm hands. They are induced to prolong their migration period, whenever there is failure of monsoon in the village. The Christian Nadars as toddy tappers depend upon the availability of palmyra and coconut trees. Since these trees are not that adequate in the vicinity of the village, they migrate to Tanjore, where their skills are in great demand. These people move with their families. Women and children also get employment as farm labourers in the Tanjore delta. Hence seasonal short duration rural to rural migration is common from this village. This happens for about three months in a year. But this migration does not improve the way of living of the people much as most of them are from vulnerable economic group. The dominant community from this village does not take recourse to migration. They consider migration for jobs to be below their dignity.

2.6 Conclusions

As a sum-up, the first village has a more homogeneous social group and there is a better community living and an effective group-decision making process has been established. Due to low land productivity, labour absorption capacity is limited. There is migration to distant urban centres for long duration. The impact of these urban migrants on the life of the village is considerable. This is reflected in the formation of streets, mode of house construction and increased use of consumer durables. Availability of basic amenities has improved the quality of life in the village. However land distribution is relatively more uneven, and the incidence of under-nourishment and underemployment persists for sizeable proportion of the population.

The second village has more diverse social groups who live in separate clusters. Interaction between the groups is limited. The village is also more remote from outside influences. The land quality is comparatively better. The unusability of ground water and frequent droughts in the region affect the agricultural production and employment potential significantly. As a result wage earners cannot sustain themselves within the village and they migrate seasonally to nearby rural areas for short duration. The distribution of land is relatively even. The incidence of undernourishment is not that severe.

From the foregoing it appears that though the first and second villages are from a homogeneous agro-climatic revenue region, they differ much in their socio-economic profiles.

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