

## CHAPTER VI

THE CHANGE

This chapter presents a study of changes in the rural social structure by examining the changes in the several fields of social relations hitherto considered. The major concern in this chapter is to understand the nature of these changes and to assess how far caste, the joint family and the community aspect of the village have changed.

At different stages in the course of my field study I was impressed with the phenomenon that change in the sense of transformation was not taking place. What has been happening were modifications in the different fields of relations and groupings. In 1954 I conducted a specific study to see if this was true of the Nair family and my findings emphasised the need to understand the contemporary changes as modifications rather than changes.<sup>1</sup> My subsequent field material further substantiates this view as will be seen in the course of this chapter. Therefore, when I use the term

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1. K. Raman Unni, "Visiting Husbands in Malabar", Journal of the M.S. University of Baroda, vol.V, No.1, March, 1956, pp.37-56.

change it is synonymous with the term modification in varying degrees or in some parts, and when there is change in the sense of transformation I shall specify it in that sense. In examining the changes, in this chapter, when no specific mention is made about the period, the reference is to the last decade.

Section I of this chapter deals with modern influence, section II, with intercaste relations and the community structure in general, section III, with changes in the Nair family which is the key unit of the power group, section IV, with the observations made in the fourth village and section V is an assessment.

### Section I

#### Modern Influence

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Two books on Malabar published during the last decade have well covered the kinds of modern influences affecting the region.<sup>2</sup> I shall confine to pointing out the manner in which modern influence of whatever kind it be, can affect the rural community.

Broadly speaking, the modern influences are educational, industrial and ideological, and overlapping these divisions is the category of urban influences. In considering changes in structure there is the obvious need

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2. A.C.Mayer, Land and Society in Malabar, (Bombay, 1952), M.S.A.Rao, Social Change in Malabar, (Bombay, 1957).

to recognise other external factors such as governmental policies, the influence of national political parties and the like and internal factors such as increase of population and forces which change certain institutions and groups with the passage of time. Recognition of these can be deferred to later contexts since the main concern here is to point out the limitations within which any external force can work.

Generally, the press, the radio and the cinema influence the mind of the villagers but in these villages dissemination of news and knowledge, except among a third of the number of families of the Nair castes, is through social contacts. There was no permanent cinema centre until 1957 except twenty miles away and after that the cinema centre approached nearer to three miles. The spurt of enthusiasm to see cinema disappeared in one year's time and the pictures reaching there were mythological or stunt ones calculated to have appeal for the masses. On the whole, as some well-informed school teachers told me, its influence is negligible for the lower castes regard a 'cinema day' more as an opportunity to meet and mix with a crowd of known and unknown people, as an occasion to walk up long distance in a hilarious mood in the company of neighbours, than a day to gulp in entertainment for a short while. The radio, even as a privately owned one, has hardly made its appearance in the villages. Education beyond the level of fifth standard is speculated

as a passport for some job in a town, a fact that will become more convincing in the next section. The more the number of schools, including High Schools, the larger the number of teachers who usually belong to the same locality. Normally they live up to the local social expectation of being guides to the students, and to their parents as well, in many matters, and in so doing, they are also agents of control in bringing about the accommodation of the new with the tenor of the old. A few of such teachers have qualities of passive leadership and they are often consulted by the villagers on matters such as the efficacy of a much publicised manure for cultivation, about the sincerity of a political party or about the reliability of a Cooperative Bank, about circumventing the irksome provisions of a new Act of Law.

There are agents who spread the modern influences but usually in this process the contents get reshaped or modified. The same agents are also instrumental in regulating the impact of many an external factor and the result is that the structure does not get the 'kick' of the modern factors as one is likely to anticipate. Such agents are the well-informed 'modern karanavans' of the Nair families, the young men in their prime staying back in the families as a matter of need without seeking urban jobs, and chiefly belonging to these two are the school teacher, the pensioner and the few others who pursue the local open occupations of the high category

mentioned in the last chapter. Belonging to these categories are some active agents who become popular through their success in guiding others and several of them usually belong to the few families of the modern power group (to be described). The pensioner is usually a "bottled up" source of information and an agent of control over the younger generation. He advises the young men "to go slow" and extols the benefit of selective acceptance of things which are urban or new, be it an idea, a dogma, or a belief. He speaks from his experience as an ex-urban man and he gets listening.

Some areas of communal relations described in a former context (chapter IV - II) are important arenas at which modern factors get considerably processed to suit the degree of receptivity, the social preparedness, of the structure, whether of community, of family or other groupings. In recognising the significance of those areas of communal relations we have noted the physical centres at which those operate. The same centres with hardly any modification continue today. Some of those groups such as the bathing-pool group and the door-yard group appear to be more important today due to the partition of taravads into small families. In addition, there are today road-side centres with a cluster of a few shops where these agents have audience or patrons among the groups which form there in the afternoons. One significant

feature to note here is that in such road-side centres the agents have certain standardised degrees of social mixing with the assortment of people there belonging to different castes. The degree depends on the age of the individual agent and the social status of his family. For instance, at a tea shop at such a centre, a young Nair of means may mix with a Tandan to sip tea in the same room but the same Nair at an advanced age may not step into that tea shop. Or, members of families of high social status irrespective of their education and age refrain from entering such modern multi-caste tea shops, and they maintain an attitude of reserve at the road-side. This is not only for reasons of caste but also to avoid highly informal relations with members of poor families of the same caste. When a Nair or a man of a caste higher, steps out of his family compound today he shows in fact three different degrees in the pattern of his social intercourse with lower castes - one within his village, one at the road-side a mile or two away, one at the nearest town eight to ten miles away; and these are in addition to the conservative behaviour he maintains within and around his family compound. A casual visitor is bound to recognise the tea shops as centres contributing to a levelling process between groups. The significance here is also that the reserve and air of superiority of the agents who keep off in this

manner and yet mix with the road-side group in a manner, make them more qualified to be worthy to be listened to as agents. For in such a stratified structure things get more effectively 'lodged' if they are poured down from the top.

There are other centres as well, and the dispersed nature of the settlements shows the need to recognise the centres as nearly important as the agents. These are the houses of the people whose professions bring a regular clientele at their door; for instance, the physician and the astrologer. There is again the extra-departmental post office (one in each of the three villages) where a regular daily gathering forms at the time of the arrival of the mail, the more prominently so during the first week of each month when money orders from the urban employed "swell up the incoming mail bag as a bulky head-load of parched rice", as some expressed it. At all these centres the degree of social mixing and informality are reduced by a few factors such as wide difference in caste rank of the component members, a low degree of neighbourliness among them, and wide difference in the secular status of their families even when they belong to the same caste.

At first sight it may appear that there are several other kinds of agents and centres, as for instance the college or high school students, but their significance

pales as will be seen later when the structure of the modern Nair family is examined. The significance of the urban employed is similarly very limited for their individuality is subsumed, though not destroyed, under the dominance of their rural family, a feature that will also be borne out later.

The modern scene presents non-caste, non-kin, non-village associations and governmental agencies of aid which do not in their actual operation combat out the tendencies of emphasis on loyalty to caste, kin and village. Some of them foster village consciousness and all in general require to be controlled, manned or guided by individuals who exclusively, or in large majority, belong to the higher castes of Nairs and above. The Cooperative Society and the Cooperative Credit Bank with village-wise provisions of aids and facilities, the public reading room, the periodical mobile health and medical unit are of this category. There are in such provisions forces which can foster the lower castes' vertical dependence on higher castes. The lower castes require to be initiated by their master families in making use of these provisions, or the master families have to help them to secure the benefits which can be derived from these. Often, it is not only simple help but managing to bring influence on the authorities concerned and exact the benefit for the dependent families inspite of the fact that the latter have a claim to it.



These villages have not come under the Community Project but it is not unreasonable to say that Community Development Programmes cannot effect distribution of benefits as planned or can transform this pattern of social relations except perhaps when the programmes are spread over decades with periodical evaluations and necessary alterations in its course even with reference to any region in rural Malabar. Factors which support this statement can further be seen in the sections which follow.

In the two recent books mentioned considerable attention has been paid to give coverage to the nature of the modern forces affecting rural Malabar. There is therefore no need to enumerate those and our concern here is, as noted, to point out the major aspects which allow forces of change to work only within certain limitations.

## Section II

The changes in intercaste relations, the community structure at its major points in general, will be examined here. Each aspect or field of intercaste relations treated in the fourth chapter will be considered in outlines and with such details as are relevant to the main theme of this chapter. Further, the unity of village today, and the changes in intra-caste groups will also come within the focus of attention here. Thus in its scope this section covers changes in the following: (i) relations through land and agriculture (ii) resources of wealth and

power of the higher castes (iii) relations through non-agricultural services (iv) intra-caste groups (v) pollution and social intercourse (vi) areas of communal relations (vii) hypergamy (viii) religious worship and (ix) the village.

(i) Relations through land and agriculture:-

We have seen (chapter I) the importance of the Acts which since 1931 made the kanam tenant aware of his rights. In the subsequent decades the dominant tendency was to sense legislation in advance and manipulate matters in such a way that the new Acts would not adversely affect the janmi or the intermediaries in any significant manner. This was possible particularly due to the importance of families of the power group. Since 1931 the original Malabar Kudiyayma (Tenancy) Act 14 of 1930 has undergone several amendments. The 1951 Malabar Tenancy (Amendment) Act stopped the need of renewal of kanam tenure every twelve years. The consequent relief to the tenants from the burden of paying a renewal fee and the fixity of tenure with only very remote possibilities of eviction by the janmi elevated the kanam tenants' economic status and prestige. There is again the Act of 1954, the Malabar Tenancy (Amendment) Act, which extended further protection to tenants as well as sub-tenants against eviction and exploitation. It fixed fair rent for paddy lands at half the net produce and approved 417 lbs. of paddy per acre

as the cost of cultivation. It further revived the provisions for a summary rent court but resort to the rent court for fixing fair rent was left to be optional. The net results of these legislations were: (i) the kanam tenants and those who held verumpattam tenure directly under the janmi could drift themselves into a more or less independent existence caring for the janmi-head only to the extent they respected him for his resources in other kinds of assets than the hold on his tenants (ii) lands given to lower castes on oral-lease-verumpattam were 'snatched' back tactically or using threats by the kanam tenants (iii) the tenants who held land on a rent higher than the fair rent were not bold enough to resort to legal procedure for the fear that the kanam masters would make their life miserable using other forms of economic sanctions or withholding cooperation and help that was formerly extended to them. Consequently, direct cultivators increased in number and nearly all who held land on oral lease had to return it to the kanam masters. This accounts for the high number of direct cultivators and the lower castes' dependency on them which will be estimated in the next section. In all, in the first two villages there were only four tenants who turned to the rent court and succeeded in fixing a lower rent. In Kolappulli, my third village, there was in 1953 a partition of a Nair taravad into four units. The kanam lands

of the taravad were in the hands of five tenants who were Cherumans, Tandans and Moslems. The karanavan, a few months prior to the partition, got all the tenants evicted by using his own command over them and handed over to the parties of his taravad the land for direct cultivation. What is usually meant by direct cultivation is that the land is cultivated by hired labour under the supervision of the owner. Thus on the whole, the pattern of dependency of lower castes only got a little modified, but in the relationship between the janmi and the kanam tenant there was a wide gap. However, by 1950 janmam lands had begun to be sold to any who wanted and the janmi families were getting partitioned at more frequent intervals. After the thirties their marriage with Nairs and particularly with the dependent kanakkar taravad ceased and the kanam masters, the Nairs, as direct cultivators and with additional sources of income from modern jobs began to be the more clearly leading caste with its leadership distributed as formerly in a few families forming the power group. There were however a few families, in all three in the first two villages, whose lands in distant villages had to be regarded as lost in the hands of tenants. It is usually the former tenants of one's own village who would yield to coercion and find themselves dispossessed of their lands.

Regarding garden lands, waste lands and residence

sites these Acts brought about an important discomfoting feature in the relations between the kanam master and his dependent labour-supplying families. There came about the fear that if new areas were allowed to the labour castes or to anybody for garden crops or for houses it would be difficult to recover it at any time. As a result the lower castes were circumstanced to crowd their huts closer even when waste lands were lying in sectors which were formerly open to them.

The broader background against which these changes can be appreciated can be seen in the features of increase in population, its distribution, pressure on land and the very low percentage of urban population mentioned in the first chapter. Under the new conditions, therefore, land began to be owned as the most valued property to be got back from the tenants into secure possession. There are the new land reforms yet in the making or in a process of implementation but all these have the policy of 'land to the tiller' and are heading to work out the ceiling limit. The first has been already achieved by kanam tenants who are now almost exclusively direct cultivators. And for the second, with rare exceptions of wealthy janmis, no family in these villages owns lands beyond the proposed ceiling limits.

The interest in owning land to get it directly cultivated, to ensure possession of it at all costs and

maintain it with permanent improvements are associated with the emergence of small joint families. The Nair taravad today is no longer known commonly by the term taravad; it is in the large majority of cases a single tavari unit and is known by the term "Veedu" which refers to the house as well as the family group residing in it. (I shall use the term family or household for this modern small Nair taravad which is the residence group - to be described later) and the taravad group from which it partitioned in living memory is mentioned as the taravad.

Permissive legislation to partition taravads came into force on 1st August, 1933 by the Madras Marumakkattayam Act of 1932, and clause 35 of the Act specified the right of every member, resident or non-resident in the house, to maintenance expenses. Usually the non-resident members never claimed any maintenance allowance but the Act encouraged partitions. Modern urban jobs and the flair for education as a passport to get jobs drifted away the interests of the karanavan to earn and educate his children even by misappropriating money from his taravad resources. Urban jobs brought individual earnings and a man's interest began to be circumscribed to the members of his tavari and to his wife and children. Also, the scope for the individual to earn through avenues locally open mentioned in the last chapter, widened with the expanding money economy. Partitions consequently increased and resulted in

the modern kind of small joint families which will be described in the next section. Fragmentation of holdings increased and the labour-caste families began to find an interested master in each member of the modern compact small joint family. Fragmented holdings resulted in the increased need for labour since the former large-scale economies in cultivation progressively declined. Fencing and expensive embankments to avoid encroachments and keep off cattle began to claim prior attention of the owner. Sometimes families which separated a few years ago began to harbour a sense of reciprocal enmity when interests to benefit from the same water courses or canals for double crop lands came into conflict as a matter of need. I have heard cultivators saying "You can trust your Cheruman worker to keep a watch at strategic points on the water course or over your ripe paddy fields, but you can't trust your former taravad members to do it; not only that, they may even tap out water if by that they may benefit at some point in their farms". Kinship and cultivation at this and similar other fronts of personal interest to the family began to fight a silent duel. But the need for family to be in mutual help at several other fronts softened the situation. With urban jobs and with the needs of contacts outside the village families had to regroup into mutual help groups, and in such groups each family would leave out one or two or more families of its taravad and include one or two or more

unrelated taravads. If two families had their taravad ties breached at the paddy fields, the cultivation front, each would examine if it could afford to continue to be so without losing at other fronts. And in due course each would resolve the conflict or allow it to continue testing the strength of each to win over the other, or to win at each front and impose defeat on the other for ever. Parallel situation of agriculture affecting kinship and the formation of 'kinship groups' as noted here incorporating non-kin families of the village have been common in other areas, even in the coastal Ponnani taluk where land is plain and fertile and population at its saturation point. Thus, the new unit outside the family has emerged, and it is neither the taravad group nor something new; it is the modern effective functional group in which some families who are not related by kinship, in due course get tied up with the rest under fictitious kinship. One's taravad-member families left out of this group continue to be in highly formal contacts at occasions of ritual and ceremonial importance. Within this group there are a few families which are again linked to other groups in a pattern similar to the enangar groups of former times. Possibilities for conflict between these groups are therefore reduced and possibly this accounts why the Nairs of the village do not split into factional groups over any issue although the spatial dispersal of the houses is a factor favouring it.



The mutual help and sense of obligation between the families of this group manifest at several occasions and in different a fields. These are agricultural activities, life crises in the family, ritual obligations (confined to taravad kin), any incident which may enhance or injure the prestige of a family, seeking urban employment, securing admission in schools or colleges as desired, loaning money, vessels and other items.

One consequence of this feature is that a labour-caste family has its loyalty first to its master family and then, although to a less extent, to the wider group beyond, the modern functional unit. Thus, the emergence of small families among the master caste of Nairs and the lack of amity that often appears among them have combating factors, social mechanisms, to balance and restore them to their former social efficiency.

In the field of agricultural labour the relations with dependent lower caste families have more personal as well as contractual elements involved. This is due to the need for hiring labour on the part of all families who conduct direct cultivation. The contractual elements get combated against by the increased informality in relationships and the respect on the part of the labourer family for the general resources at the disposal of the master family and its larger functional group. Further, all labour castes are by sentiment rooted to the village and no family among them wants to migrate even to a nearby

village unless there are highly promising new masters. Again, occupations other than in the agricultural field open to Tandans and Cherumans are very limited, the more so owing to the range of occupations in which Moslems excel. And the preference for different castes for the quality of their labour and the differential wages mentioned in the fourth chapter (part I) continues.

(11) Resources of wealth and power of the higher castes:-

The more important of the numerous factors which constitute the wealth and power or resources to acquire it on the part of the matrilineal castes are (a) the land basis and the related dependency of lower castes (b) the modern small joint family with its wider and local functional unit with bilateral kinship tendencies (c) the assets in the increasing number of urban employed (d) the increasing prices of agricultural commodities and timber (e) freedom from the former janmi and (f) marital alliance with the wealthy even by resort to female hypogamy within the limits of matrilineal castes.

Of these, such factors the importance of which have not been assessed nor will come to our attention adequately in later contexts will be considered here.

Behind several of these factors what impresses one deeply is the aspiration of the modern Nair to care for his wife and children and to ensure the best help he can extend to his parents and to the less well-to-do members of his joint family. If he is not employed he explores

all possibilities to earn personal wealth, a part of which will be spent for his own family - his mother, sisters with less well-to-do husbands and unmarried or widowed sisters who need help. He makes long term planning, works at seasonal cash crops in his own or hired lands, makes use of credit facilities of the Cooperative Bank and is alive to all ways of earning money. Not infrequently are cases of exchange marriages of a brother voluntarily going for a glaringly unsuitable marriage mate so that his sister can be married to his wife's brother; the exchange marriages which are increasing in incidence today. In 1956, when family planning was at the stage of a distant echo even in small Malabar towns I ~~had~~ happened to learn that five Nair men in the first two villages had conducted vasectomy. These men are by education of the level of S.S.L.C. and below and family circumstances of each revealed the need on their part to care for their sisters' children. I was told by one of them who counted vasectomy as a new secret for material prosperity "You see, I have to care also for my two sisters and the children of one of them. I must see that they don't suffer when my children are well up; I must give them a certain amount of education."

The scope for jobs has increased and every effort is made to see that the young men get employed leaving only the minimum number of males at home to take care of the family, house and property. There is on the one hand a shrinkage in the scope for jobs owing to the emergence

of linguistic States, the consequent stringent conditions obtaining in cities like Madras which firmly discourage Malayalis from flocking there and the closing of the Burmese avenues of jobs for ever.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, the villagers believe that they can make their way in towns if some relatives are there although the jobs available may not be attractive. The money remitted by relatives, though in small amounts, enthuses the family to instil into the young generation hopes of an urban career which will in turn keep their families at a reasonable level of living in the village. Further, every effort is made to compete for local jobs which fetch a monthly salary; and these efforts and aspirations result in a large number of individual depositors having accounts in Banks. One is easily impressed with this feature of banking in any nook and corner of Malabar.<sup>4</sup>

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3. Since 1947 according to a Burma Government Act a permit from immigration authorities is necessary to enter Burma. Since 1st September, 1953 Burma Government began to enforce regular passport restrictions for entry of Indians into Burma. On 21st July, 1941 Government of India enforced a ban on the emigration of unskilled workers to Burma - see Census Report, 1951, vol.III, part I, 1953, p.26.

4. Regarding the phenomenal development of banking in Kerala, the very high number of individual depositors, the attributability of these, in part, to the "socio-logical and psychological environments of the State" and to "some of the ancient institutions which have been developed through centuries", - see the article "Growth of Banking in Kerala", Commerce, 9th March, 1957.

The increase of prices of agricultural commodities and timber has placed the land-owning castes in a highly advantageous position over the dependent castes. Labour costs have not gone proportionately high, and rural labour, particularly of Cherumans, show a confirmed and high degree of inertia against spatial mobility. In 1956 in Munnurkode a Cheruman's wage was ten annas per day while on the road-side he had openings to earn the 'road-side rate' of one rupee, particularly during off-seasons. Yet he would not move out but only work in such places from where he would return to his hut at noon to sip his watery rice gruel and enjoy some rest. Poor Tandans or any of the castes lower who have in recent years begun to be called for occasional agricultural work show the same degree of immobility. Women of any of these castes do not carry their children-in-arms to the work spots; they move out to work within the dash of a short distance so that they can frequently be back at their huts to suckle their children. The men who can move away to the road-side or to a little more distant seasonal work-spots do not like it for three reasons: first, the highly contractual elements there; second, the absence of training to deal with people on strictly contractual relations; third, the competition of Moslems and also of Tandans who have made a headway in that direction. These are all tendencies which may not persist for decades to come but they can fade off only at a very slow pace. In Kolappulli a road-side metal

works has been running for ten years and Cherumans who are smart are on its staff. But their women stay back at the village and on the whole the labour costs in that village have gone a little higher than in the neighbouring rural areas.

(iii) Relations through non-agricultural services:-

The importance of ritual services has considerably faded away; yet what lingers is a residue that does not show further signs of decomposition. This is true of the non-polluting castes but among the lower castes it is yet not on a course of decline.

The ritual service families of the various castes continue to render the service but with a shift in emphasis. It is meant more for the elderly members of the master castes than to others and it is confined to a minimum of occasions. The educated Nair girl or wife, for instance, does not need the Mannatti's mattu or she needs it only when she lives with her mother or mother-in-law. These trends are affecting all avakasam castes in their capacity of rendering services which are ritual or which have ritual overtones. The former feature of ritual services being rendered by the poor families of a caste has become more emphasised today among the Nair castes. Mobility in secular status in the past few decades has confirmed this as a normal practice.

In some kinds of services vertical dependency has become emphasised at lower levels in the hierarchy by a

process of imitation of the higher castes. The Tandan wants the astrologer today and a Cheruman who can afford pays to the astrologer to diagnose the cause of his maladies. The Pulluvan gets a poor Sudra Nair cook for the feast at the occasion of a marriage just as the Nair seeks for a Pattar Brahmin cook at such occasions to raise the quality and ritual purity of the food.

The artisan castes have developed a pronounced pattern of contractual relations and confine their former form of respect and subordination to the few families of the power group. Broadly speaking, such tendencies on the part of avakasam castes have been seeping through for decades for reasons of several internal factors as can be seen from the last chapter. Further, today, the weekly market or the growth of the nearest urban centre has minimised the need of dependence on artisan castes. Yet, for many local needs, as for instance the construction of a house, some of the artisans are not only essential but they also serve the master castes without any intermediary in the form of a contractor. Except for governmental undertakings skilled and unskilled workers of all castes usually serve directly and seem to have no leadership for enterprise among them of the type which leads to the emergence of contractors. Moslems on the other hand, like to undertake jobs of their field on contracts, a feature which the Hindus are far from being predisposed to imitate.

Poor families of immigrant castes find sympathetic

masters among the well-to-do families of higher castes in the neighbourhood. Vertical relations with the Tarakan, Chetti and Kadupottan are getting augmented in this manner particularly because Nair servants have become scarce for employment as domestic servants or to serve in miscellaneous ways as non-manual workers attending to outdoor requirements.

Enangar services among Nairs have become reduced to the purely ritual minimum, as at the occasion of a death anniversary, and even for such occasions, only the enangan who is invited comes to attend. The enangan's service consisting of manual work such as cutting firewood for cremation of a dead body is being got done through the hired labour of castes such as the Tandan or carpenter.

Thus in the field of ritual and other non-agricultural services the vertical interdependency continues, although in a modified form, with essentially important aspects.

(iv) Intra-caste groups:-

Of these groups the prestige group no longer exists. The pattakkaran group has asserted its independence and at the same time the former pattakkar from whom land has been restored by the kanam owner are landless and dependent on him to get similar other aids or benefits. In the place of the pattakkaran group one can see today a group of poor Nair families, several of them belonging to the same former group depending much on the Nair families of independent means.



(v) Pollution and social intercourse:-

Today, approach pollution exists to a considerably less degree confined to one's house compound and its close vicinity. Outside of it approach pollution is hardly observed and pollution by contact is almost similarly ~~ing~~ ignored. In general, even the private tanks are allowed to be touched by the polluting castes except by those below the Cherumans, but one can also observe families varying in degrees of relaxation of the former rules of approach as well as contact pollution. Contact pollution is, however, more fondly maintained reciprocally between some of the polluting castes.

In the matter of interdining, the force of secular status has considerably blurred the ideas of ritual purity. Nair castes interdine, both men and women, except the castes of washermen and barbers who are still strictly excluded from commensal relation with the higher Nairs. However, wide gap in caste rank among the matrilineal castes coupled with very poor secular status of the lower ranking one excludes the latter on the pattern of former times. Within the village, or in the neighbourhood, behaviour in this field shows modification rather than glaring departures. Even the Nair with progressive views, except when he is in a town, follows this model. At urban residences of Nairs in the nearby towns this model persists. They may have tea in the company of a modern Tandan at the portico but at dinner the Tandan visitor keeps off

to eat at a different spot or the Nair host may dine on a table and the Tandan gets a seat on the floor, a pattern that is just incipient in some of the townships which have yet to get urbanised in the field of social relations. The behaviour throughout the hierarchy presents this model, the wider the gap in rank the more being segregation in this field. This feature, as can be seen later, is an expression of the fact that the growing individualism of the modern higher caste man can in action work only with devoted conformity to his family values. Not only the lower castes but Christians and Moslems of wide disparity in secular status get treated in the same manner.

Social disabilities in general are no longer followed through the fear of higher castes but out of respect for them for they are the masters. In this sense nearly all the disabilities have either disappeared or are on a course of decline. The disabilities which continue are not to be regarded as imposed by those of higher secular status. We have noted (chapter IV) <sup>while</sup> ~~which~~ considering the former pattern of disabilities that behaviour incumbent on caste rank could, in several fields, hardly be distinguished from that arising out of difference in secular status. The reason was that caste was so well correlated with secular status. Today's condition is not much different and the lower castes show signs of respect

while resorting to accept, sometimes rather fondly, a certain degree of disability. At the same time certain kinds of disabilities are expected to be conformed to on their part. A Cheruman or Tandan may touch a Nair's bathing pool but if he bathes in it the Nairs will manage to give him a fit punishment. In fact in the case of some disabilities the Nairs initiate the lower castes to shed their sense of conformity and they gradually do so only at the instance of the master families. For example, Cherumis (Cheruman women) in these villages did not wear any upper garment until 1956 and Nair women trained the Cherumi girls and the girls of some of the artisan castes such as the ironsmith to practise it. Yet they refrained for two years except when they went out of the village. Even today, Cherumi girls who are married out, when they come on a visit to their natal village go half nude to pay respect to their former master families. For such reasons the social expectations of the higher castes as regards the minimum disability to be followed by the Cherumans and other regularly dependent castes is always complied with, and in so doing, the lower castes in general, as one can gather from the way they talk about the lingering disabilities, enjoy a sense of security.

Conduct speech lingers to a considerable extent between castes widely separated in rank, as between a Nair and a Cheruman. Among those castes nearer by social

distance it continues only between members of the elderly generation of over fifty years of age. However, the differences between groups of castes in the pronunciation of words, the clumsiness in the speech in general of the polluting castes, the highly refined or sanskritised aspects of speech of the Nambudiris continue. One can say from the speech the caste or the group of castes to which the speaker belongs, and in urban areas this is a caste mark of today, except among the well educated, when other factors favour caste-anonymity of a man in a near town.

Kinship terms show little or no variation from the aspects described (chapter IV, part II) as continuing into the modern times. Some terms used among the Nambudiris are used among the Nairs but it is not a process of downward transmission or simple imitation. In areas where Nambudiris were not overlords such terms were current among Nairs (e.g., Oppa and Oppol respectively for brother when woman speaks and for sister when man speaks) and contact with such Nairs have spread it horizontally. In Munnurkode, for instance, are only two Nair families who use these terms and probably it will spread to other Nairs as well. Imitation of the ways of speech, or of kinship terms of a caste much higher is still considered by many as a snobbish attempt and by others as something that is not prompted by any need. The latter are the people who think that each caste should not go for imitation simply for the reason that a word or a kinship term is used by a higher caste.

(vi) Some areas of communal relations:-

What has been mentioned about this field of relations (chapter IV, part II) has currency in the situation obtaining today. There is further a marked degree of informal contacts among the groups such as the work-contact group and the bathing pool group. Nairs who build new houses do not go for the expensive construction of bathing pools; instead, they depend on the nearest one available, and the importance of this group in some villages has considerably increased. There is further, as noted, the routine contacts at the post offices and the road-side shops. Through channels of work-contacts, with the decline of pollution and the rise of 'touchability' there is more intimate association with the dependent lower caste families. In some villages, as in the one contiguous to Munnurkode, young Nairs run night classes to make Cheruman workers literate. Vessels may be loaned out to dependent families, loans advanced and guidance given in numerous matters. At the same time sexual intimacies of Nair men with Cherumis are not unknown today or occur occasionally in some villages. Formerly, polluting castes were far beyond the domain of sexual advances of the higher castes but today, sex in this respect, crosses over a wider range of social distance. Probably, one reason for this is that among some of the polluting castes like Cherumans, during the last few decades, there appear women with higher caste physical features owing to illicit

relations with Moslems or Tandans. I was told that "there are Nair erotomaniacs who have found ideal 'sexual types' among the women of Cheruman and Tandam castes, and have paved, for others to follow, the ways and techniques of clandestine approaches to them". However, castes such as Pulluvans and Parayans who stay in a compact cluster are not accessible by such ways and techniques and are 'out of the target'.

(vii) Hypergamy and intercaste marriage:-

Among the matrilineal castes in general, excepting the low group of Nairs, secular status considerably governs the selection of mates today. Among the very wealthy who are also the pioneers with modern views there are examples of accepting a lower caste husband. Although instances of this kind are very limited, the departure as a model started by the Nairs at lower levels has been augmented by this practice of the very wealthy 'apex' families. But usually, a wide gap in caste rank also governs the selection even when the lower ranking party concerned has several attractive assets. In 1956 a Poduval of high independent means was accepted as husband of a Sthani Nair woman inspite of some protests from some of her elderly taravad kin. Between 1951 and 56 in the first two villages are five cases of Sudra Nair women marrying Vattekat and Ulladan Nairs and there are numerous cases of female hypergamy among tNair castes. There is however a pronounced tendency on the part of Sthanis to marry

among themselves, a feature that did not exist until quite recent decades.

Nambudiris no longer marry down, a tendency that set in during the thirties. They have an avowed enthusiasm to confine marriages to their own caste, particularly because the younger brothers of an illom are, since the thirties, encouraged to practise endogamy with the concession that a wife could be taken from a lower Nambudiri caste.

Within the modern caste limits mentioned a major concern in marital selection among the Nairs is to ascertain if a man who proposes or who is considered as desirable has the potentialities to bequeath enough property to his wife and children, whether he will bring about benefits to the girl's family, whether he will open up new beneficial contacts or sources of power and influence to the members of the girl's small modern joint family. On the part of well-to-do families there is a marked inclination to value the aristocratic background of a young man. A distinction is made between 'the new rich' and 'the old rich', the former being those who have earned fortunes in wealth rather as windfalls but having antecedent conditions of low secular status.

Among the lower castes hypergamy or intercaste marriage continues to be absent. Among the Tandans even if an unmarried woman becomes pregnant through her contact with a higher caste man the procedure is to get a very poor

Tandan to marry her, divorce her on the same day or after a few days, and then to find out a suitable match for her.

Marriage has thus brought matrilineal castes much closer, Nambudiri castes a little closer among themselves and lower patrilineal castes continue to be strictly endogamous.

There are instances in urban areas of intercaste marriages bridging over a wider gap in caste rank. But, as far as I could ascertain, the couples live an independent urban life and those marriages came about under such conditions where personal choice of the parties had to be allowed to predominate.

(viii) Religious worship:-

In worship at temples the former pattern in its major aspects predominates although conditions favour its modifications to a considerable extent. The Nairs have come closer and show little or no distinction at the temple. Among them respectful avoidance of those of high secular status continues. The lower castes inspite of the modern provision of access to many parts of the temple precincts do not make use of it. Even at the festival times when they can maintain a certain degree of anonymity they do not go to mix with people at the higher caste areas. This feature continues inspite of the fact that some distant famous temples, such as at Guruvayur, have become 'practically cosmopolitan' to a considerable extent, and this as a model is well known to the lower castes.



It is the vertical dependency at several fronts which keep the lower castes in relations of avoidance and restricted intercourse at the temples.

Generally, the higher castes except the women who are well over fifty years of age do not show interest in the caste or 'cadre' of the priest at the temple. The temples in the matter of ritual status mobility mentioned in the last chapter, as far as priesthood is concerned, are likely to suffer and to that extent they may not become symbols of respects for higher caste priesthood. Further, the Religious Endowment Board has, although unavoidably, given an officious atmosphere to the staffing of temples which are under its direct management. One temple priest told me "You should not be surprised if the Public Service Commission selects our oracle (Veli-chapadu)".

The temple festivals continue to foster the sense of 'we-feeling' among the residents of the village. Young Nairs make use of the occasion to establish their inclinations to assume local leadership. They collect money, write to the urban employed to contribute if there is a programme to celebrate the festival on an unusually pompous scale and they encourage the villagers 'to run the show' with a sense of competition against the neighbouring villages.

Respect for some of the powerful deities or *gel* godlings of the lower castes continue in matters where

patronising them relieves anxiety connected with the health of cattle or the menace of some agricultural pests.

There is an increasingly marked inclination on the part of higher castes and the lower castes of Tandans and Pulluvans of some means to visit the distant and popular temples. At the same time some local deities have become recognised as qualified to preside over certain rites which were formerly within the province of a few specific deities. For instance, in Karattukursi, the nearest deity to be visited for the rice feeding ceremony of a child was the Aiyappan of Cherpalcherry. In recent years the local Bhagavati has begun to be popular for this purpose and some lower castes have also begun to visit her to conduct this rite. Again, marriage rites of Nairs and rarely of Tandans are now being done at several temples in view of a few advantages. The main advantages are that it saves expense on a large feasting and reduces to the minimum the need for seeking the help of a large number of local people including one's kin outside the family. A man of average means has few kin outside his functional unit to help him with wholehearted cooperation and he does not like to expose this fact at a marriage feast. At popular temples like the one at Guruvayur, therefore, the procedure for the usually short-lasting marriage rites of the non-Brahmin castes has become considerably 'mechanised' - cash payments in advance, printed receipts, standardised rates to the priest as well as to other attendants who

impose services, queues at the marriage-rite-spot. Thus we find the social importance of several of the temples, their secular status in general, are on the increase and they continue to reflect certain aspects of the social structure.

(ix) The village:-

The village as a spatial unit within which community feeling is fostered has not waned in its importance today. A few factors contributing to it have been noted in the second chapter. The spatial grouping of houses today shows a modified pattern in that there is more of close physical nearness between the houses. The Nairs with their partitioned families are often seen occupying the different buildings within the former taravad compound, each building being a separate house sometimes with a common gate and usually all households in the compound share the same bathing pool. The smallness of the family, the high cost of constructing new houses and the sense of security in staying close to a kin group have led to this preference. The compound of a former taravad house is today occupied by 2 to 4 families. The Cherumans tend to cluster very closely for they find it difficult to get land to disperse as in former times. Lower castes in general present this feature and the consequence is that close neighbourliness fosters the we-feeling at the level of the local caste groups and communication and neighbourly cooperation are facilitated among them

more than ever before.

In the we-feeling of the residents the immigrant castes and some castes formerly left out are incorporated. This tendency is attributable to administrative measures, benefit agencies and improvement schemes, all regarding the village as a spatial unit in implementing policies or schemes of work. Again, the appearance of a school and a post office in most of the villages has also added to it.

Children at the elementary school, under the social studies curriculum, are indoctrinated to develop, in effect, (as I view it) the we-feeling with respect to their village first, and then with respect to the wider units. The villagers enjoy a sense of pride in speaking about the well-paid employees of their village, of the urban employed in general. During slack seasons of agricultural work local labour castes resent encroaching into each other's village for selling their labour unless some conditions in the past have led to its limited need. It is usually among the lower castes and the less well-to-do among the rest that the sense of pride in the social assets of the village (the well-employed, the powerful families, the new schemes of improvement) predominates. Among the wealthy the area of their regular contacts and resources of power blur their loyalty to the village as a we-group.

The strength of horizontal unity of castes spanning over a region comprising a large number of villages is for the majority of castes not significant in my focal area. There is no such unity nurtured under the power or operation of any caste organisation. In the nature of things such a unity is not bound to develop except possibly in the case of two or three polluting castes and some of the poor immigrant castes. The Nambudiris and other Brahmins at the top have a pronounced caste consciousness which existed even in former times covering a much wider area. Their endogamous practices of today and their awareness as a class of 'ex-rulers' of rural South Malabar have reinforced it. The Nairs do not have such a consciousness to unite in their own interest or with a sense of competition and bargain at intercaste levels within a group of villages or a taluk. Nor do the polluting castes have it except the Parayans and the Pulluvans, and the Nayadis are not unlikely to follow these two castes in the near future.

In 1956 in Calicut taluk there were eight caste organisations among polluting castes but each functioned either around the core of a Cooperating<sup>re</sup> Marketting Society handling the caste's products or a few active members who were trying for leadership.<sup>5</sup> The influence of these has not reached my focal villages or around, and the polluting

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5. Regarding these caste ~~re~~organisations see the Daily, Mathrubhumi, dated 11th April, 1954.

castes have no inclination at present to develop interest in similar existing organisations in some distant urban centres. The Parayans who are members of their new organisation continue with fervour to supply their goods to their former important master families directly if required and send their goods to the market mainly for the reason that the villagers in general like to buy from the market at competitive rates. Immigrant castes such as Chaliyans and Teruvans in the area have Marketting Cooperative Societies but they too have inter-family service relations with the higher castes of their village and the neighbourhood.

We can thus find that when there are several factor forces which shift the interests of any caste away from the village there are forces which localise interests and the range of interaction. A balance between these maintain the village of today to exist to a clearly perceivable extent as an entity.

The intercaste relations thus, as a whole, do not show highly promising signs of levelling of differences or breaking up of vertical unity or the existence of forces which combat against the caste-stratified structure with any significant momentum. What we find with respect to the focal area are modifications in behaviour supported by social expectations of it, and these in turn make a substantial contribution to the continuance of caste, family and the village; a finding which can further be verified in the light of what follows regarding the contemporary Nair family.

Section IIIChanges in the Nair Family  

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We have seen in the last two chapters the importance of matrilineal joint families, particularly of the families of the power group among them in maintaining intercaste relations. This section of the chapter is an attempt to estimate how far they have, and are likely to possess in future, the resources in the same or modified forms in order that intercaste relations remain least affected by the modern forces of change. It is common knowledge in these villages that even today it is the family which resists the impact of modern influences and accommodates 'the new' with 'the old'. A knowledge of contemporary family in such aspects as have bearing on intercaste relations is therefore bound to be rewarding. It can show us the dynamic factors which keep the community structure without transformation. And to the extent we can assess the strength of these dynamic factors we have found the backbone of contemporary intercaste relations.

Quantitative data from the first two villages, Munnurkode and Karattukursi provide the principal material on which I shall present here a study of a few problems which have a direct and significant bearing on the field of intercaste relations. Broadly speaking, the study covers three aspects: the modifications in the Nair family,

the related or parallel modifications in some fields of intercaste relations, the contemporary ability and potentiality of the modern Nair family to control intercaste relations oriented to the former pattern.

The quantitative data in the following pages were collected in April and May, 1956. Prior to it, during April and May, 1954, I studied the major features of modifications in the Nair joint family in the same villages with particular reference to the marital residence. The results of that study were brought out in my paper, "Visiting Husbands in Malabar".<sup>6</sup> The facts borne out by that attempt are considerably contributory to our appreciation of the data collected in 1956. Those facts are therefore summarised below, and the latter data (1956) to the extent it yields the same findings will not further be considered except where it is essential.

The study in 1954 was conducted with a view to finding out how far and under what conditions the visiting custom of husbands was getting replaced by a more or less permanent virilocal or uxori-local residence. Inevitably allied to it was the interest in assessing in an overall manner the size of the modern Nair family in terms of tavaris and the extent to which it was shifting to patrilineal characteristics.

The study covered 126 Nair families in the two

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6. K. Raman Unni, op.cit., (1956).



villages out of 151 (given in table No.3, chapter III) the remaining being omitted for reasons of difficulties in getting full information or for lack of reliability of information, or for both. The following facts emerge regarding the size and nature of the families: (a) 116 are single tavarī families, 7 have 2 tavarīs in each, 2 have 3 tavarīs and 1 has 4 tavarīs (b) the extent of partition of taravads into single-tavarī families is borne out by (a), (c) families with 2 or 3 tavarīs live jointly mainly because in all tavarīs there are no grown male members to start a separate household and 'man' it, a feature often due to the absence of members who are in urban employment, or, in such families a tavarī may be staying in a distant place headed by an employed father or a father who has independent means to run an establishment for his wife and children. And as a result, families with more than one tavarī are all not having coresidence but only joint property (d) all single tavarī families are not the groups consisting of mother, sons and daughters and children of the daughters and soon; there is often an old sister of the mother or her widowed and close female kin as a member of the family.

In the matter of modifications in marital residence the study showed (a) about 50 per cent of the total husbands can be classed as visiting husbands (b) about 15 per cent are uxori-local husbands and 25 per cent of the husbands

have wives on virilocal residence staying with them (c) there are ten possibilities creating or favouring marital residence of one type or another (in the sense of varying family situations or contexts); and the three kinds of marital residence mentioned here (viz., virilocal, uxoriocal and the visiting custom) in reality cover ten variant residence types with differing social significance to either or both of the spouses (d) one or more of eight different factors constitute situations leading to the need of virilocal residence for a long period or of a more or less permanent nature (e) there are similarly eight factors leading to uxoriocal residence as distinct from the visiting custom. (f) there is an impressive incidence of visiting custom even among young men of the age group 25 to 35.

As regards the importance of the visiting husband in the modern small joint family the study brings forth the following observations. (a) Visiting custom and the nature of husband's relationship with wife and her natal family (or more widely, with her matrilineal kin) have undergone considerable modification. (b) The visiting husband stays for a longer duration in his wife's house and is counted as an important member of her family without any right to property. He is often a guide, controller or, as not infrequently seen, the manager of the affairs of her family. (c) Such modifications are in adjustment

to the changing needs of the time. (d) Thus, even under the visiting custom affinal links consequently become more important today and there are markedly bilateral attitudes in the kinship system.

The extent of drifting to patriliney, as the study shows, is not on firm grounds and with far-reaching consequences, for the following reasons. Apparently patrilineal father-headed families with property partly contributed by the father revert to be matrilineal after his death. The total property is then divided, if partition takes place, either equally among all members (mother, sons, daughters and the children of daughters) or if the sons resent it, only the property given by the father is divided equally among the sons and daughters. The latter procedure is rather infrequent owing to the matrilineal sentiment still nurtured by the sons and the family in general. Usually, the property given by the father two or three generations ago is regarded as common property to be inherited on matrilineal basis. Even at partitions arising through domestic broils the urge to implement legal rights is too often eclipsed by the regard for one's sisters and their children. Consequently, a sharp departure from the customary ways to the detriment of one's maternal kin of the natal family is seldom practised at the time of partition. Partly resulting from these facts we can find that the elementary family when it emerges does not usually give rise to further emergence of

elementary families with clear patrilineal characteristics. In general, the expansion in the social space of the matrilineal peoples has led to the not infrequent appearance of the elementary family. Virilocal and uxorilocal residence and the visiting custom covering what I have called ten variant residence types are the factors which make the elementary family lose its elementary character and patrilineal structure. Further, very often, several of the elementary families which emerge are not elementary in the strict sense for there is often a female matrilineal dependent of the husband or wife as an attached resident member without property rights. And sometimes, such an additional member enhances the local social status of the family through her individual resources of wealth and prestige.

Thus we find from the study of 1954 that (a) the Nair joint family continues in a modified form (b) there are modifications in the visiting custom and the roles of the visiting husband (c) virilocal and uxorilocal variations exist alongside the visiting custom (d) matrilineal families are not making any firm or complete shift to patriliney through virilocality and (e) there are markedly bilateral tendencies in the kinship system.

The relevance of the above facts to the main theme of this chapter is that the Nair family is still favourably predisposed with more or less adequate resources (or possibilities for such resources) to practise or to continue

the same relative position which it has been enjoying in relation to families of the lower castes.

We now turn to my latter data (1956) which the foregoing findings facilitate consideration with a proper insight into the modern situation. To repeat what has been noted, broadly speaking, this data will be considered dealing with three aspects of the contemporary social structure - the modified family, its resources to be the leading group in intercaste relations and the dependency of lower caste families on it, the key feature of intercaste relations today.

In the present study (1956 data), in the first two villages, Munnurkode and Karattukursi, 99 families out of 151 (66 per cent) were studied including in it a satisfactory proportion of families of different economic categories. The reasons for limiting the study to 99 families and the manner of procedure in collecting data are mentioned at appendix A. A printed schedule in Malayalam used for collecting data, translated into English is given at appendix B. The data obtained through the schedule provide information on the following: (a) number of male and female members and the age of each (b) relationship of each with the manager of the family (c) marital status of each adult (d) literacy or education (e) particulars regarding those employed, i.e., place of job, nature of job, whether sending money home regularly or occasionally (f) women members who are out on virilocal residence (g) women who are in the

family as virilocal wives (h) men who are in the family as uxorilocal husbands (i) whether paddy lands are on kanam or verumpattam tenures or on janmam ownership (j) whether paddy lands are under lease to sub-tenants or directly cultivated, and if under direct cultivation, how many of the members join agricultural work (k) economic category of the family judged in terms of the adequacy of income from agriculture to meet the household expenses (l) the purposes for which the money received from employed members is spent.

In the analysis of the data I find that there is no advantage in treating the Nairs of the upper and middle groups separately although the figures permit of it. Therefore, I shall treat both under the common term Nairs except when it is found that a group-wise distinction is relevant.

Data obtained will be considered under the following heads:-

- (i) Jointness of the family and its composition.
- (ii) Economic status of the families with reference to (a) income from agriculture (b) number of members in regular salaried employment (c) periodical financial assistance from the employed.
- (iii) The employed as a source of prestige and secular status.
- (iv) Differential concentration of the employed in towns and some allied aspects.
- (v) Intercaste dependency in agricultural work.
- (vi) The purposes for which financial help received from the employed is spent.

(1) Jointness of the family and its composition:-

It is not necessary in this context to consider the kin composition except to note the few variant types. With reference to the residence types mentioned in my paper on visiting husbands and in the light of the present data the few major types of kin variations are as follows: (a) the mother, sons, daughters and children of the daughters (b) in addition to (a) the wife of a son or the husband of a daughter or rarely both (c) in addition to (a) or (b), the mother's brother or brothers and rarely the wife of one of the latter (d) in (a) or (b) the father of the group, i.e., the mother's husband, may be present (e) in addition to (a), (b) or (c) the mother's sisters may be present.

There are variations of these five types <sup>by</sup> of combinations of the kind of kin mentioned here but the common or rather the core feature of all is that the group has important matrilineal characteristics. Except for the possible narrow fringe of spouses the group is not only of siblings and their mother but very commonly of type (a) or (b) in which authority over the children and the management of the family are held by a mother's brother, that is, any grown son of the mother who heads the group. Further, even when a family is headed by the father who wields authority over the members (his children and his daughters' children), at his death the eldest male member present in the family (not employed away from home)

succeeds to head the household, and the younger generation again comes under a mother's brother. As noted, the property given by such a father also gets transmitted usually on the matrilineal basis of division or inheritance. For these reasons, in the present study, I regard the uxorilocal presence of such a father as only uxorilocal and not as a factor giving patrilineal characteristics to the family. Similarly, the few cases of the mother-children group on virilocal stay in a house provided by the father with property partly or fully given by him are regarded as matrilineal families, each with an uxorilocal husband although the husband heading the family as a father is more than an uxorilocal husband. For, the matrilineal nature of the family in such cases as well, manifests out at the death of the father, and also the father during his lifetime trains his sons to be "authoritarian maternal uncles" over their sisters' children. It is doubtful if in the whole focal area there are at least half a dozen families of brothers staying together with their wives despatching their sisters on virilocal residence and maintaining patrilineal characteristics throughout the lifetime of the former - the kind of modern joint family which has today a sparse distribution among some patrilineal castes of Malabar and is widely spread in other parts of India.<sup>7</sup> If this is happening among

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7. Regarding the difference between the Census appraisal about contemporary patrilineal joint families and the reality as seen by empirical studies, and the different



the Nairs it is only a transitory feature ending in or bound to end in separation of the brothers to start independent households which, in course of time, fall within one of the matrilineal residence types mentioned here.

Numerically the average size of the family according to my figures is 8 which according to Census definition (1951) is 'large'. The fact that Nairs of this region have the highest percentage of large families has also been noted by K.N.S.Nambudiripad in 1949.<sup>8</sup>

Regarding the size of the family, jointness in terms of the number of tavaris do not convey that the size is large or jointness is backed by strong sentiments at the level of tavaris. Two sisters at the death of their mother are, by definition, two tavaris, and if each has her husband or a grown son to provide the 'masculine coverage' as urged by the sentiment pattern of the Nairs, the tendency for each sister is to separate and start an independent household. But, sometimes one ----- types of modern small patrilineal joint families, see I.P.Desai's investigations, in Sociological Bulletin, vol.V, No.II, pp.148 ff.

8. In his survey of the Occupational and Employment Structure in some Malabar Villages (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Bombay University, 1949), p.217, K.N.S.Nambudiripad, with reference to the town of Shoranur and suburbs contiguous to my third village, notes (a) 38 out of every 100 are joint families (i.e. having six or more members) (b) "Nairs are leading in large families having more than six members". The villages surveyed by Nambudiripad are Nedungottur, Mundakuka, Paruthipura, Chuduvalathur, Shoranur, Vatanamkursi, Panamanna, Pulyanamkunni and Chalavara.

of the sisters may be childless or a widow or has no grown son or has only one son who is employed, and to remain jointly may be advantageous for her or an obvious matter of need. Therefore the few double or triple tavarī families of today living jointly are not a dependable index of a high degree of strength of kinship ties beyond the limits of the tavarī.

It is within a tavarī that one finds a marked degree of jointness in the contemporary family. Each daughter today has a legal right to separate even when the mother is living. Yet, the marked tendency is not to separate not only so long as the mother lives but also for the lifetime of both the father and the mother. This feature of bringing the father within the foci of 'operational influence' of matrilineal sentiments appears to have developed so clearly only during the last ten to fifteen years. This is a result of the established importance of father among the modern matrilineal Nairs whether or not father is a permanent resident member of the family. Further, even when partition takes place, all members do not usually separate particularly when the parents are living. Any one or two male or female members might separate to set up an independent household and it is often done under common consent and under common recognition of the need to do so in the interest of the separating members to establish a new household with their spouses at distant places. In view of these facts jointness of

the modern family can be located in the number of married women staying together.

The following table shows the number of families with 1 to 4 tavaris and the jointness in terms of the number of married women.

Table 8

Jointness of the modern Nair family

No. of married women	No. of families with tavaris varying from 1 to 4 in number					Women		Actual No. as coresidents in each family.				
	1	2	3	4	Total	Total	Out as wives	Nil	1	2	3	4
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)
Nil	2	-	-	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-
1	23	-	-	-	23	23	-	-	23	-	-	-
2	24	6	-	-	30	60	7	-	7	23	-	-
3	14	3	1	-	18	54	11	-	2	7	9	-
4	12	6	-	1	19	76	20	-	-	6	8	5
5	3	2	-	-	5	25	9	-	-	1	2	2
6	1	-	-	-	1	6	4	-	-	1	-	-
7	1	-	-	-	1	7	3	-	-	-	-	1
Total	80	17	1	1	99	251	54	2	32	38	19	8

The number of married women shown here consists of all married women members of the families and the virilocal wives staying as resident members, i.e., without

right to property. Out of 251 married women 54 have gone out as wives with the urban employed or to other villages. The remaining 197 are distributed as shown in columns 10 to 13. In this figure of 197 there are 5 virilocal wives, but the number being very small it is not separately shown in the table. Of this 5, 2 belong to the same villages and are included in the 54. The table shows the degree of jointness. Out of 99 families 23 per cent have 1 married woman, 31 per cent have 2 married women, 18 per cent have 3 married women, 18 per cent have 4 married women and 6 per cent have more than 4. Or, 44 per cent have 3 or more married women. Deducting the women who have gone out as wives (columns 8 to 12) and taking into consideration only the resident members, 32 per cent of the family<sup>ies</sup> have 1 married woman, 38 per cent have 2, 19 per cent have 3, 8 per cent have 4 or 27 per cent have 3 or more married women. It may be noted that the small number of 5 virilocal wives in the villages is due to the counting of some virilocal cases as uxori-local for the reasons already mentioned. The 54 wives (usually with their children) gone out on virilocal stay, mostly in urban places with their husbands, are an important source of gain in expenditure to their families since normally they do not claim any maintenance expense for the period of their off-home residence. The fact that 44 per cent of the families have 3 or more married women would mean a markedly joint interest in maintaining the

common property with the usual economies incumbent on common management. Further, it gives to the wives who are out on virilocal stay a sense of security that whatever their share of the common property will remain well cared and maintained. It also facilitates poor husbands in urban employment to leave their wives back with their natal family under the care of elderly women. Employed husbands who cannot, for financial or other reasons, afford to take their wives with them, usually leave them with their matrilineal kin, their natal family in the village. Further, the jointness, it may also be noted, leaves the young males to be free to seek urban jobs since one grown male member or an uxori-local husband or a visiting husband is usually adequate to manage the family and its lands. Of the 251 women 63 are widows and 5 are divorced. Of the rest, 33 have husbands on uxori-local residence.<sup>9</sup> Of the 33, there are 21 husbands who are well over 55 years of age and in nearly all these cases, as usually happens, they have received the share of their maternal property and added to that of their wives and children.

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9. In my paper (op.cit.) in 126 families there are 165 women with husbands and in the present study there are 183 in 99 families. The latter figure would appear to be more than proportionate. The reasons are (a) marriages may account for 20 to 25 cases during 2 years, the gap between the two studies (b) there are men bringing wives and starting separate establishments, i.e., new households, and such cases may be about 10 (c) in the case of (b) the married daughters are also members of such households and they may number about 15 to 20. The figure for visiting husbands in this study (1956 data) is about 40 per cent (of the total husbands of women) as against 50 per cent in the former study (1954 data). The decrease is due to (a) increasing uxori-locality of the

(ii) Economic status of the families:-

(a) Economic status with reference to income from agriculture:

The data obtained convey how far the income from agriculture alone is adequate for household expenses. The adequacy is divided into four categories: very inadequate (V.I.), inadequate (I.), sufficient (S.) and well sufficient (W.S.). Members of the families supplied this information but in cases where it did not seem to be reliable the categorisation given was altered after cross-checking with some informants (see appendix A). The adequacy of income is judged only with reference to the individuals who are residents in the family. The non-resident members, the women who are out on virilocal residence and men employed outside the locality, if present in the family as regular resident members would possibly alter the categorisation of some families, particularly of the second and third categories. But the main interest in looking into the resources of the families from different angles is to see how far they are better placed in relation to other castes in the day-to-day life and at the level of intercaste relations in general; and hence the assessment with reference to the individuals who use the income for maintenance.

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 type mentioned, or uxorilocality, of the husband to meet the need of a male resident in the house of his wife  
 (b) the increasing scope for urban jobs and the newly married women going on virilocal stay with their husbands who are in urban employment.

Of the 99 families 16 per cent belong to the category 'V.I.', 33 per cent are of the category 'I', 30 per cent belong to 'S' and 20 per cent are 'W.S.'.

(b) Economic status with reference to remittances of money from employed members:

There are 130 individuals distributed in 73 families as members employed and getting a regular salary. Of these, 21 are employed in places within 5 miles from their homes and the rest are in urban employment. Those who have their caste occupations in the village and those who are employed on part-time jobs without a regular salary are not covered by the figures given below. Such members, it may be noted, are important sources of help to their natal families for they are usually active in exploring all local opportunities to enrich themselves. The following table shows the distribution of the employed, the economic categories of the families under study and of the families with employed members.

Table 9

Economic categories of families and individuals

	V.I. %		I. %		S. %		W.S. %		Total
Families in the study	16	16	33	33	30	30	20	20	99
Families with urban employed individuals.	10	14	27	37	22	30	14	20	73
Individuals employed	16	12	56	43	35	27	23	18	130

The table shows that in all categories of the families 1 or 2 individuals are employed. The figures for employed include 7 women of which 2 are in towns and the rest in non-urban places. As will be seen later the employed members are an important means of income to the families. Of the 26 families which have no employed members, 14 belong to the 'S' and 'W.S.' categories whose economic status is therefore secure. There are only 12 families out of 99 without any resources other than dependence on the families of higher economic categories.

Numerous factors act in combinations to induce or facilitate an individual to seek urban employment as has been noted in former contexts. There is also, as mentioned in the third chapter, the high pressure on land and the district as a whole and even the paddy growing taluks of Walluvanad and Palghat are deficit in food grains. There are other factors which are (a) the presence of an elderly male guardian at home (an uncle, father, brother or sister's husband or rarely mother's sister's husband), (b) maternal or paternal kin or members in the neighbourhood having urban jobs as 'guides' (if not job-makers) for others to follow (c) need to help family members (maternal kin or parents) to live as a family of the 'S' category in the eyes of the villagers (d) the individual's need to live independently satisfying his tastes for modern luxuries or attractions of urban life (applicable mostly to cases of individuals of families



of the 'S' category and above). It is for such reasons, as the above table shows, the number of families with employed members or number of individuals employed does not show correlation with the economic categories. If one expects that the poorer the family the more the need for urban migration for jobs, the table should reflect the tendency.

The following table shows the number of families with employed members in each varying from 1 to 3 and above.

Table 10

Distribution of the employed in the 73 families.

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No. of families with employed members numbering  
1, 2, 3 & over 3.

	1	2	3	Over 3	Total families
	40	19	10	4	73
Percentage.	55	20	14	5	

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This table shows that 45 per cent of the families have two or more employed members in each. Usually the tendency as seen from the information regarding the place and nature of jobs is that men from the same family have either the same kind of job in a town or have different kinds of jobs in the same town. This feature will be considered in a later context.

In the majority of cases it is not adequate educational qualifications which drive the men to urban jobs. This is partly borne out by the above considerations relating to the inducements for seeking job and the preference for towns where relatives and acquaintances are employed. The following table further shows that in this respect education in itself is a factor of limited importance.

Table 11  
Educational Qualifications  
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	E d u c a t e d					
	No. in the villages			Employed		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
S.S.L.C.	43	9	52	25	6	31
B.A.	8	2	10	7	2	9
M.A.	1	1	2	1	1	2
Total.	52	12	64	33	9	42

Of the total of 64 who have S.S.L.C. (equivalent to S.S.C. in other parts of India) and above, 42 are employed. Thus out of the 130 who are employed 42 (32 per cent) have these qualifications. Nearly half of the rest have passed 8th standard (Higher Elementary School level) and the rest have 5th standard (Lower Elementary School level). Literacy of the members in all families can be regarded as cent per cent. Of the 99 families in

this study, there are only 6 men and 8 women who cannot read and write. The nearly 66 per cent literacy rate is a characteristic of Nair families, (except the low group of Nairs) particularly of the upper group, even in villages which are very remote from the town.

From the qualifications of the employed it is clear that only a small minority are likely to have jobs which carry a basic salary of over Rs.200/- today. This could also be gathered from the nature of the jobs recorded on the schedules. Those who have qualifications of 8th standard and below are employed as shop assistants, cooks in hotels, domestic servants, drivers, fitters in railways and factories, bus conductors, owners of independent small business as tea or betel shops and as low paid staff in the defence forces. Those with S.S.L.C. and above are mostly clerks and the rest are teachers. However, the few employed in Singapore and a couple of men with independent business, in all numbering 9, earn a very substantial income.

(c) Periodical financial assistance from the employed:

Anybody enquiring into the economic resources of these families is easily impressed with the periodical remittances of money received by them from the employed members. Although I made some efforts to get the money income from this source disclosed and recorded, the result was disappointing. An assessment was therefore made in

terms of two categories of frequency of remittances received - regular (R) and occasional (O), the former being monthly remittances and the latter at the rate of four or five times <sup>in</sup> a year. Those employed near home and hand over money to the manager of the family are also included in the R/O category. Individuals who remit money leaving it to the discretion of the family to use it either for common purposes or for the need of any specific member (e.g. the mother or sister of the remitter) are also included in the figures which will be given below. Nearly always the money remitted by a husband to his wife's joint family of two or three married women is meant only for his wife and children. The following table presents the figures in respect of the income resources from the employed.

Table 12

Remittances of money received from the employed

Note:- V.I., I. etc. show, as noted beforehand, the economic category of families.

R, O - stands respectively for regular and occasional remittances.

u.m. means unmarried, m. means married.

		V.I.		I.		S.		W.S.		Total	
		No.-	%	No.-	%	No.-	%	No.-	%	No.-	%
u.m.	Total	9		35		13		10		67	
"	R	6	- 66	28	- 80	8	- 62	7	- 70	49	- 73
"	O	2	- 22	7	- 20	4	- 31	1	- 10	14	- 21
"	not sending	1	- 11	-	-	1	- 8	2	- 10	4	- 5
m.	Total	7		21		22		13		63	
"	R	3	- 43	8	- 38	5	- 23	6	- 46	22	- 35
"	O	2	- 28	7	- 33	15	- 68	2	- 15	26	- 41
"	not sending	2	- 28	6	- 28	2	- 9	5	- 38	15	- 24
Total No. employed.		16		56		35		23		130	

Of the 130 employed 67 are unmarried and 63 married. 73 per cent of the unmarried and 35 per cent of the married send money regularly. Most of the married usually send some money to their wives or save it for their purposes. Those not sending are 5 per cent of the unmarried and 24 per cent of the married.

The 19 cases not sending money deserve further attention. My figures show that out of these the absence of remittance from 18 may not adversely affect their families because they either belong to families of S. and W.S. categories or to families which receive money from other employed members. This, atleast in part, might be a reason why the 18 are not sending. The following table shows the relevant details regarding the 19 cases.

Table 13

Particulars about the employed who do not remit money

No.employed in each family. (1)	No.not.sending money (2)	V.I. (3)	I. (4)	S. (5)	W.S. (6)
1	5	1	-	1	3
2	4	2 (1-R)	2 (1-R)	-	-
3	6	1 (2-R)	1 (1-0)	2 (2-R)	2 (2-R)
6	1	-	1 (5-R)	-	-
7	3	-	0 3 (1-R) 0 (3-0)	-	-

In column 2 individuals represented by the figures 5, 4 and 6, all belong to different families. The 6-employed and 7-employed families are one each in the whole study. Figures in brackets show the number of individuals sending regularly or occasionally to each of the number of families bracketted against. Thus, for example, in column 3, the 2 belonging to two different 2-employed families do not send money but each of their families receive money from one regularly.

An examination of the age differences among those who send money show that there are among them individuals of age groups ranging between 15 to 55 as seen in the following table.

Table 14

Age groups of the employed who send money

Age groups	Unmarried		Married	
	No.	%	No.	%
15 to 20 years	5	8	-	-
21 " 25 "	19	30	5	10
26 " 30 "	28	44	11	23
31 " 35 "	7	11	10	21
36 " 40 "	1	2	4	8
41 " 45 "	-	-	7	14
46 " 50 "	3	5	-	-
51 " 55 "	-	-	6	12
Above 55 "	-	-	6	12
Total	63		49	

Of the 67 unmarried-employed (table No.12) 63 send money. The highest percentage of those who send money (28%) are in the age group 26-30. It is commonly understood in these villages that one important reason for late marriage of those employed is the need to send money to their homes. This is reflected by the high percentage. Also, according to local opinion the need to send money is one reason for some to remain unmarried at still higher ages. Generally the married remit money because either they get enough salary to remit to their natal family, or the latter is too poor and need such a help. Among the married, out of those who remit money there are individuals in the various age groups, even in the group above 40. We have also seen from table No.12 that 24 per cent of the married, as against 5 per cent of the unmarried, do not remit money. Marriage, therefore, does not break off to any significant extent the motivations which lead to remittances to their natal family.

It was not possible to note with any uniform degree of accuracy the amount of money received by the families since many a family was reluctant to speak about it. Further, the employed in addition to regular remittances fetch money when they come home which again is a matter usually not disclosed but allowed to be rumoured about. The extra-departmental post office with a part-time post-master in each of the villages handles a large amount of

incoming money orders every month. The postmasters were unwilling to go into the details of the money received but the information they conveyed permit a rough estimate. According to it the approximate average amount received by a family per month can be counted as between 35 and 45 rupees.

(iii) The employed as a source of prestige and secular status:-

An employed member in a town, even on a meagre income, is a source of prestige to his family. Several matters which could otherwise require to be done through the help or dependency on other families would be done through the employed member, through his contacts or resources in general. Dependency on other families even for matters not related to the subsistence economy of the family is today regarded as unhappy by the latter unless there is already a pronounced subordination essentially maintained towards others in the field of means of livelihood. But under the conditions obtaining today even the verumpattam tenant is freed of the yoke of the kanam tenant and he is a free man silently competing against the former kanam master or other families in a career of upward mobility. Very often, a family speaks with a sense of pride about the importance of its employed members not in terms of their earnings or income but in terms of their power or influence gained through their job-contacts or of the prestige and power of their employers. The local importance



of the urban-employed in the villages also depends upon how much they could be helpful to others of their villages or how much, as not infrequently happens, even the more wealthy families needed their help in some matters. Those employed in the nearby towns are at times helpful even to some of the lower castes such as the carpenters for whom professional interests and urban opportunities have created the need to have contacts far and wide from the village. Further, at the level of the village as a whole, the villager, whatever his caste, enjoys a sense of possessive satisfaction in the fact of the urban employed scattered in different towns. There is a definite anticipation of help from those employed in a town when the villagers, not to speak of the kin groups of neighbourhood groups, have to go to that town on any purpose. For such reasons the urban employed are not only a source of income to their families but an asset contributing to secular status. The salary received by the employed man and his financial resources accumulated, are a matter on which the villagers make wild speculations. His family elevates him to a high level and prides on the probabilities of fortunes that may come down through him. As soon as an employed man comes on leave there is news-mongering about the amount of money he has brought and the marvels he may show with it during the period of his leave. Some men reputed for their nose for news and labelled the 'Newspapers of the village' make it an exciting piece of

information and give publicity to his arrival, to his programme during leave and to speculated details about his worth and all that he has brought with him. He is the hero of the day in talks among the bathing pool groups or the door-yard groups of gossip mentioned in the fourth chapter. News about him range from the perfume of the soaps and oils he has brought to his bank balance and insurance, from the resources of his power and influence to his prospects till the time of his retirement. He is, in short, the pride of his natal family; if married, he is a man of promise to his wife's family as well. And for these reasons, an employed man with a meagre income does not return to his village without qualifying himself a little worthy in the social expectations of his villagers. In sum, the employed are a matter of secular prestige to their families and in most of the cases they effectively contribute to the secular status of the families through diverse ways and means.

(iv) Differential concentration of the employed in towns and some allied aspects:-

As noted, only 21 are employed within a rural range of 5 miles from their houses. Of the remaining, 29 are employed in towns in Malabar and the States of Travancore-Cochin (the three together being the present Kerala State). The distribution of the remaining in towns and cities of India shows that Madras has 28, Coimbatore 5, Salem 3, Madurai 1, Bangalore 5, Calcutta 1, Secunderabad 2,

Bombay 9, Poona 4, Baroda 1, Delhi 3, Jubbulpore 1, Kashmir 5, Agra 1, and outside of India there are 11 in Singapore. This feature of distribution, particularly in the light of allied information on job seeking which I could gather, shows one significant factor. It is that the relative employment potential of an urban centre is not the determining factor in attracting these villagers to make a proportionate concentration there.

The urban employed so widely scattered, are exposed to the possibility of a certain degree of ideational mobility. As carriers of new ideas and beliefs and as important members of their families, they can be the agents of several kinds of modern influences. But, the rural families are managed by elderly men or women whose authority and control extend even to the non-resident urban-employed members. As far as I can glean from enquiries the urban-employed fail to cultivate an individuality free from orientation to the interests of their rural families. After retirement the urban employed settle down in their village or within the social environment of their maternal or affinal kin. Except for two cases of settling down in the nearest town eight miles away there is no instance of a retired person in these two villages settling down in a distant town within or outside Malabar. Looking into the age groups of the managers of the families given in the following table it is evident

that there is a high degree of possibility of elderly control over the modern small joint families and as well over the urban employed belonging to these families.

Table 15

Age groups of managers of the families

Age groups	Number	Percentage
25 to 35 years	9	9
36 " 45 "	19	19
46 " 55 "	26	26
56 " 65 "	31	31
66 " 75 "	10	10
Above 75 "	4	4
Total.	<u>99</u>	

The managers given here include 39 women of which 5 belong to the age group 36-45, and 34 belong to age groups above. In most of the 28 cases of managers of the group 25-45 there is an old mother or an uxori-local father 'behind' the manager. Further, in the cases of 39 women managers, in each, a grown male assists or often represents the women.

The extent of elderly controls do not mean a highly effective curb on the individuality of the educated or the members of the family who have wider contacts. The elderly members consider it a matter of grave concern if the developing individuality of the younger members

becomes a threat to the common tenor of the family. Generally speaking, the family is not democratic in structure and if ever a few families feature it, it is rather an exceptional case based on the involvement of personalities of its members. The family structure which accommodates a certain degree of individuality of its educated and enlightened members therefore has to foster a double or rather triple standard of behaviour on the latter. We have seen in the last section how this happens in social intercourse with other castes when one is within his family compound, when one is out in the village, at the road-side and in a town.

(v) Inter caste dependency in agricultural work:-

A reference to the first chapter will show that according to the Census Report, Malabar has (a) a relatively very high concentration of land holdings in the hands of a small number of persons (b) urban population is the least in West Madras Division and Malabar has the lowest in that Division. Table 2 (chapter 2) shows the predominantly high proportion of cultivating labourers and their dependents in these villages, a feature common to rural Malabar as a whole. These facts point to the need of an essentially high degree of interdependency with the castes who supply agricultural labour.

The interdependency rests on two factors: there is on the one hand the landless castes enjoying a sense of security in serving the local masters, and the Nair

castes on the other hand find it almost impossible to shed away the heritage of the prestige value placed on freedom from manual labour, particularly such labour provided by the lower castes. Even the men of several families of the 'I' category do not regularly participate in agricultural work but only remain as supervisors on the spot. The dominant tendency is to avoid as far as possible working abreast with labourers in the field, and much of the seasonal work cannot be done except by teams of workers. Women of some families of the V.I. and I. categories join the work but only at the harvest or post-harvest stage when the remaining work can be done from their own fenced compounds. Generally speaking, it is not so much the economic category of the family that determines the feature as the high social status of the family which it enjoyed for decades or generations. There are families of the 'I' category with women trying hard managing to live within the means rather than going to do active work on the farm. This is a common feature in Malabar for it is reported from areas popularly known as areas of a high degree of social change. I find this very markedly in my fourth village in Ponnani taluk and a study in recent years pertaining to a village in North Malabar very clearly illustrates it. Contractual elements in intercaste relations predominate in North Malabar villages particularly in those known as 'communist enclaves'.<sup>10</sup>

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10. Thomas Shia, "Economic Study of a Malabar Village", Economic Weekly, vol.VII, No.34, August, 20 & 27, 1955. An elaborate study of the village Morazha in North Malabar

The following table shows the number of families conducting direct cultivation of paddy fields and the number of families from which individuals attend to agricultural work.

Table 16

Dependency on lower castes in agricultural work

Kind of tenure	No. of families with 1 to 3 individuals attend to farm work								Total families
	Nil	1	1*	2	2*	3	3*		
K	17	22	2	6	2	-	-	49	
K $\frac{1}{2}$	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	
K $\frac{3}{4}$	-	4	-	-	-	-	-	4	
Total	18	26	2	6	2	-	-	54	
V	1	3	2	-	2	1	1	10	
K & V	-	5	4	2	1	2	-	14	
J	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	
J $\frac{1}{2}$	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2	
Total	21	36	8	8	5	3	1	82	

Note:- K - kanam, V - verumpattam, J - janmam.

The fractions against K and J in the first column show the fractional portion of the holdings under direct cultivation. In the same column K and V means approximately half the holdings belongs to each of K and V. The \* denotes that in addition to the males one or two and rarely three women also do certain kinds of agricultural work. 'Attending to' agricultural work only means very little participation as mentioned in a preceding context.

known as a Communist stronghold is given by T. Shia. As the author notes with figures, the marked tendency is that poorer agriculturists also sublet their holdings because they look down upon physical labour. Even among those who participate in agricultural work, women and children abstain from it.

82 of the 99 families are covered by this table. There are 11 without any holding of paddy lands and 6 have kanam lands entirely sublet on verumpattam tenure. The table shows that (a) 21 families (24 per cent) have no members attending to agricultural work (b) 44 (54 per cent) have one male in each attending (c) 13 (16 per cent) have two males attending and (d) 4 (5 per cent) have three males attending to the work. Further, in the case of families with holdings partly or wholly on verumpattam there is only 1 family (out of 14 of this category) having no member attending to the work. This figure contrasts with 18 (out of 54) having kanam holdings. This is due to the former pattern of concentration of verumpattam holdings among Nairs of the middle group who were themselves cultivating or actively working with hired labourers. For the same reason, as the table shows, it is among them that there is a contrasting figure for families which have women assisting in agricultural work, there being 10 out of 24 families (41 per cent) as against 4 out of 54 (7 per cent) belonging to families of kanam holdings. On a rough estimate, of the males attending to agricultural work, a little over half the number do only occasional or regular supervision and the rest participate in varying degrees.

In these two villages according to the Census Hand Book (table 2, chapter 2) the agricultural labourers and their dependents number 1011. An approximate estimate of



their dependency on them is provided by the facts presented here. Again an estimate can be made in terms of the number of families of various castes (table 3, chapter 3). 156 Nair families depend regularly on the 143 families of the polluting castes of Tandans and Cherumans, more emphatically on the 101 families of Cherumans. The means of livelihood of these castes, exclusively that of the Cherumans, is labour and usually preference is given to employ labourers from one's own village. The sense of dependency is thus maintained.

(vi) The purposes for which financial help received from the employed is spent:-

Families of the categories V.I. and I. usually spend the money received on food, purchase of livestock, agricultural implements and repair of the house. However, families of these categories without able bodied men to participate in agricultural work spend it on labour charges mainly through the fear that subletting of a land may lead to its dispossession under the impact of Land Legislations. Families of the higher categories spend it on a variety of items, all contributing to their prestige. Among these as well are cases of men enjoying freedom from active participation in agricultural work when they can afford it due to the increasing income received from the employed. Other items of expenditure are employment of part-time domestic servants, improvement of the house, tank and well, expensive improvements of the garden compound

around the house, building permanent embankments on the boundaries of paddy fields (to avoid encroachments and in some cases to prevent soil erosion), converting single crop land into a double crop one by an expensive outlay to lower down its level by stages, tapping all irrigation resources as can be commanded by money, often against the interests of the less wealthy, educating the children for as high a qualification as possible (if their fathers cannot finance for it), celebrating marriages on a large scale, making contributions to undertakings of common interest to the village, conducting expensive offerings to temples, and contributing to temple festivals. Families of the ~~top~~ higher categories may save money in banks and spend it later as the employed, the remitter, likes; and more often such lines of spending are, improvement of the house or modernising it. Such items of expenditure as require local labour raise the local power of a family as promising employers. In spending money priority is usually given for education of the children and to pay for labour for productive work such as seasonal crops, planting trees or improving land. In the matter of marriage a new trend that is incipient, and already rooted in some of the contiguous taluks, is to seek for a most desirable husband even by paying an attractive amount <sup>of</sup> money as dowry. Poor families who receive some money make every endeavour to avoid the need on the part of their women to serve the well-to-do families as full time cooks or domestic servants.

The urban employed man, whatever his economic status, resents to hear that his sister or mother serves another family in such capacities.

Thus, the consequence of the use of resources in the urban-employed is that the poor families become less dependent on others and the well-to-do enhance their secular status. The drive for upward mobility examined in the last chapter continues to dominate at the level of relations between families. It also contributes considerably to the existence of families of power who can control relations with lower castes.

x                      x                      x                      x

A few families of wealth of the S. and W.S. categories with their resources of power held by the functional units constitute the modern power group in these villages. The janmi-heads who have also smaller families today usually fall within the power resources of these functional units. The former janmi-head family does not normally like to dominate alone for fear of possible disappointment if he tried it. He therefore joins hands with the power group, which, as far as I can observe, plays important roles in the modern community structure.

In some villages, as in Kolappulli, the boundaries of the power group are vague. In Munnurkode there are two such groups one of four families in the western sector and

one of five in the eastern sector. In my second village there is one group of five families some of which extend influence over the contiguous village Kuttikode. In some villages the power is held in a diffused manner by a large number of families. An individual family may fade out from the group but one or more slowly comes up or rise into phenomenal recognition as its members, as happened in the instances of meteoric rise of a few families in these villages during the last war period. Two or three power groups emerge in a village due to the scattered nature of the houses and the increase in number of the families. There is usually no factional pre-disposition between these groups in a village, and often, the more important families of the group make concerted efforts in matters of common interest.

An important factor that contributes to the strength of the Nair family today is the bilateral tendency in the kinship system, though operating as it is, within a small range. The family has its own resources as a small modern taravad and in addition resources of high value in its close affinal relatives. Women get personal wealth from their husbands as slowly accumulated bank deposits, as lands and houses. Most of the wealth earned for the wives in this manner are in deeds or other documents in the name of the wife, for the husband desires that after his death the wealth should at any time pass to his children and grand children equally as the taravad

property of the mother. This feature of the Nair family contrasts with the changes among the patrilineal castes below. They gave up polyandry, rapidly increased in population and are steadily giving up their former extended family. They appear to believe in the local proverb which means that four heads can exist amicably in a family, but not four breasts. (This probably in origin pertained only to the castes which practised fraternal polyandry and found domestic harmony among brothers having only one wife). And thus, they have already gone far today in making the strictly patrilineal elementary family a reality as well as the ideal.

In the field of control over lower castes the power lies diffused among all families which employ them or give them benefit in some form. Again, adjusting to the modern situation, the master families as noted, have built up informal relations to 'dilute' the contractual elements in intercaste service relationships. The labourer is tied to the master more by hopes rather than by fear; the hope of getting benefits from him or through the contacts and resources which he commands. The absence of economic sanctions which formerly kept the labour castes under control is being combatted by all factors which contribute to the modern resources of the master families. Further, the higher castes have not only informal relations with them but have, during the last one or two decades,

a trained ability to handle the lower caste servants with tact and care. The modern karanavans are setting a model in this respect casting off their former sense of reserve and command on their part. Yet, there is a formal distance of the master-servant relationship augmented by caste differences which is normally seen in the behaviour between the elderly members of the higher caste families on the one hand and the lower caste servant family on the other. Therefore a Cheruman or a Tandan may obey the karanavan of his master family but may be even more loyal with some young men of the same or other families of the master caste.

The great political event in Kerala during the last decade, the electorate voting the Communists to power, was in my focal area not attributable to the horizontal unity or organisations of the labour castes. It was to a great extent due to the leadership and propaganda abilities of higher caste members of whom the majority belonged to the generations below 40 years of age. I have discussed with Cherumans, Tandans and school teachers and some modern Nair karanavans the matter of the local Communist success. Of the several reasons which explained the situation the important ones relevant to note here are (a) only very few master families talked to the lower castes with fervour to vote for the Congress (b) nearly all Communists who campaigned for votes were known local men belonging to higher castes such as Nair,

Poduval and Nambudiri, and they made personal contacts with each lower caste family (c) the Cherumans and the mass of ignorant Tandans believed that the split of higher castes into several political parties showed that the whole 'game' was one to be enjoyed rather than taken too seriously (d) several families of the higher castes were characterised by strong and divergent political leanings among the male members of the same family, a fact which the lower castes thought was a justification for their voting as they fancied. Thus, in all, it appears that the voting behaviour of the lower castes in this area was not an expression of denial of the sense of authority of the higher castes or of dependency on them. Nor was it in any manner an expression of inhibited sense of revenge against the higher castes.

The findings we have arrived at by our study of the resources of the modern Nair family, its structure and of the controls it can maintain over the lower castes can be counted as applicable to all matrilineal castes in the focal area except the two tiny Nair castes of washermen and barbers. Above the matrilineal castes all patrilineal castes including the immigrant ones have education and wealth which favourably compare with those of the Nair Nairs. The Nambudiris have ~~few~~ firmly taken to higher education and modern jobs and a few are making attempts to conduct business or a modern industry on an organised and large scale.

Section IVThe Fourth Village  
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The seashore fringes of the coastal Ponnani taluk where this village is located is a predominantly coconut-growing area, plain and fertile with white sandy soil. For one coming from my focal area it is a scene of serene beauty and panoramic views contrasting with the rugged landscape of interior Malabar. The land is studded with coconut palms and there are occasional stretches of paddy lands and cashew gardens. Broad arterial foot paths of loose beach-sand facilitate access by foot as well as transport by shoulder loads to any nook and corner. The region is a long stretch of margin twenty-four miles long and two and a half miles broad between the seashore on the west and the slow-flowing Ponnani river on the east which is navigable by large boats throughout the year. The nearest large town is Trichur, fourteen miles eastwards in the Cochin State, and the river connects the place southwards with the port of Cochin.

Pallipram, the village of five square miles, my fourth village, is in this area, and it is fifty-five miles south-west of the focal villages studied. It is popularly known outside as Valapad, although the latter refers to an area covered by a major part of Pallipram



and a small area of an adjoining village. The marketting centre and Govt. offices at one sector known as Valapad led the area to be known by that name. The dense population, closeness of residences and absence of any topographic boundaries made the social awareness of the administrative unit, the village, less important and vague than that of the wider area which, as the villagers recognise it, is from early times known as Valapad. I shall therefore call this village Valapad in recognition of the emphasis on social relations spanning over and covering the area specified by this name.

The Census figures of the village for 1951 are not available but the area is one with a population of over 2000 people per square mile.<sup>11</sup> Of the 120 inhabited towns and villages in Ponnani taluk 107 have a population of 2000 to 10000 and 13 have a population of over 10000.<sup>12</sup> From the food ration registers of 1949 kept by the village head (Adhikari of Pallipram), the figures when worked out show that in 1950 there were 10600 heads and 1826 households, and of these 86 were Nair households.

Valapad has a well developed cash crop economy in coconut and cashew, and fishing has been developing as a regular industry on the seaside among the caste of

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11. The District Census Hand Book, (1951) has, probably by oversight, omitted this and other contiguous villages. Regarding the density of population in coastal and interior Malabar, see chapter I.

12. District Census Hand Book (1951), p.13.

fishermen (Mukkuvan). Shells from the sea and river are an important source of income to some low castes who devote to the industry of chunam making.

Compared to my focal area Valapad gives a vivid impression of being ahead by fifty years. Education, small industries, local employments, facilities of river transport, the dress of even the low polluting castes whose women wear self-laundered white and locally up-to-date dress, tiny road-side shops in large numbers flooded with goods which are, by the standards of interior Malabar, luxuries (a range of toilette and cosmetic goods, attractive synthetic-metal ornaments, torches, thermos flasks, fancy kerchiefs, goggles, lighting equipments and fixtures, crockery etc.), all convey that the village is peopled with families of affluence or of modern needs.

The Hindu population of wealth and high secular status consists of the castes of Nairs, Tiyas (a variant name for Tandans) and Mukkuvans (fishermen). The castes which render agricultural labour are the Tiyas, Pulayans and Vettuvans, but the large bulk of the labour is supplied by the Pulayans and Vettuvans who correspond to the Cherumans of Walluvanad. The caste hierarchy in general corresponds to that of Walluvanad with some castes varying in names but having a similar order of ranking. Polluting castes are all patrilineal and they are in the approximate order of ranking Tiyan, Velan (the variant of Mannan), Kanakkan (boatman), artisan castes of carpenter, ironsmith,

goldsmith and mason, Panan, Pulayan, Vettuvan and Parayan. Between Nairs and Tiyas are the very small castes of Odan and Chaliyan of which the latter is matrilineal by slow conversion. The Odan is a superior caste of makers of earthenware pots, and the Chaliyans, originally an immigrant caste of weavers but no longer so, are now regarded as a low caste of Nairs. Pulayan and Vettuvan, close by social distance, supply the agricultural labour and are the dependent labour castes of today. Commonly, Vettuvans serve in coconut cultivation and are particularly good at plucking coconuts while Pulayans do other agricultural work. Odan, Kanakkan and Parayan stay compactly clustered and have little regular inter-family dependence with higher castes.

There is, in addition, a sizeable population of Christians (Syrio Romans) about thrice the number of Nairs and among them a third are wealthy by local standards. The Moslem population, probably equal in number to the Nairs, has a few families who are wealthy, and both the Christians and Moslems devote to agriculture, modern jobs, business and local industries related to agriculture.

Among the Hindus the rise in secular status of some low castes began by the close of last century. The Tiyas were then known as Chons, or less commonly as Iruvas when by the second decade of this century they had begun to follow in large numbers their pioneers who were in paying

occupations or jobs in Ceylon. Since then, income from Ceylon raised them to be wealthy and prosperous; they acquired kanam lands and much later janmam lands from Nair taravads which were steadily becoming poor. In due course the Chon or Iravan of the twenties began to be known as Tiyas which is a variant name of the caste in North Malabar where it was more prosperous at even a still earlier period. The process of rise of Tiyas was not so smooth for informants from their lingering memory speak of the days when kanam lands were refused to be sold to Chons even when they offered tempting prices. The hard-working Mukkuvans (fishermen) found local opportunities to acquire garden lands and through the last two periods of war they rose to considerable prosperity. The janmam lands of former janmis and some temples, both in their course of decline, were purchased by all who could afford, often by bits, and there were in 1955 over 1500 janmam land-holders who included even carpenters and ironsmiths.

The distinction between several Nair castes of the village has now become nearly obsolete but until about the thirties they were clearly corresponding in rank to the Nairs of my focal villages. The past pattern of relations between Nair castes under the village head of Valapad appeared to be very difficult to reconstruct except by a long course of enquiries with very old Nairs. However, I record here what I could at best gather during my short stay in the village.

The Nair caste at the apex, by rank, was the Vellayma Sudra Nair (corresponding to Kiriya Nairs). By the beginning of this century a few families of them had assumed the caste name Menon. The castes below were Sudra Nairs and a few castes of the middle group of my focal area in the same order of rank, viz., Pallichan, Vattekat, Ulladan, Attikursi. The powerful Sthani-head belonged to a lineage of 14 taravads of Pallichans, one of the taravads being the Sthani proper and the rest taravads of high secular status holding Sthani Nair as a title. There were 5 Vellayma Sudra Nair taravads of which 3 were given the title "Kaymal" presumably by the Sthani-head and they had the right to read the epic Ramayana at seven of the Sthani taravads. Two Vellayma Sudra taravads had the title 'Panicker' whose right it was to serve similarly the other seven Sthani taravads including that of the Sthani-head. There were 3 Attikursi and 2 Vattekat taravads with whom rarely men of the Sthani taravads married. Thus the powerful and very wealthy belonged to the group of 14 taravads who were Pallichans with whom the males of higher ranking Nairs would not dine. Marriage of some males of the 14 taravads of Pallichans with Attikursi and Vattekat taravads on the usual principle of female hypergamy raised the latter to be taravads of means, secular worth and ritual prestige. By the twenties the Attikursi and Vattekat taravads began to be named as Menons. The 14 taravads had husbands belonging

to Nambudiri, Pattar, Kiriya Nair, Kiriya Menon and rarely Vellayma Nairs from other areas. The situation was thus one which seems to have had occurred in some parts of Malabar: the Nair caste of a high rank comes under the secular power of a lower ranking caste (Pallichan); the latter gives titles to the former and appoints it on a ritual service (reading the epics in this instance) in which it enjoys a ritual prestige. Valapad was thus an area which showed that among non-Brahmins secular-status-hierarchy could exist in contradistinction to caste hierarchy. Very rarely among Nairs there were instances of a woman marrying a man who was much higher in secular status but lower by rank.

Among Nairs this situation must have occurred even in the pre-British period. But it began to appear at a lower level in the hierarchy early in this century. The Tiyas, as noted, became wealthy and two joint families among them which acquired high wealth through their income from Ceylon and by exploring all local opportunities of upward mobility mentioned in the last chapter, became the leading ones by the twenties. In their power and wealth they were paralleled only by the taravad of the Sthani-head. They began to employ high caste Nairs as managers and clerks, and a few Nairs, by connections through land tenure, began to be dependent on them. Their initiative and leadership brought a separate temple for Tiyas into existence and one of the families was its uralan (manager).

In the thirties most of the Nair families of all Nair castes began to be known as Menons because even the lower caste Nairs of means began to assume that name. Tiyas in large numbers became independent of the Nairs, and thus the Tiyas, Nairs, Christians and Moslems began to be the leading groups, with a mass of population, of the labour castes and the poor labour supplying families among themselves except the Nairs. The rise of Mukkuvans was not felt for they confined to the strip of the sea-shore and only in recent years have they begun to come to the front. All these castes began to acquire education and drive away their younger members for urban jobs. With the closing of opportunities in Ceylon in the forties Tiyas faced a set-back but began to meet the adverse situation by actively seeking jobs in India. And in 1956, I was told that in urban migration for jobs the Tiyas were leading. The Tiyas in the past had no polyandry and even today the wealthy among them show a marked liking among brothers to live jointly until they pass their middle age.

The Nairs began to be comparatively poor. They would not do manual work and the women of even the poorest family would not do any work connected with agriculture or any work involving outdoor manual labour. Nair men in large numbers seek urban jobs and remit money home to keep the prestige of their rural families oriented to

the traditional model. Nair families, as in my focal area, are small joint families but jointness in terms of number of married women seem to be less. Other features of the modern family of Nairs show little variation from what has been described in the last section except that visiting husbands are rare. There is the emergence of the modern functional unit of the kind described but in some parts of the village it may consist of only two families while in some there may be two to five or six families.

Ritual services of lower or higher castes are not regarded as important except for very important rites and ceremonies. The Velans (Mannans) serve as washermen to higher castes like Tiyas whom the Nair washermen does not serve. Poor Nairs occasionally serve as cooks of ritual purity at the feasts of the lower castes such as Pulayans and Vettuvans, a practice seen in the last two decades. In 1955 I witnessed a Vettuvan's marriage for which Nairs were cooking and the marriage rite was an imitation of the Nair model. Very rarely, in some parts of Ponnani taluk, I was told that there are rich Tiya families having permanent Nair cooks, the model followed being that of the former Sthanis having Pattar Brahmins as cooks. Usually two factors prompt one to go for a higher caste cook; the ritual purity of the food cooked and the element of taste for dishes of the higher castes.



On enquiry, I learn that there is a certain degree of both ritual and secular prestige enjoyed by families of the lower castes who regularly, or at occasions, get the service of higher caste cooks. But the Nairs today do not continue this, and if they do so, it is more for the mastery of the higher caste cook over mass-scale preparation of food of higher quality and taste than for ritual purity. In this manner, what the Nair practised once gets imitated by the lower castes and it may continue as well for reasons of inherent benefits ~~at~~ associated with it.

In non-ritual services contractual elements are well predominant. However, regular or occasional dependency, a marked closeness in habitations or between houses of castes, disappearance of untouchability except for some lingering aspects of it, have led to considerable intimacy and informality in master-servant relations across caste. In the spatial distribution of houses there is considerable interspersing of the houses of Nairs, Tiyas, Pulayans, Vettuvans, Christians and Moslems. Consequent on these factors there is a certain degree of command over labour caste families or labour supplying families of any caste in any sector of the village.

In vertical dependency through the supply of unskilled labour there is a pattern based on caste and a few principles appear to be governing it.

- (i) A caste does not supply labour to a caste lower, however wealthy the latter be.
- (ii) A well-to-do family of any caste (also Moslems and Christians) does not serve any family of any caste including its own.
- (iii) Nairs do not usually serve families of any caste except rarely some wealthy families of their own caste to carry consumable items of daily needs such as rice, oil and the like in small quantities, and this is done only by poor dependent Nairs. Nairs are served by any of the lower castes and also Moslems and Christians subject to (ii) above.
- (iv) Wealthy Tiyas are served by the poor of their own caste or of any family of lower castes or of Christians or Moslems, a feature which in its principles repeat at lower levels as well.
- (v) Christians and Moslems come to be on a par with Tiyas in this respect. The two groups may be served by poor Tiyas or castes lower than them, or the poor among themselves.

The complex data which I have in this respect permit these generalisations, but I am not sure how far some castes such as Kanakkan (boatman) and Odan (potter) who have disputes of rank with a few castes and whose dependency on other castes at inter-family levels is very limited, behave in the field of unskilled labour. However, there is no doubt that the principle (ii) above operates among them as well. The well-to-do among labour castes or among those with occupational specialisation are almost negligible in number and the pattern of dependency, for these reasons, appear to be a sustaining integrative force.

In the field of interdining there is much relaxation of the stringent pattern prevalent in the early

decades of this century. The tendency to accommodate lower castes in interdining on the lines pointed out in the second section is clearly visible. But there are strict limitations too inspite of the fact that in the field of secular services of a skilled type, a man can find his master or employer in a lower caste. Even though the latter is his regular employer, he does not dine at his house nor his women have any commensal relations or relations on terms of social visits with his employer's family. I learn that this tendency with little relaxation exists in urban centres except among the highly educated young men and women. In Valapad, from about the thirties, there have been Nairs who always thought it a matter of secular prestige to have been employed by the very wealthy and powerful Tiyaṣ for skilled services. Yet, caste controls the Nair and the Tiyaṣ is indifferent or 'neutral' to the fact of caste superiority of the Nair. There is in this field a clear continuity from the situation that existed from an uncertain past, perhaps from a period over 200 years ago, into this century. The Sthani Nair was by caste much lower than the Vellayma Sudra Nair who was under the secular power of the former and was serving him in some capacity. The Sudra Nair prided on this prestige; yet he would not dine at the Sthani house unless a cook of appropriate caste cooked and served him with food. At lower levels in the caste hierarchy there is in general less of relaxation of norms

of interdining. The 'tea-shop behaviour' in commensality, even among lower castes is not allowed to encroach into their houses.

People of approximately equal secular status belonging to different castes have more intimacy in matters of social intercourse and there is among them a 'we-feeling' fostered by the sense of equality in secular status. Yet, in interdining, their women do not dine at each other's house across caste, and men try to confine reaching their hands across caste to tea and snacks. The model in recent years set up by some progressive educated men to interdine at feasts did not get much following. But it still continues confined to the male members.

Thus the formation of 'diagonal groups' in which progressive members of a caste join hands with similar members of a lower caste and maintain frequent mutual contacts does not appear to be destroying caste even among them particularly because marriage is still caste-determined. This feature of these diagonal groups also accounts for the fact that factions created by political parties are not said to be long lasting; a probable fact on which my data are rather very scanty.

Thus in the vertical relations we find that caste, modified slightly by secular ideas, governs the feature of 'who serves whom?', and in interdining, caste controls behaviour to a clearly perceivable extent inspite of the secular ideas and groups of secular status.

There is no hypergamy or intermarriage except for sporadic cases which in all numbered four. Two of these couples have an urban life and two have parted off from their houses. Nair castes, except the washermen and barbers among them, are today more or less a single caste with living instances of numerous intercaste marriages among them. At the lower level, among Kanakkans, Odans, Vettuvans and Pulayans, and other castes ranking within these levels a girl marrying even a higher caste man is driven out although in former times some castes such as the Kanakkan accepted the erring girl back after a fine was imposed on her.

Among members who have no knowledge of each other, at the bazaar or tea-shops, the dominant tendency is not to be interested in each other's caste but to count on symbols such as dress, ornaments and general behaviour. For these reasons even the lower castes have a good 'make-up' at such centres away from home since it gets appreciated in its own merit.

The power groups of Valapad have a vague social boundary. There are atleast three of them each being important in a sector of the village and in each are families of Nairs, Tiyas and Christians and Moslems. Each group as a 'whole' is concerned only with the intercaste or secular matters but norms of intra-caste matters are left to be handled by families of the

respective caste concerned who may or may not be members of the power group. There is at the same time a pronounced individuality and self-confidence that each family can manage its own matters, and in the adjudication of a dispute there is hardly any need of an established power group when there is the Court of Law. A Christian teacher told me "In Valapad in any family of some means and standing there is one man who is a lawyer by self-training. He can even guide the professional lawyers; and you can see that each morning even the Vettuvan reads the newspaper and is posted with the latest news in the Press."

From the working of the power groups I could gather that the area is socially well disposed to accept the modern Panchayat or is atleast not likely to find it cumbersome or as a political institution which will be exploited by the wealthy for their benefit. Further, the power groups, 'the diagonal groups', the bazaar, the historic past of a unity of the area under the Sthani Nair, the vertical dependency through skilled and unskilled labour have all contributed to a sense of unity among the people and to place loyalty to Valapad in preference to wider areas.

Among the Christians of the area there is caste. Marriage and commensality among them still show that the seven groups among them with diverse ancestry <sup>are</sup> ~~and~~ inter-linked more or less on the principle of caste, "a fact"

as a couple of Christian teachers asserted. The Moslems have parallel divisions but their commensal relations reflect it in a milder degree.

In religious worship, inspite of the possibility for multi-caste temples to become popular there are no promising features that it will happen to be so. Tiyyas Mukkuvans, Kanakkans and Odans have their separate temples and all patronise higher caste temples more at festivals than at any other time. There is also a tendency among some progressive sections of the Tiyas and of some other lower castes, as I was told, 'to leave the Nair deities severely alone to the Nairs' or not to pay any special interest to patronise the higher caste deities.

From this short survey of modern tendencies in Valapad I am inclined to say that caste, joint family and village in this progressive area is bound to continue in modern forms for decades to come. The area is highly promising as a spot of field work to learn how modern forces can modify or foster the old groups and institutions and to discern the probable directions of change which these are likely to assume. Not only that, before the oldest generation of today disappears intensive enquiries can bring to light how ~~ease~~ caste hierarchy could operate inspite of adverse factors of secular status affecting it for two or more centuries. The instance of the low ranking Sthani Nair here is the guiding example in point.

When I processed my Valapad data I was often impressed with what a family of my Nair hosts in Valapad told me on the first day of my enquiries. A young college graduate of the family discouraging my efforts at the proposed enquiries, said "There is no caste, no joint family, no village here; in anything every part is glaringly urban. You can find small industries, Vettuvans reading newspapers, relatives quarrelling, untouchables holding you under command for higher wages, and also liquor, sex and cinema and what not. Can you tell apart the Vettuvan girl from a Nair girl? You cannot, for she dresses so well and looks at you squarely." But the father of the household intervened with a corrective, "When I was young I too thought like that, but I find caste and the pattern of our family are much with us still." Corroborating this I locate in my field notes ~~that~~ the pithy remarks of my Kanakkan boatman before he smiled off good-bye to me on the day when I boated back on my departure - "Sir, you can find caste, family and village behind all these modern people here but in our Valapad there is also everything you find in Trichur or in your Bombay."

I realise, I have yet to locate more precisely the structural links between indigenous Valapad and what the wise old boatman with his native intelligence styled as 'Bombay'.



Section VAn Assessment  
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The social stratification as it existed in the beginning of this century was considerably complex, particularly at the level of the matrilineal castes. Families of high secular status maintained or even moulded the pattern of intercaste relations in its intricate patterns. The pattern of land tenure and ownership was an important and effective basis factor in the working of intercaste relations as well as intergroup and inter-family relations within a local caste. The limited self-sufficiency of the village, interest in land outside the village, the social need for affiliations and for marital alliance with those in power brought several castes as well as families outside the village into some aspect or other of the working of the village community.

One is generally likely to assume that under the British the power structure and the rural level was transformed except where the former official power holders continued to be in office in some capacity or other. But we have seen that the situation until about the last decade was that a Sthani-head or a Nambudiri-head or a janmi-head who was neither a Sthani nor a Nambudiri, was at the apex 'ruling over' with a power group functioning under him.

The Sthani in a good number of cases was not the pre-British Desavari or Naduvvari, but one who held an important office under the Zamorin or another pre-British Raja, or he was sometimes a wealthy janmi with a title awarded by an important pre-British ruler. Sthanis of this category who were not the pre-British district or village heads but stayed within the former area of power of such heads, in several instances even took over the 'reigning' of the area when those heads sank into poverty and held hardly anything beyond the honorific titles. The Villages of this kind are worthy of investigation today to enlighten us on this process and the subsequent pattern of shift of peoples' loyalties to the new fountain-head of power. The main factor that led to the shift of centres of power from one family to another under the consequent shift in loyalties was the janmam ownership of land; the ultimate owner of land was the de facto king of the locality. History thus takes us in its own pace of continuity until about the forties of this century. And since then, as we have recognised, there are the power groups. They may not be there, in some villages, clustering up as an impressive entity keeping in their grips all controls over the local people; but the fact is that they are there. It may be a nebulous group in some villages, but it has its important roles, and more field studies focussed on appraising the conditions today are bound to be rewarding.

There were in the past set-up three hierarchies, hierarchy of caste, of land tenure and land ownership classes, and a vague hierarchy of groups of families of differential social status within a caste, and at some levels these hierarchies coincided. Families of locally high secular status among the Nairs, the dominant group controlled and maintained the general structure, and particularly the working of caste-based distinction, disabilities and prerogatives.

The possibility of some degree of vertical mobility particularly within the matrilineal castes characterised the caste system with the feature of an impressive acquisitive urge at the level of all matrilineal groups. This sense of acquisition often operated even at the component unit of the Nair joint family, the tavari. The goal of such activity and aspirations in general was to enhance one's family's social status or to maintain it against adversities. This, in turn, led to the maintenance of the traditional intercaste relations since each family aspired to keep up its relations with others oriented to values of the hierarchical feature of the caste society. Not only that, the very process of upward mobility of the a family involved maintenance of social distinctions between families within its local caste. Further, the groups which could dominate, the power groups, could get its component units, the families, recruited afresh with the passage of time when some of its former

units were losing power. This was a consequence of the process of mobility at the various levels. The feature of dominance also characterised the caste society down to interfamily levels among the 'touchable' castes. Increased social status meant wider possibility of enjoying potential or active dominance.

The assessing of the effect of modern influences is made with reference to the agents and centres. The social placement of the agents (i.e., their status-role as householder, teacher, urban employed, earning member etc.), conditions the content of modern influence which they spread and also the extent to which they can spread it. This problem among others as we saw led to the need of studying the structure of the modern family of the upper caste of Nairs. The study of the modified joint family, the shift to importance in the role of the visiting husband, the data on urban employed and the discussion on their motivation for sending money and their job-seeking endeavour itself, all point to the strength of family in acting out tradition oriented behaviour and also as an agency ensuring it among the younger generation. Our considerations regarding the aspirations of these families (the norm-setting group) in today's acquisitive pattern striving to achieve the criteria of modern secular status also reveal that the dominant upper castes are still at an advantage over others.

In intercaste relations commensality and social intercourse reveal obvious and striking social distance only between castes which were considerably apart in former times. Between other castes restrictions on relations resting chiefly on the basis of pollution and caste rank are fast disappearing.

The modern land reforms have set the kanam tenants free, but sensing legislation in advance the verumpattam tenants in large majority have been deprived of their lands. The need for manual labour and income from urban employed to supplement local income have led to a master-servant relationship between families of Nairs of the upper and middle groups on the one hand and the lower castes on the other. This has created a firm and favourable background to keep command over lower castes.

The system of values does not appear to have transformed. The hierarchical ideas, the aspirations to be free from manual labour confining of womens' activities outside to skilled non-manual work, absence of marriage across the prohibited caste boundaries of former times, belief in and patronage of a number of Brahminic and non-Brahminic deities, all illustrate that the former system of values has not been adversely affected to any significant extent.

The castes have an increasing horizontal unity but this is not manifesting itself in caste associations or caste-wise organisations of standing except in towns

and suburban areas. Further, the vertical relations which continue within the village do not allow the horizontal unity to grow in its own momentum in a manner progressively detrimental to the village community. A uniform articulation of interests within a caste which resides in a group of villages is visible among those who stay very compactly. For such a caste there are more favourable conditions to have horizontal links over wider areas. However, castes of this kind such as the immigrant castes also come within the orbit of power of their village residents and they also continue to be, in part, complementary castes or occupational castes under the power group within their village or a neighbouring one.

The loyalty to the village, as we have seen, is in part adversely affected by modern conditions but it is also partly fostered by the same conditions. Castes are thus bound to be component groups with vertical relations working within a delimited area, the village, or in some areas, a group of villages.

The fourth village shows a possible model of contemporary relations between castes. It is a spot which is representative of villages where caste rank in the remote past at an important point at higher levels in the hierarchy of matrilineal castes had no correlation with power and wealth. Not only that, the lower castes ruled the higher and hypergamy raised the secular status of the still lower ones to high secular status, even higher than

that of the highest caste. It is again a village where the modern power groups are multi-caste and yet intercaste relations in labour, marriage, dining and intimacy in social intercourse in general at interfamily levels are all still considerably determined by two factors, caste and secular status. Of these two, in some fields atleast, as we saw, secular status cannot affect the operation of caste factors. The matrilineal castes alone have become more or less united into one caste presumably because of their common heritage - matriliney, absence of approach pollution, ritual and religious beliefs, permitted hypergamy. Other castes do not show any sign of uniting in this manner. It is thus a village that shows the possibility of continuance of caste and the village, and the joint family of Nairs in the present modified form characterising the stratification for decades to come.

Transformation has occurred in parts at some points, for instance the enangar group of Nairs has only vestigial remains; elements and component units of it are some of the integral parts of the modern functional unit which we have recognised as operating outside the family group. Similarly Nambudiri-Nair relationship today has no land basis, nor hypergamy but there is some relationship woven around the secular resources of the Nambudiris. They also join the modern power groups as a component unit.

The probable direction of change is that castes can have more of contract relations between them with the rise of industrial and urban openings for earning livelihood.

At the same time, master-servant relationship or master-dependent relationship at family levels is bound to remain qualified by the caste background or traditional intercaste behaviour. Each of the lower group of castes below Nairs can grow to be locally cohesive in each village or a group of neighbouring villages. The upper caste of Nairs and other matrilineal castes except probably the Ambalavasis are likely to be practically of one caste with increasing intermarriages among them and with the progressive disappearance of differences among them based on rank and on the former kind of ideas of social status. At the same time such marriages among them will create class formation more marked thus giving a heterogeneous character to the group that can emerge through the forces which unite them.

We have seen in the first chapter the nature of internal movement of population from areas of very high concentration. The movement is to sparsely populated area such as the hill tracts of Walluvanad and North Malabar and the process of communities developing there with a basis in a predominantly cash crop economy continues. Such new areas of inhabitation in highland Malabar, as I gather, are having intercaste relations as seen in the plains. This development relieves the possible rise of such areas of the coast and the middle range slopes which have population at saturation point from reaching excess levels leading to consequent changes in



intercaste relations.

As seen in this study there has so far been an adjustment to modern forces but not succumbing to it. The general structure of the stratified society has become modified today. It is the knowledge of this process of impact and adjustment which can make the Malabar society of today intelligible in its dynamic aspects.

What does an overall and long range historical perspective bring before us? The Nambudiris, ever since they began to spread over, a period of <sup>series</sup> ~~centuries~~ back in time, were always lagging behind the matrilineal castes in secular status except in the matter of wealth and what inevitably followed wealth. All the Brahmins could be priests, cooks and husbands for the matrilineal castes; the latter served the Brahmins as managers and secretaries, as tenants and domestic servants; and at the same time they were also the de facto local rulers to a considerable extent. What we saw in Valapad is an instance that reaches back into the time, perhaps over 200 years ago, when that locality evolved as a village community with its own centre of power. There the Pallichan Sthani Nair ruled over the higher castes and from the close of last century a caste of the untouchable group paralleled the power group families at the top of the local secular status hierarchy. In the forties multi-caste power groups took over; yet caste continues in the forms as we noted. We have further seen in the chapter on mobility the

limitations within which even during centuries castes could aspire for upward mobility in ritual status. The disappearance of distinctions confined to the Nair castes in some villages as Valapad today shows the contemporary limitations and that distinctions can become obsolete in the local hierarchy even when secular factors are highly favourable to blur out the distinctions beyond such limits.

The contemporary stratification and the general structure of the rural community is thus not likely to be transformed beyond some in minor modifications until the teenagers of today reach the fag end of their life when their children will have grown up to take over. But, each generation grows up acquiring a sentiment pattern rooted in the community in which it has grown and therefore, in that future as well, will there be much of a transformation to be experienced by the children who are playing about today?

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