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Education, Employment and Land Holding  
Pattern in a Tamil Village

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## Employment and Land Holding Pattern in a Tamil Village\*

### INTRODUCTION

Kadathuchery is a small village in Thongamputhur pakuthi Agasthoeswaram Taluk in Kanyakumari district.<sup>1/</sup> Roughly about ten minutes bus ride from Nagarcoil town towards Manakudi (a Harijan village) will take you to a place called Parakai junction. You get down there and walk along the country road in the eastern direction, after about two and a half kilometers you will reach Kadathuchery which is known locally as 'Kadatty'. The distinctive feature that marks out this village from the rest of the Harijan villages in Tamil Nadu was its monocaste (Harijan) population and high levels of literacy. The Census authorities selected in 1961 this particular village for an intensive survey of its socio-economic conditions.<sup>2/</sup> We resurveyed this village in January-February 1980 with the objective of understanding the changes that took place there since the 1961 survey. Some of our major findings relating to education, employment and landholding pattern are briefly reported in this paper.

The paper is divided in three sections. In Section I, we report the changes in the levels of education, occupation and employment of the population. Changes in land holding pattern and their impact on the village economy are discussed in Section II. A summary of our

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findings is given in Section III.

## SECTION I

### Education and Employment

According to the 1961 Census, the total population of 'Kadatty' was 464 persons comprising 224 males and 237 females. This population was spread over 130 households. The entire population belonged to the Harijan caste of Sambavars.<sup>3/</sup> The Christian Missionaries who had worked in this village during the latter half of the nineteenth century, converted a sizeable proportion of the population to Christianity. In 1961, the Christian Sambavars constituted 57% of the population and the rest remained Hindu. However, conversion has not removed the Caste; both Christian and Hindu Sambavars still together form one single caste group. The Christian Sambavars continue to be treated by the government on a par with their Hindu counterparts for dispensing various benefits. There exists no restriction among the two groups for inter-marriage. In almost all the socio-cultural aspects of life except in matters of faith, the Community still remains homogenous.

A significant impact of the Christian influence in this village society has been on the spread of literacy. The Missionaries had set up an elementary school in the village towards the end of the last century. However, this school was discontinued after a few decades. Now children from 'Kadatty' go to the two schools situated in the neighbouring village at a distance of about 1.5 kilometers. The nearest high school is at a

distance of 3 Kms. from the village. Facilities for college and other technical education are available in the Nagarcoil town which is about 6 Kms. away from the village.

Since the village had had a fairly long tradition of elementary education, the level of literacy has reached very high levels. According to the 1961 survey, 66.4 percent of the population was literate, a rate much higher than even in the Madras city (58%) and the Kanyakumari district (48%) in which the village is situated.<sup>4/</sup> The female literacy rate was also very high in this village. Over the last two decades, the rate of literacy has shown further significant increase with the result that in 1980 only less than one percent of the population above (0-5) age group was returned as illiterate.

As we noted earlier, the credit for Sowing the seeds of educational advancement among this community goes to the Christian Missionaries. They extended to the convert population all possible assistance for social and economic advancement. Their efforts included material incentives for schooling, granting of church lands at concessional rates for lease cultivation and also help to the educated persons for securing gainful employment. Education has in due course become the prime concern of all households, however, minimal the actual attainment turns out to be. Most of the parents, infact, send their children for schooling instead of retaining them for household work or of enrolling them in the labour force early in life. See Table 1.



Though the significance of education is well realised by this Harijan community, their ability to sustain it for economic advancement seems to be rather limited. Besides, most children take longer periods than the minimum prescribed to reach given levels of education except perhaps at the initial stages. High rates of drop out and grade repetition at the middle school and higher stages naturally lead to a petering out of the proportions of the population in the higher age groups enrolled at the corresponding stages of education. The distribution of the population according to age groups and educational attainments is given in Table 3.

Table 3: Proportion of person (6 and over) according to educational level and age group 1980.

| Age group | Relevant stages of education | Present level of education |        |           |                 | Total |
|-----------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--------|-----------|-----------------|-------|
|           |                              | Primary                    | Middle | Secondary | Above secondary |       |
| 6 - 13    | Primary and Middle           | 11.9                       | 2.4    | -         | -               | 14.4  |
| 14 - 20   | Secondary                    | 4.1                        | 4.3    | 5.0       | 0.7             | 14.1  |
| 21 - 44   | --                           | 20.8                       | 10.5   | 7.7       | 2.4             | 41.4  |
| 45 - 59   | --                           | 12.9                       | 2.2    | 1.0       | -               | 16.0  |
| 60 +      | --                           | 12.2                       | 1.2    | 0.7       | -               | 14.0  |
| TOTAL     | --                           | 61.9                       | 20.6   | 14.4      | 3.1             | 100.0 |

About 62 percent of the population has attained only primary level education. Most of the persons in the older age groups do not possess schooling beyond that level, the proportion among them with middle and secondary school education being very small. Among the younger age groups, particularly among those in the age group 14-20, the number

of years of schooling is higher (see proportions in the secondary and higher levels), eventhough, a large proportion discontinues schooling before reaching stages which would ensure them job opportunities in middle and high levels of employment. On the other hand, they join the local labour force and seek employment in agricultural and allied activities.

Table 4: Percentage distribution of workers according to present level of age, level of education and occupation at the time of entry into labour force, 1980

|                                | Age at Entry into Labour Force |       |       |      | Total |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------|-------|------|-------|
|                                | 14-16                          | 17-19 | 20-24 | 25 + |       |
| <u>I. Present Level of Age</u> |                                |       |       |      |       |
| 14-20                          | 7.5                            | 1.0   | -     | -    | 8.5   |
| 21-44                          | 32.5                           | 14.8  | 4.6   | 1.0  | 52.9  |
| 45-59                          | 15.4                           | 3.9   | 1.0   | -    | 20.3  |
| 60+                            | 14.8                           | 2.0   | 0.3   | -    | 17.1  |
| Total                          | 70.2                           | 21.6  | 5.9   | 2.3  | 100.0 |
| <u>II. Level of Education</u>  |                                |       |       |      |       |
| Primary                        | 57.7                           | 6.6   | -     | 1.3  | 65.6  |
| Middle                         | 11.1                           | 8.9   | 0.7   | -    | 20.7  |
| Secondary                      | 0.7                            | 5.6   | 4.6   | 1.0  | 11.9  |
| Above secondary                | 0.7                            | 0.7   | 0.7   | -    | 2.1   |
| Total                          | 70.2                           | 21.6  | 5.9   | 2.3  | 100.0 |
| <u>III. Present Occupation</u> |                                |       |       |      |       |
| Cultivation                    | 6.9                            | 3.9   | 1.3   | 0.3  | 12.4  |
| Agricultural labour            | 59.4                           | 15.1  | 2.3   | 0.7  | 77.5  |
| Salaried jobs                  | -                              | 1.3   | 2.0   | 1.0  | 4.3   |
| Other self-employment          | 3.9                            | 1.3   | 0.3   | 0.3  | 5.8   |
| Total                          | 70.2                           | 21.6  | 5.9   | 2.3  | 100.0 |

It is significant to note that 70 percent of the workers entered the labour force between the ages 14 and 16; most of them have only primary education and congregate on the agricultural labour category. Those who joined the labour force at a slightly older age have relatively better educational levels and a few of them got salaried jobs or ended up in self employment. Nevertheless, entry points into labour force are not conditioned mainly by the levels of education reached, but by economic pressures and opportunities within and outside the village economy. The relatively high work participation rate and the early entry of persons into the labour force are not, however, due to any increase in employment opportunities within the village over the years. Rather it is due to economic compulsions of poverty. The tendency on the part of the labour force is seen to be one of sharing the available opportunities for work among all the persons who are not able to pursue studies or to migrate to places outside the village for employment.

The occupational structure of the workers in 1961 and 1980 is given in table 5. It shows the preponderance of agriculture as the source of employment for the labour force in both the years. Within agriculture, it is significant to note that since opportunities for owner or tenant cultivation are limited, a large proportion of the labour force depends on agricultural wage employment. Interestingly, the proportion of agricultural labourers in the total labour force increased from 54 percent in 1961 to 77.5 percent in 1980 while the proportion of cultivators declined during the same period from 37.6 to 12.4 percent. The decline in the proportion of cultivators has been due to the resumption



by owners of formerly leased out lands for own cultivation. The opportunities for salaried employment have shown only marginal increases over this period, despite the notable improvement in educational levels of population.

Table 5: Occupational distribution of workers in various categories

| Occupation            | 1961   |       |        | 1980   |       |        |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|-------|--------|
|                       | Person | Male  | Female | Person | Male  | Female |
| Cultivation           | 37.6   | 41.1  | 34.5   | 12.4   | 12.4  | 12.5   |
| Agricultural Labour   | 54.1   | 46.8  | 62.1   | 77.5   | 69.9  | 84.9   |
| Salaried employment   | 2.4    | 3.5   | 0.9    | 4.3    | 7.8   | 0.7    |
| Business and trade    | 1.6    | 2.8   | -      | 5.8    | 9.8   | 2.0    |
| Other self employment | 4.3    | 5.1   | 2.6    |        |       |        |
|                       | 100.0  | 100.0 | 100.0  | 100.0  | 100.0 | 100.0  |

The employment opportunities within the agricultural sector seem to be strictly limited by area under cultivation, crops cultivated and technology of cultivation in vogue. It is difficult to obtain precise estimates of the quantum of work available to the agricultural labour force. According to some rough estimates obtained from our survey during the agricultural season previous to our survey, the average number of days of employment available for a male agricultural worker (including the small proportion of owner cultivators) was 56 days of work in own farm and 51 days of work as wage labour. For a female worker, the corresponding number was 52 days for own work and 42 days as wage labour. Since there are only two agricultural seasons in this region, the quantum of annual agricultural work shared among the agrarian population

very low per person. The total number of days of unemployment and the intensity of under employment being high, the workers are badly in need of supplementary sources of income such as subsidiary occupations. Unfortunately such subsidiary occupations, are not available to the required extent. The distribution of workers by main and subsidiary occupation, shows that agriculture continues to be the major opening for employment to the labour force. Among the 236 agricultural labourers only 27 had some cultivation to fall back on and only another 4 found some kind of self-employment to supplement their earning from agricultural work. Among the 13 salaried persons in the village, 4 had some own cultivation and one had land to lease out. All the 18 self-employed persons reported agricultural labour as their main or subsidiary source of income. In short, in the situation which prevails in the village, persons whose earning from their main occupations are low, find that opportunities for employment in other activities by which to supplement their earning are deplorably low.

Table 6: Distribution of workers in their main and subsidiary Occupations 1980.

| Main occupation          | Total<br>no. of wor-<br>kers | Workers with subsidiary occupation |                             |              |                               |                          | As<br>ry<br>tio. |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------|
|                          |                              | Agri-<br>cul<br>ture               | Agricul-<br>tural<br>labour | Ren-<br>tier | Sala-<br>ried em-<br>ployment | Other self<br>employment |                  |
| Agriculture              | 38                           | --                                 | --                          | --           | --                            | --                       |                  |
| Agricultural<br>labour   | 236                          | 27                                 | --                          | --           | --                            | 4                        | 31               |
| Rentier                  | --                           | --                                 | --                          | --           | --                            | --                       |                  |
| Salaried emplo-<br>yment | 13                           | 4                                  | --                          | 1            | --                            | 1                        | 8                |
| Other self<br>employment | 18                           | 1                                  | 3                           | --           | --                            | --                       |                  |
| Total                    | 305                          | 32                                 | 10                          | 1            | --                            | 5                        | 48               |

The 1961 Survey did not give any detailed information on the quantum of employment and the availability of various subsidiary occupations for the labour force. However, some of the observations made in that report on the quantum of employment show that the situation prevailing then was not much different from that in 1980.

"They have work in the fields only for about seven to eight months in a year, the other four months being a period of enforced idleness. Even during that eight months of cultivation season their earnings are very meagre. A couple of husband and wife working in coolies can at the most get Rs. 40 a month on an average of 20 to 25 working days during the peak season and this would hardly be sufficient to meet the bare necessities of their low level of living .... The number of days they work is not quite within their option and it is all a question of availability of work in the fields. During the cultivation

season, an agricultural cooly can hope to get work for about 15 to 20 days in a month in the village itself. On the other days he has necessarily to go out to the neighbouring villages in search of work as there are no household industries in this village to provide him work during this period of enforced idleness. A good number of agricultural labourers of this village go to the neighbouring villages and work as coolies in the fields."6/

Attempts by government agencies to ameliorate the conditions of life of the poor, unemployed and underemployed workers have been in since 1961. Some efforts have been made by the Block Development Agency to generate subsidiary employment opportunity for the village population. As part of this effort, a programme for training village women in weaving was started in the late fifties. Though initially the villagers showed interest in the programme, there was not machinery to do follow up action so as to help them to develop weaving as a subsidiary occupation. We were told by the villagers that the training school was closed sometime in the mid-sixties due to lack of students. Another effort made by the Block Development Agency was to help the villagers to take up dairy farming. Milch cow and buffaloes were distributed among households. A co-operative milk society was formed in the village for marketing milk. Though initially the programme caught up in a large way, due to lack of demand for milk in the neighbouring area, the marketing programme failed. And finally most of the beneficiaries had to sell their milch animals. During our 1980 survey, hardly any household reported dairying as a subsidiary occupation.

An important mechanism by means of which the pressure of labour force in the village labour market is getting relieved to a large extent has been out-migration. The out migrants include three main categories, namely, life time out-migrants, temporary outmigrants residing in places of employment, and daily commuters who work in places outside the village. Since the Missionary period, quite a large number of people with education have moved out of the village in search of non-agricultural occupations, most of them having eventually settled down permanently in places of employment. Obviously, the growth of literacy and education has played an important catalytic role in this process.

It is difficult to get any estimate of the rate of outmigration from this village. According to the 1961 survey, outmigration was an important reason for the stability of the size of the population in the village during the preceding four decades. The trend continued during the preceding four decades. The trend continued during the succeeding decades also; lately, however, there has been a decline in the total population in the village from 464 in 1961 to 418 in 1980. The decline in population could have been due also to the decline in the number of children per household. However, such outmigration of labour force or the decline in the number of children per household does not seem to have contributed to improvement in the economic conditions in the village. Hardly any remittances are received in the village from outmigrants. During our investigation, we also get the impression that the prospects of outmigration are getting reduced for the agricultural labour force,

This observation is consistent with the increase observed in the labour force in the village during the 1961-80 period. The number of male workers increased from 140 to 169 and that of female workers from 115 to 152.

As possibilities of higher education are very bleak for the majority of the households and the ability to sustain the unemployed, dependent population is in general weak in this subsistence economy, the work participation rate has increased from 55 percent in 1961 to 73 percent by 1980. Many of the educated persons therefore remain in the internal labour market and share the available wage employment with their brethren. In 1980, among the 14 percent of the workers with secondary and higher levels of education, only 4 percent were employed in salaried and other non-agricultural occupations; 3.3 percent remained cultivators and 6.5 percent offered themselves as agricultural labourers obviously for want of other opportunities.

Table 7: Proportion of total workers distributed according to educational level and occupation, 1980

| ational level | Occupation | Culti-<br>vator | Agricul-<br>tural<br>labour | Salaried<br>employees | Others | Total |
|---------------|------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------|-------|
| ary           |            | 7.2             | 53.1                        | 0.7                   | 4.6    | 65.6  |
| le            |            | 2.0             | 7.7                         | 0.3                   | 0.7    | 20.7  |
| ndary         |            | 3.0             | 6.2                         | 2.3                   | 0.3    | 11.8  |
| Secondary     |            | 0.3             | 0.3                         | 1.0                   | 0.3    | 2.0   |
|               |            | 12.5            | 77.4                        | 4.3                   | 5.9    | 100.0 |

The factors underlying the inability of the village population in making use of educational attainment for economic advancement and the large scale increase in the agricultural labour force will become evident from the following discussion on the pattern of landholding and its changes over time.

## SECTION II

### Land Holding Pattern

The geographical area of "Kadatty" is 0.23 square miles or roughly 150 acres. This small geographical area has a very high population density, about 2000 persons per square mile. Out of the total village area, 145 acres (97 percent) are under cultivation and the remaining 5 acres constitute the village settlement. Nearly 60 percent of the cultivated area is owned by farmers of the neighbouring villages. About 90 percent of the net sown area is under rice. Since all the rice lands get assured irrigation rice is cropped twice annually.

### Present Landholding Pattern

According to 1980 survey, there were 140 households in the village. The distribution of land owned and operated by these households is given in table 8. The significant features of the landholding pattern are the following:

- (a) The proportion of landless households in the village is only about 9 percent which is much lower than the state average.

- (b) However, for a larger percentage of the landed households, the average area owned and operated is very low. Eighty out of the 140 households owns only less than 10 cents of land.
- (c) Bulk of the land owned is concentrated in the larger size groups of holdings. The ten households which fall in the above 2 acre category own about 60 percent of the owned area. The distribution of operated area is less concentrated within this size group. These categories operate only about 35 percent of the total.
- (d) The incidence of tenancy is very high in the village. The villagers have leased in 24 acres of land which comes to about 45 percent of their owned area. At the same time they have leased out only 22 percent of their owned area. Roughly about 50 percent of the land leased-in by the villagers are from the cultivators of the neighbouring village who own land in Kadatty. Within the village, most of the land is leased-in by persons belonging to the lower size group of holding and it is leased-out by the larger size groups.

Table 8: Ownership and Distribution of Land 1980

| Size Class of Ownership holding (acres) | No. of households | Area owned | Area Leased in | Area Leased out | Area Operated |
|---|-------------------|------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Less                                    | 150               | 0          | 0.85           | 0               | 0.85          |
| - 0.10                                  | 80                | 1.85       | 14.81          | 0.50            | 16.15         |
| - 0.25                                  | 9                 | 1.62       | 4.88           | 0.00            | 6.50          |
| - 0.50                                  | 9                 | 3.00       | 0.47           | 0.00            | 3.47          |
| - 1.00                                  | 9                 | 6.44       | 0.00           | 0.75            | 5.69          |
| - 2.00                                  | 8                 | 12.19      | 1.59           | 1.18            | 12.60         |
| - 5.00                                  | 10                | 32.12      | 1.85           | 10.08           | 23.89         |
|   | 0                 | 00.00      | 00.00          | 00.00           | 00.00         |
|   | 140               | 57.21      | 24.45          | 12.51           | 69.15         |



Since the incidence of tenancy is significant in the village, we have examined in detail the operations of the lease market. There are 28 tenants in the village who together leased in 24.5 acres of land. Out of this 28 tenants, for 26 the main occupation was agricultural labour. Tenant cultivation was only a secondary source of occupation to them. The tenants leased in land from 19 households, eight from within the village and eleven from outside. Some characteristics of these leaser households are given in table 9. Out of the 11 leasers from the neighbouring villages, 7 belonged to the upper castes of Pillais and Brahmans and 4 were from the backward caste of Nadars. Out of the eight households from Kadatty, in two cases, the heads of the households were involved in fulltime cultivation; in five households, they were employed in the service sector. Among the lessors from the neighbouring villages 3 were mainly in cultivation and 6 in the service sector. Lessors in general did not own large areas of land. Our enquiries on the reasons for leasing out land have shown non-agricultural occupation of the head of the households, as the primary reason for 5 of the lessors from within the village and 6 of them from the neighbouring villages. Three of the lessors from Kadatty reported that they were unable to cultivate their land due to shortage of family members able to manage and participate in the cultivation operations.

Table 9: Some characteristics of the leaser households

| Characteristics                                   | Leasers<br>from Kadatty | Leasers from the<br>neighbouring villages |
|---|-------------------------|---|
| 1. Total number of leasers                        | 8                       | 11  |
| 2. <u>Caste</u>                                   |                         |   |
| (a) Upper caste                                   | -                       | 7   |
| (b) Backward caste                                | -                       | 4   |
| (c) Harijans                                      | 8                       | -   |
| 3. <u>Occupation of the head of the household</u> |                         |   |
| (a) Cultivator                                    | 2                       | 3   |
| (b) Service Sector                                | 5                       | 6   |
| (c) Others  | 1                       | 2   |
| 4. Average size of ownership holding<br>(acre)    | 2.65                    | 4.25                                      |
| 5. Coefficient of variation in ownership holding  | 1.25                    | 1.08                                      |
| 6. <u>Reasons for leasing out land</u>            |                         |   |
| (a) Non-agricultural occupation                   | 5                       | 6   |
| (b) Inability                                     | 3                       | 2   |
| (c) Distance and other occupation                 | -                       | 3   |

An important aspect of the lease market that emerged from our survey was the very high rate of rent per acre. The tenants on an average paid 840 kg. of paddy per acre as rent per year which was about 60 percent of the estimated gross output per acre of paddy land in the village. There was also some variation (though not very significant) in the rent per acre which could partly be a reflection of the variation in the productivity of land and partly the operation of competitive forces. Though the rent rate was fixed per acre for the whole lease period, our enquiries showed that in the event of a crop failure due to natural calamities, most of the lessors compensated

their tenants by waiving part of the rent. The lessors ensured prompt payment of rent by the tenants by collecting in advance a deposit from them. The deposit amount comes to roughly equal to the annual rent of the leased land.<sup>17</sup> This practice of collecting deposit also limits entry to the lease market. Since most tenants are agricultural labourers, they find it difficult to mobilise the money required for deposit. Only 20 percent of the households had succeeded in entering the lease market; about 55 percent of the amount of deposit was raised by the tenants through own savings and another 30 percent by borrowing from relatives.

Table 10:                    Terms and conditions of land lease

|  |                                    |        |
|--|------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. Number of tenants interviewed                       |                                    | 19     |
| 2. Average annual rent per acre (in kgs of paddy)      |                                    | 840    |
| 3. Coefficient of variation in the rent per acre       |                                    | 0.36   |
| 4. Deposit paid by the tenants per acre (Kg. of paddy) |                                    | 820.00 |
| 5. Coefficient of variation in the deposit per acre    |                                    | 0.40   |
| 6. Source of finance in paying the deposit (%)         |                                    |        |
|  | (a) own savings                    | 55.00  |
|  | (b) friends & relatives            | 30.00  |
|  | (c) other sources                  | 15.00  |
| 7. Duration of lease (Number of tenants)               |                                    |        |
|  | (a) 5 years                        | 11     |
|  | (b) 5-11 years                     | 8      |
| 8. Nature of contract (Number of tenants)              |                                    |        |
|  | (a) written                        | 3      |
|  | (b) oral                           | 16     |
| 9. Conditions or obligations (Number of tenants)       |                                    |        |
|  | (a) free or low paid farm work     |        |
|  | Yes                                | -      |
|  | No                                 | 19     |
|  | (b) free or low paid non-farm work |        |
|  | Yes                                | 5      |
|  | No                                 | 14     |

The duration and the nature of lease contract varied widely. Out of the 19 tenants interviewed, the duration of lease was less than 5 years for 11; for the others, duration varied from 5 to 11 years. Most of the tenants had entered into only oral contracts with their lessors. The majority of the tenants also reported that the lessors did not impose on them any conditions or obligations other than payment of rent in return for leasing out the land. All the decisions concerning the cultivation of land were being taken by the tenants themselves. Majority of the tenants did not use any high yielding variety of seed or chemical fertilizer. For the village as a whole, only 15 percent of the rice area was covered with high yielding varieties. The area treated with chemical fertiliser was also very low, about 8 percent. Though the use of modern inputs is very low, the productivity of rice lands was generally high in the village, about 1400 kg per acre. Such a high level of productivity is sustained in the village with low levels of modern inputs mainly because the rice land in this village forms part of the delta region of river Pazhayar. The annual deposits of silt help the soil sustain its natural fertility. Moreover, the Parakkai Irrigation tank situated adjacent to the village is a regular source of canal irrigation in the rice lands in the village.

Table 11: Estimated income per acre of leased in land

|   | Rs       | %    |
|---|----------|------|
| 1. Estimated gross income per acre                                | 1,246.00 | 100  |
| 2. Rent paid to the lessor  | 746.00   | 59.9 |
| 3. Cost of cultivation per acre<br>(including family labour)      | 348.00   | 27.9 |
| 4. Cost of cultivation per acre<br>(excluding family labour)      | 273.00   | 21.9 |
| 5. Net income per acre to the tenant<br>(including family labour) | 152.00   | 12.2 |
| 6. Net income per acre to the tenant<br>(excluding family labour) | 227.00   | 18.2 |

Note: Estimates related to the first crop season of the year 1979-80

We have made some rough estimates of the income share of the tenants. The data on output and inputs were collected by means of oral enquiry. Since the reference period of the enquiry was about of 6 months, there could have been recall lapse on the part of the cultivators, we shall not give too much importance to the magnitude/<sup>of</sup> values as such of the different variables. At the same time, it will be useful to get some insights into the extent to which the lease market is beneficial to the tenants. The data on output and input were collected for the first crop season in 1979-80. The output (including the value of byproducts) was valued at the farm harvest prices and the cost of family labour at the market wage rate. Out of the gross income of Rs.1246 per acre, about 60 percent was given as rent to the lessor. The cost of cultivation (including the cost of family labour) accounted for another 28 percent. The remaining 12 percent (Rs.150) constituted the net income of the tenant from lease cultivation. Considering the fact that the average size of lease holding is very low (0.37 acre), the income which the tenant family derives will come down to Rs.130 only. We would expect a rise in the income of the tenant cultivators if the cost of their family labour input is also included along with the net income from lease cultivation. Incomes including cost of own labour raised the income share of the tenants from 12 percent to 18 percent only. The reason for this low share of income is, however, evident from a close look at the pattern of labour use in rice cultivation prevailing in the village. The tenants usually hire in labour and complete the cultivation of their lease lands within a short duration and hire out family labour in the remaining period. An important reason for this pattern of labour use arises from the fact that the range of cultivation

operations for paddy is time bound and hence the cultivators are unable to complete their farming operations with own family labour alone.

Table 12: Employment pattern of tenant and agricultural labour households

|   | <u>Tenant<br/>House<br/>holds</u> | <u>Agricultural labour<br/>households</u> |
|---|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. Estimated number of days of employment for male worker                                 | 66.8                              | 49.4                                      |
| 2. Coefficient of variation in the estimated number of days of employment per male worker | 0.40                              | 0.32                                      |
| 3. Estimated number of days employment per female worker                                  | 86.5                              | 72.4                                      |
| 4. Coefficient of variation of employment for female worker                               | 0.32                              | 0.39                                      |
| 5. Percentage of male labour days hired out per worker                                    | 82.4                              | 66.5                                      |
| 6. Percentage of female labour days hired out per worker                                  | 71.5                              | 89.8                                      |
| 7. Percentage of households owning bullocks   | 80.5                              | 3.0                                       |
| 8. Average number of days in which bullocks are used                                      | 63.4                              | 59.2                                      |
| 9. Coefficient of variations in the utilisation of bullocks                               | 0.28                              | 0.18                                      |
| 10. Cost of hiring a pair of bullocks   | 13.50                             | 14.12                                     |

Note: - Estimate relates to the first crop season of 1979-80.

We have made some rough estimates also of the use of family labour and hired labour in the tenant and agricultural labour households. Interestingly, the tenant households hire out a higher number of male labour days compared to the agricultural labour households. The reason for this phenomenon lies in the favourable lease market

for bullock labour. The demand for bullock labour in 'Kadatty' as well as in the neighbouring villages is such that a pair of bullocks when leased out would fetch Rs.12 per day of six hours duration. Besides, the tenant who accompanies the bullocks as ploughman gets a wage of Rs.7. Thus by hiring out a unit of human and bullock labour, the

tenant is able to get Rs.20 per day. In a crop season, the tenants, reportedly hire out their bullocks during around 50 to 60 days, which fetch them an additional income. It is important to note in this context that in the absence of the lease land, the tenants would have found it difficult to keep the bullocks, since in such a situation they would have had to maintain the bullocks entirely with purchased fodder. That the possession of leased in land is crucial to maintain the bullocks comes out clearly from the fact that a great majority (90 percent) of the pure agricultural labour households did not own any bullocks; while most of the tenants (26 out of 29) owned a pair each.

#### Changes in the landholding pattern

The 1961 survey of Kadatty gives only fragmentary information on the landholding pattern. The available information is restricted to the incidence of landlessness, number of households leasing in land and the rate of rent and deposit per acre. In order to get some insights into the changes occurring to the village land market, we have made a comparison of the 1961 position of these variables with what we observe in 1980. To get additional insights into changes in the landholding pattern, we have also collected data on land transfers that took place in the village during the last two decades.

The main changes noticed from the comparison of the 1961 survey

data with that of 1980 are the following:

- (a) there is a sharp decline in the proportion of landless households in the village. The percentage of landless households was 52 in 1961 and it declined to 11 by 1980,
- (b) the number of tenants declined from 48 in 1961 to 22 by 1980. Unfortunately the 1961 survey does not give any idea on the extent of area under tenancy and therefore it is not possible to know the extent of decline in area of the land leased in.
- (c) The rent per acre of land leased in ranged between 660 kgs. to 825 kgs. of paddy in 1961. In 1980, it ranged between 720 kgs. to 960kgs. It is difficult to give any estimate of the average rent rate as the 1961 report does not contain any estimate of the average rent per acre in the village as a whole. However, the significant upward movement in the range of rent prevailed in 1980 compared with the 1961 situation indicates that the rent per acre of land has been slowly increasing in the village over the last two decades. This is further evident from the increase in deposit per acre from 320 kgs. in 1961 to 820 kgs. of rice by 1980.

The explanation for the sharp reduction in the incidence of landlessness in Kadatty has to be sought from an analysis of the land transfer that took place in the village over the last two decades. Land transfers take place through partitions, sales and mortgage. The data relating to these different types of transfers during the 1961-80 period are given in the following table.



Table 13: Land transfer in Kadatty (1961-80) according to the distribution of ownership holding

| Size distribution of ownership holding (Acres) | Land gained |       |          |       |          |      | Land lost |       |          |      |
|--|-------------|-------|----------|-------|----------|------|-----------|-------|----------|------|
|  | Partition   |       | Purchase |       | Mortgage |      | Sale      |       | Mortgage |      |
|  | a           | b     | a        | b     | a        | b    | a         | b     | a        | b    |
| No land  | --          | -     | --       | --    | 1        | 0.1  | -         | -     | -        | -    |
| 0-10   | 64          | 8.26  | 17       | 0.31  | 2        | 0.65 | 7         | 5.88  | 1        | 0.50 |
| 0.11-0.25                                      | 9           | 1.37  | 2        | 0.25  | 0        | 0    | -         | -     | 2        | 0.35 |
| 0.26-0.50                                      | 8           | 2.66  | 5        | 0.89  | 1        | 2.02 | -         | 0.86  | -        | -    |
| 0.51-1.00                                      | 8           | 7.73  | 5        | 2.16  | 1        | 0.50 | 4         | 3.75  | 2        | 1.00 |
| 1.01-2.00                                      | 8           | 10.89 | 3        | 0.94  | 1        | 0.23 | 1         | 0.66  | 1        | 0.71 |
| 2.01-5.00                                      | 10          | 25.43 | 6        | 1.03  | 1        | 1.00 | 2         | 1.06  | 3        | 1.20 |
| 5.01-7.00                                      | -           | -     | -        | -     | -        | -    | -         | -     | -        | -    |
| Total  | 109         | 53.42 | 38       | 17.58 | 7        | 1.81 | 15        | 12.21 | 9        | 3.96 |

(a) No. of households

(b) Area in acres

Transfer of land through partition of parental property was the major source of land gained by the village households. Out of the total 74 acres of land gained by transfer, 75 percent was through partition. In the lowest size category (i.e. with land upto 0.10 acre) of household partition was the most important source of land. About 64 households in this group obtained land through partitions which accounted for 95 percent of the land transferred to them. Purchase constituted another source of land for 17 households, but the extent of area purchased formed only an insignificant proportion of the total land owned by each household. Similarly, households may gain land by both demographic and non-demographic forces, we listed separately, the number of landless households of 1961, who obtained land through these different mechanisms. The results showed that among

the 59 landless households of 1961 who joined the land owning group in 1980, 42 gained land through partition of other land owning households and the remaining 17 by purchase. The process by which these 42 households obtained land was through marriage with other landowning households. For the top size group (i.e. above 2 acres), purchase of land is also seen to be as important as partitioning. About 80 percent of the land gained by the village households through purchase was concentrated in this size group. Sale constituted the most important way of losing land. About 75 percent of the land lost was through sales. The households losing land are confined mostly to the lower size groups. The main reason for loss of land is the indebtedness of the households. This fact is clearly stated in the 1961 report which identified the following as the major causes:

"Among the causes of indebtedness 'ordinary expenses' for 'family maintenance' figures most prominently. Fifty families are in debt to this cause and they had a hand-to-mouth existence only with the help of loans. Another prominent cause of indebtedness is marriage under which 33 households are in debt. Marriage expenditure among the Sambavas ranges from Rs.500 for a simplest wedding to Rs.2000 depending up on the economic status of the parties. When these poor cultivators and agricultural labourers do not find their meagre income sufficient to buy necessities, there is no other way of meeting the marriage expenses except by borrowing. The other causes of indebtedness like sickness, losses in cultivation, purchase of property etc. are comparatively insignificant".<sup>8/</sup>

A comparison of the indebtedness among the village households in 1961 and 1980 has shown the following results:

- (a) the percentage of households in debt declined from 85 in 1961 to 25 in 1980.

- (b) At the same time, the average debt per indebted household increased from Rs.539 in 1961 to Rs.1704 by 1980. In terms of rice equivalent the indebtedness increased from 357 kg to 609 kg.
- (b) A significant change in the source of debt has taken place among the village households. In 1961, 97 percent of the households reported their source of debt as private (like friends and relatives and money lenders) and the rest to institutional sources. But in 1980, 60 percent of the households reported institutional agencies as the source of debt.

While the increase in the average debt per indebted household is largely a reflection of the persistence of expenditure under marriages and other related items, the decline in the proportion of households in debt could be the effect of the change that took place in the landholding pattern. Traditionally most of the landless agricultural labour households in the village depended on the large cultivators for consumption loans. Over the last two decades, among the 50 agricultural labour households who gained land, 32 got rice lands ranging in area between 8 to 50 cents. If we assume that the average productivity of rice land is about 1400 kg per acre, these households must have been realising about 112 to 140 kg of paddy per annum. This, to some extent must have helped these households to reduce their dependence on the credit market for meeting consumption requirements. Most of the land owned by the agricultural labour households have a few coconut trees. Coconuts are harvested once in every 2 to 2½ months and in each harvest a tree yields between 12 to 20 coconuts. Assuming that each coconut is sold at the rate of Rs.1 the annual income from a tree may range between Rs.60 to 100. When a poor man has no money to buy rice or other provisions for daily consumption, he depends on

cocoanuts which he exchanges for other consumer goods in true barter fashion.

According to the 1961 survey, the large cultivators in the village were also money lenders who charged exorbitant rate of interest, varying from 36 to 50 percent. But our 1980 survey has shown that they are no more involved in this activity. With better educational attainments of the labour force and their higher withholding power, it becomes no more possible for a money lender-cum-cultivator to keep agricultural labour households indebted to them by extending credit. The growth of institutional credit agencies in the area is a significant reason for the decline of the cultivator-money lender as the major source of credit. Therefore instead of practising money lending and self-cultivation, now they prefer to lease out their land at very high rates of rent. In other words, the cultivator-money lender have now realised that manipulation in the lease market is more profitable to them than operating in the credit market where institutional agencies are forcing down rates of interest. The co-operative credit society in the adjacent Parakkai village which has been functioning for the last three decades has begun to receive borrowers from Kadatty also in recent years.

The transformation of a large majority of former landless agricultural labour households into the category of landowners (however small the extent of land they own) seems to have been responsible, to a large extent, for the significant increase in the rent rates for rice land in the village. Once the landless households get some land for their own cultivation, the next tendency observed among them is to become a tenant by leasing-in land. Tenant cultivation is an important source of self-employment for them

since wage employment opportunities are limited both in the village and the surrounding areas. Since the area under tenancy has been declining and the number of agricultural labour households wanting to lease-in land has been increasing, competition in the lease market seems to have gone up. In this changed situation, , the lessors who are in a much stronger position have increased the rate of rent and the deposit amount per acre.

Since there has taken place significant qualitative improvements in the levels of literacy and education among the agricultural labourers, there seems to have grown among them some kind of a 'notion' of a minimum wage rate required for their maintenance at the new, higher levels of their living. Workers no more are willing to take up work at the wage rates below their minimum. The fact that the majority of the agricultural labourers have at present some land of their own and that they have no obligation - pecuniary or otherwise - to the large cultivators, seem to have strengthened their bargaining position in the village labour market. It has been recorded that the real wage rate of the male agricultural labourer increased steeply from 0.83 kg of rice in 1961 to 1.79 kg in 1980. The corresponding increase for female labour has been from 0.34 kg to 1.08 kg.

### SECTION III

#### Summary and Conclusions

In this paper, we have highlighted some of the important changes that took place in the village economy of 'Kadatty' and attempted some tentative explanations for them. Our findings may have significance beyond 'Kadatty' but we do not venture at this stage to draw any generalisations.

A summary of the main findings in this paper is given below.

1. In the Harijan village of Kadatty, literacy is almost universal. Though the enrolment of the population in the early school going age group is nearly 100 percent, only a very small percentage of those enrolled at this stage completes middle school or higher levels of education. Consequently, education has not helped the economic advancement of the village population to any significant extent. Nevertheless, over the last two decades, some improvement has taken place in the percentage of students entering the higher levels of schooling, even though only very few among them have been able to make use of their education for obtaining gainful employment.
2. A large proportion of the village labour force depends on agriculture. During the period, the proportion of cultivators has registered a substantial decrease. Though the number of agricultural labourers has increased over time, no corresponding increase has taken place in the quantum of agricultural work. The opportunities for subsidiary occupations are also limited in the village economy.
3. An important mechanism by means of which part of the employment problem is getting resolved in the village is through out-migration. While this has helped to curtail the growth of population in the village and also in reducing the pressure of labour force on land and <sup>other</sup> available employment opportunities, recent indications are that even these opportunities are getting restricted. Consequently, even better educated persons in the village are joining the ranks of agricultural labourers.

4. The important features of the land holding pattern in the village are the low incidence of the landless, concentration of land in the hands of a few and high incidence of tenancy. Most of the tenants are agricultural labourers with some land of their own used for self cultivation. Duration of tenancy contracts is short, and rent rates are high, but there is no obligation for the tenants to their lessors other than payment of rent agreed upon. Generally the productivity of rice lands is high and the tenants are realising some net income from lease cultivation.
5. Over time, the incidence of landlessness and area lender tenancy has declined, but the rent rate of land has increased.
6. Land transfers have taken place to a large extent due to ~~parti-~~tion of households. The consequences of this process are reflected in the occupational structure of the population.
7. The impact of the decline in landlessness of households is reflected in the decline in their indebtedness. With the landless agricultural labourers becoming owners of land, labour has become independent. Since they derive some income from this land they are less dependent on consumption loans from the village moneylenders (cum-cultivators).
8. The decline in the landlessness among the agricultural labourers has also contributed to increase in the intensity of competition in the lease market which has in turn led to increase in rent rates.
9. The increase in the asset position of the agricultural labour households has also contributed to increase in their bargaining strength and consequently to rise in real wage rates.

### Notes

1. Kanyakumari district has four taluks. The sub divisions of a Taluk in Kanyakumari district are different from those in other districts of Madras State. Here, a taluk is sub-divided into several Pakuthis. A Pakuthi denotes a group of villages and the components of a Pakuthi are called Karas. Thus Kara is the smallest territorial unit for purpose of administration and refers to a group of settlements which more or less corresponds to a hamlet in Madras State.
2. Kadathuchery was one among the 40 villages surveyed in Tamil Nadu as part of the 1961 population Census. The object of these surveys was to present a picture of what was happening and how fast village life in the state was changing overtime. For a discussion of the criteria adopted in the selection of these villages and the socio-economic and cultural life of Kadatty towards the beginning of the sixties, see P K Nambiar (1965).
3. The Sambavars are a sub sect of 'Paraya' which is a scheduled caste. They occupy the lowest place in the social hierarchy and claim superiority only over a few other sects of Paraya and other low castes like Chakkilias and Varmans.
4. It is interesting to note that in Tamil Nadu as a whole only 14 percent of the Harijans were reported as literate in 1961. The male literacy rate was 22 percent and that of female was 7 percent. The literacy rate of non-harijans was 35 percent, the male literacy rate being 49 percent and that of female 21 percent.
5. All the data for the year 1961 given in this table and also in the subsequent tables are from P K Nambiar (1965). The data for 1980 is from our village survey.
6. P K Nambiar op.cit., pp.62.
7. The phenomena of realising deposit from the tenants is not wide spread in other parts of the country. The one possible explanation for this could be the very high demographic pressure on land contributing to more intense competition in the lease market resulting in higher levels of rent and other severe terms of lease unfavourable to the tenants. This explanation is similar to the one offered by Nayami (1982) in his recent paper on "Asian Agriculture on the Cross Roads".
8. See P K Nambiar op.cit.

### Reference

P K Nambiar, Census of India 1961, Volume IX, Madras Part VI, Village Survey Monographs, 16, Kadathuchery, Superintendent of Census Operations, Madras 1965.