

Bonded Labourers of Tamil Nadu from
Sangam Era to the present.



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The Mankinds' first social organisations must have been a communist society. The people shared whatever they could get from the nature whether it were fruits they gathered or the animals they hunted. In the next stage, they divided themselves into groups and they domesticated animals like cows, goats etc. Then they had to look for green pastures for their cattle. Even at the stage, they used whatever was available in nature but they did not know the means of production by exploiting nature. As the population increased, their need for food also increased. As a natural corollary, they began to fight among themselves for the sake of food sources. Their conflicts also centred around the using natural sources. Those who lost were simply killed. Women were taken away by the victorious groups. In the next stage, the males of the defeated group were not killed on the other hand, they were enslaved to work till the end of their times for the captors. The victorious group became the bosses of the slaves. The primitive communist society changed into the society of haves and have-nots, the class contradiction also began to emerge, and slave society came into existence.

A slave was a person without any personal liberty and he had to work for a particular caste, family or organisation or a government. The slave might be there from birth, he might have been captured, or he might have been bought. A slave did not have any liberty to get away from slavery or any right to cease work or to get any wages for the work he had done. The slave was given frugal food to sustain his life. He was considered as a property of the owner. Slavery compelled the slave to work for the owner. This practice was prevalent in many countries. The slaves were bought and sold by the owners according to the owners' whims and fancies.

From the available evidences, many of them engravings on the stones reveal that slavery was prevalent even before Christ. The ancient communist society war conflict and clashes were inevitable. Earlier, the vanquished were killed. As time past, the need for more labourers increased so the defeated were not killed but were enslaved. Women and children were not exempted. In a place near Mesopotamia, an edict of King Hamurapi was discovered and he had given specific directions regarding dealing with slaves. Researchers fix the time of edict as 1792 BC. It is said in the edict that “those who steal others’ slaves will be killed. Those who killed others’ slaves will have to compensate by handing over his own slaves. This edict is known as ‘protection of slaves act’. Slavery was an accepted social custom and women were need for labour and sex. When a slave became ‘useless’ either he was killed or was transported to a forsaken island. The countries like Egypt and Greece owe their growth to the hard labour of slaves.

When we look at the ancient history of Egypt, we find they not only enslaved the defeated but also bought slaves in the open market. Usually, the slaves were the property of the Pharaohs. The Pharaohs usually gave away the slaves as gifts to the favoured ones. When we examine the engravings of the period of Tutmas(BC 1479 to 1425) and Romeseus (BC 1279 - 1213) we understand how they enslaved soldiers in the battles. The Pharaohs are those who ruled ancient Egypt, they wore a crown in red and white. The two colours indicated that they ruled upper and lower Egypt. The Egyptians considered the Pharaohs as the representatives of their Gods.

This is what we find in the grave of a Captain of the Eighteen King. *Then we blundered Avarise; I brought a male and few females; Barpoah gifted them to be as slaves.* The Pharaohs usually

enslaved black people as slaves. When they went to war with the Asian countries, they enslaved Jewish males, females and children. Their plight is graphically described in the old testament of the Bible. Many slaves worked till death in the copper mines. Only during the time of Patriarc Moses, the Jews became free and reached their homeland. The history also shows some slaves were able to get good positions because of their hard work and ability and also sometimes because of sheer luck.

Greece & Rome: Slavery was widely practised in Ancient Greece. Some were born as slaves. That is because their parents were slaves and hence as a ‘natural consequence’, their children were also slaves. Further abandoned children became slaves of the finder or rescuer. Slaves were sold in the open market. Prisoners of war became slaves. So in the above mentioned manner Greece was flooded or crowded with slaves. For example in the great Peleponisian War which is a war between City States of Greece, the defeated soldiers became slaves. Athenians soldiers who were captured were forced to work as slaves in the nickel mines of Syracuse. Thus, the slaves worked as domestic workers, labourers, farm workers, miners, sailors and even salesmen in shops.

Young handsome strong, timid slaves were sold for 10 minars i.e. roughly 180 US Dollars of today. Old rebellious slaves were sold for a half minar i.e. roughly 9 US Dollars. When the number of slaves available for sale in the market increased, their prices also decreased following the market principle when supply increases prices fall. On an average, rich Greek families, were permitted to possess twenty slaves at a time. The owners have the right to name the slaves. The slaves were never permitted to have any name of their own and if they try to have the name of their choice, it became a punishable crime. In the market the slaves were labelled from the place where they were procured or captured. Moreover the slaves did not have

the right to go to gymnasium or places of public utility. Athens which is known as the cradle of democracy had the maximum number of slaves. The population of Athens was 21,000 whereas the number of slaves was 4,00,000.

Once, there was a proposal in the Roman Senate that the slaves should have distinctive uniform. It caused a great commotion and disturbance among the slave owners. They pointed out that if the slaves were in uniform then they will immediately know that they are a great majority and they will rebel against the Roman Empire. Many of the slave owners had a deep-rooted fear regarding the slaves, because, many of the slaves were former soldiers. They were well built and strong. The slaves also rebelled against slavery now and then. The most famous rebellion happened in BC 73 – 71 and it was led by Spartacus.

When Roman Empire grew in size, the number of slaves also increased. The slaves outnumbered free Romans by many times. Spartacus was a former soldier who became a slave. When he was a soldier, he could not get along with his superior officers. So he deserted Roman Army which is a highly punishable crime. He was captured by the Roman soldiers because he was a deserter. So the Roman Government sold him as a slave. In Rome, slaves were engaged in martial sports. These slaves were called gladiators. The gladiators were given very good food, comfortable lodging, wine and other drinks and a cash bonus, if they win competitions. After certain years of service as gladiators, they will be given freedom with a cash bounty to start a new life. But those who achieved such a distinction were very few and very far between. Such ex-gladiators were given land and Roman citizenship. Spartacus when he was enslaved became a gladiator. Very soon, he became the principal of the School of the Gladiators. He and his 100 students escaped and went into the interior of the Roman Empire near, Mount Vesuvius a

Volcano. From there he gave a proclamation for the freedom of slaves.

Very soon nearly a lakh of slaves joined his liberation force. Unfortunately, all the slaves were not trained soldiers like Spartacus. They thought by sheer numbers they can conquer Roman cities and live as free men. Initially, they won a few cities. But the Roman Empire sent a very well disciplined Roman Legion under the able leadership of General Marcus Crassus. Spartacus and his liberation army was able to break through the advancing forces of Roman Army. Spartacus thought once they reach the seashore they can sail to Sicily. But they could not get ships. They got between the deep sea and devilish Roman Army. Many of them were simply slaughtered. The captured one were nailed on the cross on the way to Rome. But General Crassus was 'generous enough' to offer Spartacus to choose his own end.

Spartacus and his only son were taken to the Roman Circus. Circus is nothing but a huge arena where people assembled in galleries and watched the martial sports. Even today, the ruin stands in Rome and it is known as Coliseum. Crassus, the victorious General, gave Spartacus the following option:- *Spartacus and his son should fight unto death. The person who comes out to the battle alive will not be given freedom but he will be crucified.*

A free man who became a slave will have the experience of freedom as well as the experience of slavery. Spartacus had only one son. He had enormous love and affection for him. He was ready to give up his life. But if he died his son would be tortured and crucified. He was unable to accept this. His son also had the same feelings. The fight commenced. They began to attack each other. The youngster lacked experience. So, he became tired. Without any hesitation, Spartacus killed his own son. Immediately, Spartacus was captured

by Roman soldiers to prevent him from committing suicide. Thereafter, Spartacus was crucified on the tallest cross. The Roman Empire in this 'exemplary manner' crushed the rebellions and rebellious spirits of the slaves for a very long time.

The Romans enslaved all the people other than fellow Romans. Upto 400 AD slavery was widely prevalent. The slaves, from 2nd Century BC to 2nd Century AD, the slaves were 1/3rd of the total Roman Population. The great historian F.B. Grovkin in his book 'Ancient History' records that no other country had treated slaves so badly as Romans.

The history of Afro-Americans began with slavery. Europeans converted slavery as a means of production and hence an important aspect of global economics. Slavery practised by Europeans according to many historians was very shameful. Slavery continued unabated for many centuries.

Europeans were the first settlers in North America. They captured the land that belonged to the tribal people of North America. They wanted labourers to work in their farms. They used slaves for farming.

In the middle of sixteenth century, 'slave business' was a very highly profitable one. Many countries began to indulge in the slave trade. Portugal and Spain sent huge ships from their countries to African Coasts to harvest slaves. Sometimes the Europeans bought the slaves from their own chiefs. Many a time, the Africans were enticed to visit the ship and they were captured. Similarly, the African tribes, to sustain themselves enslaved other tribes also.

Seashore for slaves(title will be changed later)

America bought slaves from Africa in the year 1619 AD. The first ship had only twenty Africans as slaves. In due course, the

number began to grow and in the beginning of 19th Century a million Africans were captured, bought or lured into slavery. They used to hunt for Africans in villages near the seashore. They were not strong enough to venture into the deep forest.

The Whites captured a person who went in search of a particular type of tree for making drums and he was carried away to the ship. When he woke up, he was shocked. He was gagged with a dirty clothes and he was unable to shout. He was completely naked. His arms and legs were chained.

Thus, he was transported. They thought he would fetch a good price in the Slave Market and so a raw meat was stuffed into his mouth. He spat it out. He was beaten for that also. When he woke up he touched his head and realised that his head was completely shaven. All of them including women were completely naked.

Then they were forced to stand in a line and a white male examined them from head to foot including their genital organs. The females were also subjected to the same treatment. After this type of 'medical examination' they were singed with hot iron on their back with the letters 'LL'. On that wound, warm oil was smeared. Everyone began scream. At night, they were transported once again in a small boat to the main ship anchored two miles away from the seashore. From the upper deck of the ship, they were pushed down to the bottom of the ship. They were once again chained. The hot air and the foul smell made the dark place a real hell. The stench from the vomit, urine and excreta of the people was intolerable.

Above all, the wounds caused by the hot iron rods made them suffer greatly. When the latch opened on the top, a person will be pushed down. During the few seconds, they have to find out whether it was day or night. How long they will have to travel? Is it

ten days or one month? Where were they going?. None of them knew the answer to these questions. With these torments, they were forced to eat unusual food given to them. Lucky ones completed the voyage successfully. Many of them roughly one-fourth of the captured persons died during the terrible journey. In the height of the slave trade it is estimated that nearly ten crore black Africans were enslaved.

Europeans converted slavery into a means of production and an important aspect of their global economy. The European system of slavery is the worst in the World. Approximately, Sixty Millions African Slaves died due to torture.

To run the slave trade without any problems, the Europeans built Forts on the African Seashores. The Africans who were captured from the interior were 'stored' in these forts. They were chained from neck to leg and they were pushed into four feet high rooms. The unhygienic rooms spread many infectious diseases and caused many deaths. Those who escaped from diseases and deaths, they were loaded into the ships as and when they came. In such inhuman conditions, slaves were transported to America. Before they could land in foreign soil, nearly half of them died.

Some Africans who wanted to escape or die jumped into sea and they became food for sharks. The people who survived were sold to very rich land owners. They worked for White Masters in their Houses, in their lands and died in the end as slaves. One of the toughest jobs was to make them work in the cotton fields. The job of plucking cotton bolls made their hands bleed.

The reluctant slaves were whipped mercilessly. Up to hundred lashes from the whips was a common punishment and flesh was exposed on their backs. It was impossible to sleep. They had to work throughout their waking hours. During harvest, they had to work for eighteen hours and even pregnant women were forced to work

full term. The slaves were not considered as human beings in flesh and blood. They were merely considered as machines. Even the great Greek Philosopher Aristotle called the slaves talking tools.

The slaves who attempted to escape, were sure to meet a terrible death. The slaves who attacked their White Masters were singed with Iron Rods on their Faces. Rebellious slaves were made to dangle from branches of the trees with iron balls tied to their feet, their hives on the neck.

The rate of suicide among the slaves was very high. To compensate these deaths, slaves were continuously brought from Africa. The persons who had a large number of slaves usually had highest production. So, the Slave Market continuously began to grow. Children, who were sold by their parents smuggled Slaves and Slaves who were paid off for the debts, are the different category of slaves.

Slaves were made to work in the mines and distilleries. So, the Slave Market never had a dull period. The Slaves who were paraded in the market places will have a board tied to the necks, which indicated their age. The prospective buyers will have a 'trial' by making them run or test their capacity to withstand the lashes.

Initially, the Europeans used to trick the Africans to their ships and then sell them in Europe. Following the same method, Slaves were brought to America also. Because of the huge demand for slaves, they were hunted, captured and brought to America. It is estimated 9 to 12 million Africans were brought to America. The slave trade is described by African-American historians as Mafa in Swahily Language. Mafa in Swahily means 'Great Perversion'.

In 1790 in West Indies for one free man, there were ten Slaves. In France, for one freeman there were 14 slaves and in the *Netherlands, it was twenty three slaves for every freeman. In the Western Civilised World, slaves were considered as essential tools to amass wealth. Slaves were necessary according to them for their own freedom.*

These slaves worked tirelessly for their masters. In the Netherlands, every freeman was able to get the labour of twenty-three persons freely. This created a never-ending demand for slaves and the slave trade became very powerful.

Those who had slaves amassed their wealth. With frugal meals, the masters suck labour from the slaves. A new concept 'More Slaves, More Wealth' evolved.

The Company, which indulged in slave trade in Liverpool, had 15 ships in 1730, 53 ships in 1751, 74 ships in 1760, 96 ships in 1770 and 132 ships in 1792. The Liverpool Company, in a span of sixty years increased their ships by nine times. As a corollary, techniques of ship building also improved. Ships were built to bring in more number of slaves.

The skills of capturing slaves and the skills of transporting them to the market became very efficient techniques of exploiting the slaves as labourers are also become more. Slave trade became the source of wealth. So, more and more countries came to be involved in slave trade. Many countries wanted to capture slaves. The labours of millions of people were exploited by a few people in many countries. They not only exploited the labour of slaves, but also sexually abused women slaves. Children born of such union were again sold as slaves. It was the fate of these women to be exploited sexually by White men and beget children. The White

Women hated these sexual escapades of their husbands. They hated their men having sexual relationships with black women slaves. But they were unable to speak against their husbands because male domination was all pervasive (only 1920 or so American Women obtained the right to Vote). So, many White women became mentally sick and they began to ventilate their aggression towards the black women slaves. Thus, the culture of these countries where slave trade was dominant began to deteriorate. Amazing wealth and rapid consumerism became the social behaviour.

The social fabric began to disorient. So, the rebellion against slavery and slave trade began to emerge. Thus, the movement for abolition of slavery came to evolve.

The Principle of Abolitionism

Abolitionism is a movement to abolish slavery and slave trade. An artist, Yosia Wetge Wood made a model of a slave in the year 1787 with the slogan 'I am a human being. Am I not your brother? The historical movement began to spread throughout Western Europe and America for abolition of slavery and for putting an end to the slave trade.

The Colonialists from Spain and other West European Nations initially attempted to enslave the native people. Bartolome de las Casas a Celibate Priest of the Order of St. Dominique was the first to give all for abolition of slavery. Due to his continuous efforts, Spain enacted many legislations abolishing slavery in its colonies. But these legislations remained only on paper.

Many attempts throughout the World were made to abolish Slavery. Quakers were the first to say slavery is against the Principles and Tenets of Christianity. The Quakers issued a public declaration in Philatelpia in 1688 against Slavery and abolition of slavery. Their

movement succeeded only in 1780 and Pennsylvania was the first State to abolish slavery.

In 17th Century, Evangelical Religious groups also began to oppose slavery. In what is called as “First Great Awakening” in 18th century the 13 colonies of North America began to propagate “slavery is illegal”. They also began to say, “slavery is violation of human rights”. This was called as the great achievement of age of enlightenment.

In 1775, the Society for Relief of Free Negroes unlawfully held in Bondage was founded. Benjamin Franklin became its first President in 1784.

An American thinker Thomas Paine was the first one to write a treatise on abolition of slavery. On March, 1775, he published an article called “African slavery in America”.

In the year 1787, a legislation abolishing slavery on the northern bank of Okaiyo River in America was enacted. In 1804, only the slaves in Northern Bank were freed. In 1780, the State of Massachusetts declared all men will have “equal rights” and thus paved the way for abolition of slavery.

Even though, the enactments were made, the slave trade was not abolished and this can be verified by population statistics of the States of New York and Pennsylvania.

Peculiar Slaves:

It is a well-known fact that well-built male slaves were used for hard labour and female slaves were used for sexual gratification. Sometimes male slaves were castrated and employed in places where there were large numbers of females.

In 14th century, the Chinese Emperor Judey permitted 317 Ships to sail with 27000 persons on board. For this voyage Zhenghe was a leader. He enjoyed the confidence of the Chinese Ruler. Zhenghe’s father died in a War and he was sold as a slave and he was castrated and was employed in a palace as one of the many eunuchs.

Chinese rulers had an army of eunuchs. All of them were normal persons who were castrated. Their main job was to work as security personnel in harems. Some of them were personal bodyguards of Queens. Even though they were castrated, they were skilled in Martial Arts. Zhenghe was one such person.

Zhenghe was the personal attendant of the Prince Judey and he rose in the ranks and became a General. At that time, the Emperor wanted to improve trade relations with his neighbours. So, he asked Zhenghe to undertake a voyage with many ships and men. This voyage was organised at enormous expenditure. Zhenghe visited many countries long before Columbus left Spain. Zhenghe undertook seven voyages. He visited India in his very first voyage itself.

In his first visit to India, Zhenghe saw giraffes and he was amazed to see such animals. In Chinese mythology, they described an imaginary animal called “Cuelin”. That animal was supposed to live in the Paradise. It resembles a unicorn with single Horn. It was considered a great blessing to see that animal. Zhenghe thought that giraffes were the mythological creature and he wanted to take one of them to his country as a gift to the Emperor.

Zhenghe came to know that Giraffes were brought from Africa. So, he approached the African tradesman to get him a pair of giraffes and in exchange for the same, he gave the African Merchants

Chinese silks and other gifts. African tradesman gave Zhenghe a pair of giraffes. He was very much delighted and he made an exclusive space in the Ship for their comfortable journey. He informed the Emperor in advance that he was bringing an animal from Paradise.

The Emperor received the giraffes at the city gates. The giraffes were tired of such a long journey. The giraffes were made to bath in the tank of perfumed waters. Then they were brought before the Emperors. The King could not believe his eyes. He was wondering how such a creature came to Earth and how his sailors brought them to his country. He calls the giraffes as “Cuelin”. The Emperor thought that giraffes were the direct blessings of God and that is why they have come to his country during his reign. People stood in long queue to see the divine creature. The Emperor used to visit cuelin pair every day. The news that creatures from the Heaven were in the capital reached even the interior parts of the Chinese Empire. Giraffes do not sleep much. The King thought since giraffes were from Heaven, they did not need much sleep. Moreover, the strange sounds made by the giraffes and their habit of lifting their heads towards the sky confirmed his belief that they were from Heaven.

They did not know how to look after the giraffes. Similarly, they did not know how they will procreate and increase their numbers. So, the Emperor ordered that Zhenghe must bring persons who knew the “secrets of giraffes”.

Never failing Zhenghe immediately “ordered for” black slaves from Africa. The Chinese had never seen such black human beings. Senior Chinese officers were asked to take care of the giraffes. The newly imported slaves from Africa worked as their assistants. Even though the story is funny today, it shows how far how strangely slaves were used.

Slavery in India

Even though it is generally said slavery was not practised in India, according to research scholars of Tamil Language and History, slavery was widely prevalent in Tamil Nadu during Chola Regime. The Chola Kings bought slaves of both sexes and donated quite a few of them to the Temples and Mutts. The sale transaction of Slaves was recorded in Palm Leaves as any other property registration. Slaves of the oppressed castes were called untouchable slaves. The slaves of the Palace bore tiger emblem, slaves of the Siva Temples had Trisul as the symbol and of the Vaishnavi Shrines had conch. Working in temples, agricultural farms, pounding the paddy for rice were some of the main occupations of the slaves. Dr.K.K.Pillai in his ‘History of Tamils and their culture’ says ‘there are evidences that many citizens became slaves during the Chola rule. But, they became slaves of the temples but not to individuals. There are no evidences to that effect. Sometimes, some citizens sold themselves to the temples. Sometimes, when the Government confiscated farmlands, the people working in the farms were enslaved. Some women were sold to the temples along with their families to serve in the temples. These women were sold to serve in the temples generation after generation.

The great Writer Basham cites ‘Abas Thamba Dharmashutram’ and says ‘it is a fact that there were slaves in India’. But, in Greece and Rome, the slaves were abandoned in their old age by their masters. The Indian master did not have such a privilege. *Even when his wife and children are deprived, the Master has to provide well for his Slaves who had served in so long.*

The Code of Manu describes who all became Slaves “Prisoners of War, Male and Female Children of Slaves, those who became Slaves for survival, bought as Slaves, those who

have bought along with the lands, those who could not pay their debts". Slavery was widely practised in 12th Century B.C.(Source:- Liberation Struggle of a Farm Slave by N.Ramakrishnan).

Manu considered Slaves and Members of one's family in the same way "A Master can be his wife, son, slave, servant and younger brother where they commit a mistake or a crime with the stick or with a rope. But he can beat them only on their behind. He can never beat them on their heads. Those Master who violate these Rules will face the same punishment as a thief(Source:- Indian Cultures and Tamils-by Professor S.Ramakrishnan). Great Chanakya said that Slave should be given the same food and wages as a free-worker. The slaves had their right to work in their free-time, and to save their wages. He can pay his master from the money they save to buy his freedom. Chanakya emphasis female slaves should not be raped(Source- Indian Cultures and Tamils-by Professor S.Ramakrishnan).

In Mahabharatha, Draupathy had one lakh female slaves to look after the guests of her husbands – the Pandavas. The great Dharmar loses everything in gambling with Sahuny and finally loses his wife also in gambling. Dhuriyothana taunts Draupathy by saying "You are my slave. Your husband used as pet in the gambling".

Dharmar, at the time of his coronation, received one-lakh slaves as gift along with many other gifts. The Grathar Tribes who lived in the mountains gave ten thousand female slaves as a gift to Dharmar at the time of his coronation.

Likewise, in Ramayana, Surpanaka, the youngest sister of Ravana wants to marry Lakshmana when he was in the forest

along with Rama and Sita. To that Lakshmana asks 'I am the slave of my elder brother. Why do you want to become a wife of a slave?' Likewise, Dasaratha remarks about his wife Kousalya "She serves me like a friend, like a wife, like a sister, like a slave and like a mother".

When Dasaratha married Kaikeyi, she brought many female slaves as her dowry. One of them was Manthra. In this way, slavery was described in the Indian epics Ramayana and Mahabharata (Source:- Indian Cultures and Tamils-by Professor S.Ramakrishnan).

Before 1834 slavery was widely prevalent in India. As per this practice, male and female were sold like cattle. We have with us a document of sale describing how a young girl was sold in Gujarat as a slave. The document is in Sanskrit. So we give below a translation of that sale document.

In Vikram Calendar 1288 (AD 1231) Vaikasi 15th Thursday. Today, in this place (Shri Anhil Pattn), the victorious land of Shri Beam Deva who is equal to God sale document of a slave girl is thus written.

"A slave girl who is about 16 years old and fair in colour by name 'Banuthi' was brought by Rana Shri Pratab Singh with a bundle of grass on her head, to the quadrangle of the town and was sold openly. The purchaser Asther gave Rs.504/- to Shri Pratab Singh in the presence of the public comprising the four castes for the sale price of the girl.

Hereafter, the slave girl had to wholeheartedly do the following jobs:- She had to sweep and mop the house of the person who bought her, pounding grains, picking firewood, boiling water,

removing rubbish, milking cattle, churning curd(yoghurt), to take buttermilk to fields, to work in cotton fields, spinning yarn, farm work and house work etc. The owner of the slave girls as per the tradition of the land and times will give her food and dress. While she was doing her work in the master's place, if her father, brother or husband comes disturb her work, her owner has got every right to tie her to a pole or a tree and beat her without mercy. Afterwards, her owner can catch hold of her hair, track her, kick her and beat her. If she dies while receiving her punishment, her master is not guilty. She died as per her fate and this should be understood by all the public belonging to the four castes. To wash away this sin, it is enough if the master with his wife and children takes a holy dip in Ganges. If the slave girl dies in a pond or a tank or by eating poisonous food, her Master is not guilty. The elders of the Panchayat should know that the girl died as per her fate.

The Master with his family should take a holy dip in the Ganges. To discharge his duties, all the citizens and guards of the City are the eye witness. For this purpose, Rana Pratab Singh and the four Guards are signed their signatures. This sale document was written by Jayatha Bharathi as per the request of both the parties". This sale document is found in the Essay "support for slavery" by Elavenil.

England commenced its trade with India in 1612. The British established East India Company to control India politically, economically and in defence. From the year 1858 India came under the direct rule of the Government of Great Britain.

By the end of 19th Century, the entire Indian Sub-continent and a great portion of East Africa came under the control of England. Thousands of Indians were sent to East Africa as bonded labourers. At that time, the Indians were brought to Africa as bonded labourers

(indangered labourers). Because, great opposition to enslave black Africans and selling them in the different parts of the World. So, the colonial Ruler shifted their attention to Indians who will work like a bulls. So Indians were exported to Africa by Ship. Many Indians died in African Savana Forest and they had to face innumerable sufferings while being transported from India and again landed in Africa. Many families and friends were separated. More than 2500 Indians die due to Malaria and Small Box and in Accidents. In 1898, the Colonial Rulers wanted to lay a railway track from Mombassa, a sea shore in East Africa, to Nairobi via Uganda. More than 3000 bonded labourers were made to work in that tough job.

The Indian 'Coolies' and African workers destroyed forests, remove rocks and were laying railway track. To build a bridge across the River Savo, they have to come across many dangers. The main danger was the attack by man eating lions which killed more than 135 Indian 'Coolies'. This was accounted. But many died without any evidence. Roughly about nine months, lions feasted on the Indians. Terrorised workers struck work for the first time. The work of laying the tracks was halted for nearly three weeks and this was debated the House of Lords. The then British Prime Minister Lord Chalferry said the lions like the taste of Indians. Many whites called this project as 'lunatic' and the Africans called it as 'iron snake'. Colonel J.H.Peterson, an English Engineer was sent in 1898 who supervised the work. His main job was to build a bridge across the river Savo. So, Peterson camp at the site along with his workers. The workers completed the job in great fear.

Peterson described in his Book how the lions came to attack and how it killed them again and again.

The workers thought that the man eating lions are blood sucking Vampire Ghosts. The first two days of his arrival, Peterson

lost two of his workers. He thought that they might have been killed because of money disputes between the workers. Peterson thought so because he had earlier worked in India. The joke is that the worker got Rs.10/- per month and the Maistry or Local Supervisor used to get Rs.12/- per month. He thought that the worker would have killed each other for this paltry sum. The lions killed the workers even before his arrival and even after he killed two lions. This is because lions used to frequent to that area of the river to quench their thirst. So, the river Savo was their 'water hole'. In that place, the slave traders used to abandon injured, handicapped captives and seriously sick captives. They used to be easily killed by lions and hyenas. Roshan, an Indian Worker, wrote about the killings of the Indian workers by Savo Lions. He was a loyal person to the Britishers. He was the Maistry. He wrote a Hindustani song about the killings and his translation found a place in the last pages of Peterson's Book. His poem begins thus "This poem is written by Roshan Maistry, son of Kador Maistry of Jeelam Distric on 29.01.1989. He wrote hundreds of Indians were killed by lions and more than 700 workers ran away to the Forest. So, Britishers offered Rs.200/- for every lion killed. So, many hunters came to that area and began to kill lions.

Indians who came from their Motherland and toiled in a hostile Country when they were killed or died, they did not have proper last rites. There is no memorial or graves for them. But, the Momambassa –Uganda Railway Track, stands even today as a testimony of the hard work rendered by the Indians.

If we visit the villages near the Arabian Seashore in the North Kanada Area of Karnataka or if we visit small Restaurant of Goa, we can see Black People with curling hair and flat nose, big lips and strong muscles, working as Dish Washers or called as Menials. These persons who resembles Africans speak Kanada and Kongan

Languages fluently. When we asked the history and enquired about their ancestry, we will be shattered.

More than four hundred years ago slavery was widely prevalent. Many Africans who lived on the Seashore of Mosambique were captured in thousands and brought to India as Slaves for Whitemen. The tragedy is a few African Leaders themselves acted as Agents to enslave their own people for Europeans whoever came across their path were captured. If the ships were delayed they will be enclosed in Sheds and were made to all sorts of work. Thus many hundreds of thousands of slaves, they forced to walk hundreds of miles to board the 'Slave Ships'.

If the Master of the Slaves were a Christian, they will be taken to a nearest Church and baptise and in a slip of paper their new names will be given. On the contrary, if the Master hapens to be a Muslim, then they will be converted as Musalmans and again a new muslim name will be given in a piece of paper. The small paper is the name their identification card. A pinch of salt will be speared on the toungue, water will be sprinkled on them, and then they will be made to board the Ship. With that, they have to forget their native land and their kith and kin. To escape this torture, a few Africans jumped in to the Sea and attempted suicide. So, the 'clever Masters' linked each and every one of them in chains. So that no single person would escape. They were all pushed into the bottom of Ship and locked up.

Before the 'Slaves' were made to board the Ship, all the Slave Masters used a common scale of measurement and it is called as 'Begadi India'. This Portguese words means an African between the age of 15 and 35. For example, three Africans between ages 8 to 15 and three Africans aged between 25 and 35 will be equivalent to two Begadi India. Similarly, persons between 35 and 45 and

children below 8 years are called as one Begadi India. Babies in hand are considered as free additions. Similarly persons above 45 and sick people are measured approximately.

In Small Ships about 600 Slaves will be 'packed'. When the Ship reaches Indian Shore, the Slaves who were alive will be given a make up with oil through out their body and sometimes they will be smeared with colour oil. To beautify them, white and red lines will be drawn on their faces. Their black hairs will be sprinkled with yellow powder. They will be given bangles for the hands and ankles. They will be given a fresh loincloth. At the end of the que, their Masters will be standing and at both the ends, trained domesticated Slaves with Weapons will be guarding them. All these traditions were thrown to the winds.

After the purchase, the new Master will take him or her. In Goa in the house of every European there were atleast one slave. When an European Gentlemen or a Lady or an Indian of Upper Class and Upper Caste walks is a common site to a Slave holding an Umbrella. Thus many Africans were employed in Indian House Hold. Many of them were employed in Kitchen. Able body slaves were recruited as Soldiers in the Armies of Indian Kings. These Slaves from Africa were called as 'Chithi'.

The name 'Chithi' is a corruption of African Word "Syed" or 'Syedhi' according to language specialists. But in North Africa, 'Chithi' or 'Cithi' is a word of 'respect'. Such people are found in Gujarat and in Maharastra apart from Karnataka. They are also found in small numbers in West Bengal and in Orissa. After abolition of slavery in India, the British Government of India released them from bondage at least in names.

The liberated Slaves marched to Western Ghats and they began to work for Rich Brahmin Land Lord in their Farms and they

became Hindus. Then they began to continue their journey and many of them settled in Mundukodu, Haliyal, Sirsi and Suba.

The 'Chithis', though they are forgotten their African Ancestry, their curling hair and black skin can easily identified them. They are the living examples of the atrocities committed by the Rulers of the West.

Like all Tribes, they live in close relationship. They democratically elected their own leader. The Chithis both in Islam and Christian groups accept brides and give their women as brides to other communities. The Chithies who follow the Hindu Religion are given Scheduled Caste Status also.

The Chithies do not have the habit of saving money. Whatever they earn they share it with others and spent the whole thing. Understanding this weakness of the Chithies, the Caste Hindus and Brahmins bought their fertile lands for a pittance. So, the erstwhile owners of the land has become agricultural coolies and bonded labours.

Kiran Kamal Prasadh an anthropologist is a former Christian Priest also. While discussing the Christian Chithies, whatever be the defect according to them they do not commit any mistake.

Then the Slaves will be taken through the City and through the Main Market. The Masters are someone will be sitting about the capacity of the Slaves. If somebody wants to buy one or two slaves, then he will stop the procession and choose his likings and he will examine him for listening and eyesight and he will also make him run and test the 'commodities' worthines.

On being assured that the Salve will not snore or chatter his teeth while sleeping. Then the prospective purchaser will examine

the genital organs of the person. To an African allowing someone to examine his genital organs is a grave crime and sin. But for the Slaves, all these traditions. According to Kiran Kamal Prasadh these peoples do not have any sense of right or wrong.

After globalisation, young Chithi Men equate beauty with fair colour. So young Chithi Women who are black and curling hair are not considered beautiful by the young Chithi Men. At the best they marry Chithi women as a second wife. Slaves continues as Slaves.

Even though, a few Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) studies the socio-economic status of these 'Chithies', they are not properly documented. According to studies made in 1990s, their literacy rate is mere 9.6%. They have not passed primary Schools. Not more than 10 Individuals have completed Graduation.

It was the African-Americans who supported the Revolutionary Movements in Africa. Many Great African-American writers were the descendants of African Slaves. But, in few corners of India, the African who were brought to India as slaves were still leading their lives as "Chithies" without emancipation.

Slaves who ruled India.

It is amazing to note that two Slaves changed the course of history of India. One of them is the founder of Slave Dynasty Gudhpudin Ibeck. Another one is who was a terror and came upto Tamil Nadu, is Malik Kaboor. Both of them are slaves and bought them in the open market. They acquired the confidence and love of their Master, exploited the circumstances in their favour, and wormed their way to the pinnacle of power.

Gudhpudin Ibeck who established Slave Dynasty is of Turkish descends. He was born in Afganisthan. When he was a child, he was

sold as a Slave. The Master who bought him was Nisha Purin Quashi treated Gudhbudin Ibeck as his own son. He was given training in horse riding and other martial Arts. He was also taught Arabic and Persian Languages. At that time Gori Mohamed who was ruling from Gajini bought Gudhpudin Ibeck and had him as his personal slave. Gori Mohamed had many personal bodyguards and palace guards and Gudhpudin become one of them. Because of his bravery, he became very close to his new Master. Soon he became a Commander and very soon, he became his right hand man and his Chief of Staff.

Gori Mohamed wanted to Capture Hindustan. So he lead an Army in 1192 towards India. But he was defeated by Prithivi Raj Chowkan. Gori Mohamed could not accept defeat and he tied the hands of his Commandors behind their back and made them eat food like animals. That made his Commandors and Soldiers ferocious fighting force. In 1193 Gudhpudin Ibeck lead the Army of Gori Mohamed attacked Delhi savagely and captured Delhi. As a reward, Gudhpudin Ibeck was made Governor of Delhi. In 1206, Gudhpudin Ibeck commenced his role at Delhi as the first Sultan. Thus commenced the Rule of Slave Dynasty in Delhi.

Gudhpudin Ibeck was severely injured while playing polo on horseback in Delhi and soon he died. He ruled Delhi only for four years. His son Aaram Shah became the Delhi Sultan. But the son-in-law of Gudhpudin, thought Aaram Shah was unfit to rule and dethroned Aaram Shah. The name of the son-in-law was Altamish. He was also sold as a child to Slavery. He was bought first by a Merchant of Horses by name Jamaludin of Pukkara. Since he was a able soldier and very clever Gudhpudin Ibeck bought him at a huge price. Since he wanted total loyalty to Altamish, he gave his daughter a marriage to Altamish. When was a Ruler the Great Senkishkhan came near the borders of India, but Altamish cleverly manipulated him to march towards the West. Altamish also suppressed the civil

War and united the scattered areas into a United Rule. Moreover, he was a first Delhi Sultan to be recognised by the Caliphs.

Abolition of Slavery and American Legislations

After the establishment of United States of America, a Conference was held in 1787 in the city of Philadelphia. In that Conference, Slavery in many States of America was discussed. In that Conference, it was estimated that it will take twenty years to abolish Slavery. In many States of United States of America, many legislations abolishing Slavery was enacted. But there were strict opposition for the abolition of Slavery.

Quakers, persons belonging to a Christian Sect, approached Slave Owners as early as 1766 and persuaded them to release the Slaves. It had a very good effect. The percentage of Slaves who were freed rose from 1% to 10%. This happened particularly in Virginia, Maryland and Delaware. By 1810, almost 3/4th of Slaves in Delaware, they released from Bondage. In 1791, Robert Carter-III who belonged to the State of Virginia released more than 450 Slaves. This was a record for the single owner releasing maximum number of Slaves.

The Masters who released the Slaves in their proclamation of Liberation of Slaves said "We accept all men are equal with same rights". Another factor, which helped the reduction of slaves, was the change in the pattern of agriculture. The lands which were under traditional tobacco cultivation were converted into Mixed Crop Lands.

In January, 1808, the United States of America banned totally the import of slaves from other Countries and declared such import

is illegal. At the same time, the legislation was silent with reference to Internal Trade.

In 1820, when a debate in the American Senate, Rufus King said "Slavery is illegal. Because, it is against the law of nature and against the law of God". But it was not widely accepted. In 1820, publications endorsing abolition of Slavery was prevented by Southern States and postal articles carrying that message were prevented from entering certain States. Teachers in Southern States who are originally from Northern States, lead a propaganda for abolition of slavery. But they were summarily transferred.

By 1860, 91.7% of Blacks in Delaware State and 49.7% of Blacks in Maryland have become free persons. From this Group of Freed Slaves came the Artists, Teachers, Priests and specially skilled Officials and they became the seeds for the growth of next generation.

Historical Stages in Abolition of Slavery:

In 1789, France abolished Slavery totally. But, when Napoleon captured power, he brought back Slavery in the French Colonies. Haiti, which was a French Colony struggled and successfully waged the War of Liberation and achieved Freedom in 1804 and it abolished Slavery immediately. In 1808, England enacted a Law of Importing Slaves and said it is illegal. Following that in the same year i.e. 1808 United States of America banned the trade in Slaves.

By 1833, Slavery was totally abolished in the entire British Empire. Fifteen years after that in 1848, France abolished Slavery in France and its Colonies. In United States, after the end of Civil War in 1865, Slavery was abolished. The 13th Amendment to the American Constitution declared Slavery is inhuman and hence illegal.

In 1948, the General Assembly of United Nations proclaimed Slavery is Illegal. The last Country to abolish Slavery was Murthania in North West Africa. Only in 1981, this Nation abolishes Slavery.

Judgement in Favour of Abolition of Slavery:

In 1772, a Judgement in favour of abolition of Slavery by a Court in England was delivered. In legal history, this case is known as Sommersett's case.

An English official by name Charles Stewart bought an American Slave by name James Sommersett in the American State Masschusetts and he brought in 1769 to England. In 1771, Sommersett escaped from his Master's house. His Master traced him and imprisoned him in a Ship. The Ship was said to sail for Jamaica, a British Colony. His plan was to sell his Slave to work in a Farm.

Persons who called themselves parents of Sommersett approached the Court and they questioned the legality of imprisonment of Sommersett.

The case was listed before Lord Mansfield. He said that even though Slavery was practised in British Colonies, it is against the Law of England. He declared you cannot compel a person to enter into a contract against his will and saying thus he set at liberty Sommersett.

Though the judgement was not based on human rights but on the basis of Law. It is considered as a land mark judgement and highly historical. This judgement paved the way for abolition of Slavery in England as well as in its Colonies.

Persons who dedicated themselves for abolition of Slavery:

Henry Clay(1777-1852), one of the three founders of 'American Immigrant Society' dedicated himself for the abolition of Slavery. John Brown(1800-1859) thought that the abolition of Slavery could not be brought about by peaceful means. The Southerners of United State accused of him spreading 'terrorism'. He was charged with killing a Slave Owner, he was called traitor, and he was hanged. Even to-day, John Brown is considered as a hero who fought for equal rights for all by few and other few considered him as the first internal terrorist.

Abby Kelley Foster (1811 – 1887) is a first black lady from the State of Masschusetts to raise the voice for abolition of Slavery. She declared all persons should have equal rights. William Loyd Garrison (1805 – 1877) was the publisher of the Magazine 'The Liberator' which supported abolition of Slavery. Inghosi Sancjho (1729-1780) known as 'Honourable Negro' was the symbol of Human Qualities of Black Africans and the unjust nature of Slavery.

A Novel in support of abolition of Slavery:

'Uncle Tom's Cabin, or, Life Among the Lowly, a novel that describe the brutality of the Slavery. A White Lady by the name of Harriet Beecher Stowe is the Authoress of this novel. 'Uncle Tom' a Slave who suffered in silence the atrocities inflicted on him and other slaves by their cruel Master Simon Ligrie, kills Simon Ligrie one day. The Novel describes graphically the sufferings of slaves and the necessity for abolition of Slavery.

August 23rd of every year is considered as a remembrance day from the year 1998 for the efforts taken internationally for the abolition of slavery and slave trade. Main events took place in Haitty

on 23rd August, 1998 and in Senegal on 23rd August, 1998. Now all the Countries who are members of UNESCO observe 23rd August.

It recalls the rebellion against Slave Trade in the Island of St. Domingue “now known as Haïtï on the night of August 22nd, 1791 and on the day of August 23rd and also the consequences of the rebellion.

Has Slavery been abolished?

In 20th Century UNO, ILO and other Similar Organisations have enacted many legislations for prevention of Slavery of the old and new kind. Slavery, which was widely prevalent except in one or two Countries, has been banned by Legislation in all the Countries. However, many Countries still have secretly employ Slaves. It is estimated that throughout the World, there are 2.7 Crore Slaves. As narrated in history books, after banning Slave Ships from Africa to America, and after liberation of Slaves in the big Farms of America, many believe that there are no Slaves. But, the imbalances between the haves and have-nots create slaves everywhere. The persons who are benefitted by the Slaves want poverty to continue throughout the World.

Benjamin Skinner, a famous American writer has travelled throughout the World including India and collected all the information and brought them out in a Book. “A Crime So Monstrous” a great book as a result of many-many years of hard labour. To write this book, he lived among the people of many Nations who lived in conditions of Slavery.

He commences his journey from Haïtï, a place very near the most modern affluent Nations United States of America. The people of Haïtï who rebelled against France and achieved liberty

are reduced to the plight of Slaves every day. The criminals of Haïtï drove out the President who won the election with the support of the poor. Now Haïtï is under the control of the Peace Keeping Force of United Nations. The UN military force comprises of soldiers from many-many Countries. These soldiers exploit the poverty of young girls and have sexual relations with them. The young girls rent a body for as low as two dollars is a shocking news.

These are all routine atrocities which come out once in a while. The traditional rich people of Haïtï who live in Capital of Port of Prince employ young girls as servant maids and they are not given any money as wages and they are routinely abused sexually by the males of the House. Even the rich Haïtians who live in United States have many young girls from Haïtï for their household work. The Author confirms after his discussion with a Slave Trader that a young boy or a girl can be bought as cheap as 10 dollars.

A Rumanian Woman being pushed into Prostitution and being compelled to work as sex slave has become a routine story. A Rumanian Woman who got herself trapped in a Brothel in Amsterdam and was lucky to escape has deposed in this work. The Author traces the path of the Slave Trade by travelling from Moldavia and from there to Istanbul and has observed how this woman is trapped. He has recorded how the sex workers of Dubai are killed by sex-maniacs and their bodies are abandoned on the deserts.

The Author had visited India and has displayed elaborately about fifty pages how the ‘Khol Tribe’ of Logarthal in Uttar Pradesh are treated as Slaves even to-day. The Quarry Contractors who are from Upper Caste have enslaved these tribals from generation to generation. For a mere 60 dollars which their grandfather might have borrowed, their descendants are forced to work in the Quarries without any wages for ever. They are permanently got in ‘death trap’

again and again. They fall into the death-trap again and again because they borrow money from these Quarry contractors for their family expenses like death, marriage and other expenses.

The authorities denied the existence of Slaves in India. Britishers who abolishes slavery throughout their Empire, they did not do so with reference to India. Just before Indian Independence, the Britishers declared there are no slaves in India but there are '1.Farm Slaves,2.Exploited Workers and 3.Poor'. The same words are used by the present rulers of India also.

Throughout India, there are about 80 Million Farm Slaves. A few farmers who cultivate cotton usually use young girls to work in the Cotton Farms. India is the maximum number child labourers in the World. In the Carpet Factories of Varnasi (Banaras), young boys of Bihar are forced to work for 15 hours in a day.

Because of the hard labour, their vision is impair and the legs become bowled and they used sticks to walk. In Ferozobargh, upto 1993 dalit boys from slums and sold in 'Boys Market'. The rich persons who buy them will use them in the Factories. India has many Crorepathis. But they are exceptions only. No one can deny that majority of Indian live below poverty line. India has not a abolished child labour totally. Compulsory education upto 14 years has not been implemented fully. Likewise abolition of Castesim is only in the Law Book. Like developing Nations, India has many Cities but even to-day 2/3rd of its population lives in its Villages.

Every year thousands of farmers who can not escape death-traps commit suicides. We must think an introspect whether Slavery has been abolished in these circumstances.

Researchers are of the opinion that Slavery has changed its appearance and has reappeared in the form of Caste and Untouchability.

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Slavery in Ancient Tamil Nadu.

Slaves in Sangam Age:

According to Megasthenis, there was no system of Slavery in India and in Tamil Nadu. V.Kanagasabai affirms that there were no slaves or the system of slavery in Tamil Nadu during the Sangam Age. But, the number of castes is multiplied. Persons called as Pulaiyas were segregated and condemned to menial jobs and in farms and their living quarters were situated in distant place known as Cheries(Ghettos) or slums. But, Dr.S.Ramakrishnan says that they cannot be called as slaves. But we can infer that Slavery prevailed in Sangam Age through the Literature of the Sangam Period.

A.L.Basham refutes Megasthenis by pointing out that the words 'Dasas' and 'Sutras' literally means Slaves whereas R.P.Sharma is of the view that Slavery was practised in South India and it predates the Aryan Society of the North and later on the Slavery System of South India disappeared. Employing prisoners of War to do Slave labour from the Sangam Times. V.T.Selvam points out that economic upliftment increase slave labour. Dr.S.Petchimuthu opines, "in no Society practised Slavery in the early stages of Social Formation throughout the World". Multiplicity of Vocation created private property and only thereafter Slave System should have commenced. In short, in Tamil Nadu from ancient times people lived separate groups according to their profession. In course of time, these people were enslaved by their landlords. After Aryan invasion, the persons who were enslaved according to their profession were condemned to be of lowly work, and then they became slaves from generation to generation. Only when Egalitarian Society established and exploitation is wiped out we cannot abolish Slavery i.e. practised in the form of Caste". Tamil Scholars determines that Sangam Age extended up to 2nd Century of A.D. At that time classics like

Paththupattu and Ettuthogai blossomed. In the age of literary richness, we can find that slaves were there through its literature. In Ancient Tamil Nadu, the paddy fields and the fields surrounding it known as 'Marutham'. The people who lived in this area developed the civilization. They cultivated the land and so they lead a settled life. Private Property also raised its head. Those who had lands and those who did not have it develop hatred and enmity. They were able to make tools of production from Iron. Because of this progress, the productivity also increased. Sangam Literature glorifies these by saying Veli Aayiram Vilaiyum which when translated roughly or freely means "*thousand quintals per hectare*".

Bow and Arrow, Sword and Spear along with tools of farming caused the contradiction between the persons who were having these "tools of production" and those who did not have them. This caused many to become slaves. Those who had become Ruler. This is the first class distinction. For selfish reasons to increase productivity man enslaved fellow man. These created two classes in Tamil Society-"*Aandagai*" and "*Adimai*". Those who toiled for Rulers became the slaves.

The Masters or the Rulers had the absolute power to kill or sell the slaves. Those who had extracted work under compulsion from the have-nots on one side we had extreme suppression. On other side, surplus produce, excellent harvest, dwelling units and handicrafts also came into existence became the order of the day. Many persons in the Ruling Class began to indulge in intellectual activity. Vocations began to grow. Philosophy, Literature and Grammar, and Religious Rituals evolved. Ruling Class who were a minority found out that mere suppression is not enough to keep the slaves in perpetual captivity. So they were in need of many 'opium'. So new Religions, Gods, Faith, Previous Birth, Next Birth, Hell and Heaven, Gods Will etc were created during this time by Ruling Class

Intellectuals who exploited the ignorance of the have-nots according to P.R.Parameswaran.(Preface Pages 37 – 38).

Through Tamil Literature, we are able to understand how the Slave Labourers were mercilessly exploited by the Masters. The poor farmer who did not own Bulls to chaff or separate paddy from the Sheaves has to work on them in bare foot with their young children. Even after that, he was not able to pay fully his creditors. At the same time we are made to think in a Society where one can borrow cannot have an enriched System of slavery.

But Sangam Literature gives us information how the labourers became slaves. The slave labourers were only given old rice. They lived in huts and they were compelled to have their huts outside the main Village. Pattinapalai describes them that they live with pigs and hens and they did not have good wells. Nachinarkkinyar, a great commentator, says they lived with pigs, piglets, and hens and their streets were narrow and they are lowly people.

The Kings in order to build Forts, Ramparts and Moats used prisoners of War as the workers. In other words, prisoners of war became automatically slaves. Karikaal Cholan conquered Sinhala(Modern Srilanka) and brought many prisoners of War and used them as slaves to build and strengthen the banks of Cauvery. The households of Kings and Aristocrats had many maids, female servants, attendants, old women worked in them. This is evidenced by recordings in literature. Adiyaarkkunallaar, a great commentator of Silappathikaaram(Story of Anklet) calls these women as 'Adiyorpongu' or Methods of Slavery. This is also revealed through the preface of Tholkaappiyar that 'Adiyor' means 'slaves' only. 'Adiyor' did not have any rights and they have to obey the comments of the leader. In Kalithogai also, 'Adiyor' is synonyms with 'slaves'.

In Puranaanuru (400 songs) says that in Palaces and in the Households of Aristocrats, male and female slaves were used. They were mainly work in the Kitchen, Washing the Cloths and bounding the Paddy and these jobs were done mostly by female slaves. This is evidenced in the song 399 of Puranaanuru.

Similarly, the houses of the rich, female slaves were employed as nannies. This is evidenced by another song 'the carpentors made wooden scooters of three wheels, the little ones walked by pushing them'. Exhausted Children sucked milks from their maids and then went to sleep.

Female Slaves were employed to attend the children of the rich and to dress them and adorned them with jewels. The main job is to swing the cradle, to feed them, to sooth them when they cry and to train them in regular habits to be their handmaid. In them the nursing maid whose main job to feed the children with breast milk occupied a higher position.

Female Slaves employed in the Palaces has to make the sandal paste for the queen and others and this is recorded in 'Nedunalvaadai'. A few female slaves main job is to massage the legs of the Queen and 'Nedunalvaadai'(song 151) records it as 'silken girls' gently massages the beautiful legs.

Male slaves working the Palaces are prohibited from entering the harem or female quarters and 'Nedunalvaadai' records it in the songs 106 and 107. The male slaves have to carry the umbrella, the flag, the footwear and spice box.

A Royal Palace will have officials whose designations are 'Suthar, Magathar, Vaithalihar, Naaligai Kanakkar. Their main job is to speak or sing in praise of the King and keep him in good humour.

They are again divided into 'Ninruethuvaar' and 'Irunthuethuvaar'. The 'Suthers' has to stand and sing or speak in praise of the King. They are not permitted to sit before the King. This is indicated by the explanatory phrase 'Ninruethuvaar' who stand while speaking. The persons who are called as 'Magathar' can sit before the King. 'Naligai kanakkar' is the clerk for the King. His main job is to announce the time wherever the King or the Courteous asks. 'Vaithalihar' are the persons who describe the functions of each Department. Moreover, there were persons who are specifically employed to beat the drum to wake up the King in the morning.

The Victorious Kings, after successful battle, used to bring females from the vanquished land along with the cattle and the females became slaves. 'Pattinappaalai', a classic of the 'Sangam Age', in line 246 calls them as 'Kondi Mahalir', which means according to the 'Commentator' "Women from Captured Land". The same phrase "Kondi Mahalir" is used in other works like 'Madurai Kaanchi' (Line 583), 'Pathitrupepathu' (7th of the 10 songs) – Song 3 Line 9 and in 'Manimegalai' (Chapter.18 Line 119).

'Kondi Mahalir' were used in the Temples for sweeping the floor, lighting the lamps etc. Moreover young and beautiful 'Kondi Mahalir' became sex workers. Their main aim is to siphon off the rich. The phrase 'Kondi Mahalir' is used only in this sense in 'Madurai Kaanchi' and in 'Manimegalai'.

Senior Slaves were also compelled to accompany the Kings while they waged wars. The female slaves have to nurse them when they were injured and massage them and satisfy their lust.

The soldiers when they go for battles, they have to wear 'garlands' to indicate their Regiment. So, those who summon the soldiers to get the 'garland' and to distribute the 'garland' are done

by slaves only. These slaves are called by the designation 'thudian' and 'izhisinan'. 'Izhisinan' used to sit on the elephant and beat the drums and called the soldiers to get the garlands. This is evidenced by the Song No.289 of 'Puranaanuru'.

When a King was defeated or killed in a battle, his spear and armour were carried by slaves who are called 'thudian' and 'paanan'. This is narrated by a great Sangam Poet 'Arasil Kizhaar' in Puranaanuru (400 songs). In Sangam Age, many castes came up according to their 'profession'. They are, according to K.K.Pillai, Azhavar (one who measures), Idayar (shepherd) and Eyavar, Umanar, Uzhavar (farmer), Aynar, Kadambar, Kammiyar (mechanic), Kazhamar, Kilaingar, Kuyavar (Pot maker), Kuravar, Kurumbar, Kooththar (folk artist), Kollar (blacksmith), Kosar, Thatchar (carpenter), Thudiyar, Therpaakar (Charioteer), Parathavar (fisherman), Paraiyar, Paanar, Pulaiyar, Porunar, Mazhavar, Vadavadukar, Vannaar (washerman), Vanikar (merchant) and Vedar (Hunter).

The outcaste of the Society were called as Pulaiyar and we can find evidence for it in Anthologist of 'Sangam Age'. Their main job is to offer rice and toddy for the dead in the cremation ground. 'Puranaanuru' calls 'Pulaiyars' as persons of lowest birth. In course of time, the number of outcaste increased. Their number is more in South India than in North India. They were forced to live outside the main Village because of their lowly profession. According to Professor S.Ramakrishnan, even though they were outcaste, they cannot be called as 'slaves' because nobody can buy them or sell them.

The slaves who were called as 'Pulaiyan' and 'Izhisinan' were mainly used by the Rulers to burn the dead in the cremation ground.

In 'Sangam Age', the word 'cherry' was not used only to describe the area in which the lowest caste lived. A Village or Town

had many Cherries like 'Paraicheri', Parppanacheri' and 'Idaicheri' (Shepherd lives). (K.K.Pillai – History of Tamil Nadu – its people and culture-Page 169)

Even today, even the elders who do slave labour and persons belong to low caste are addressed without respect. This practise can be traced in the earliest days of slavery. Even in the Sangam Age, this was the common norm.

'Tholkaappiar' acknowledges the existence of 'Slaves and Slavery' and they cannot have niceties of the five aspects of love – Ref.....Tholkappiar Porul –Elam 74.

According to 'Tholkaappiar', only the Kings and the Brahmins had the right of invocation or saying prayers and being an ambassador. Merchant castes and farmer caste did not have the privilege - Ref.....Tholkappiar Porul –Elam 74.

Again, Ref.....Tholkappiar Porul –Elam 625,also . Ref.....Tholkappiar Porul –Elam 629, even when low caste man acquires lot of wealth and even when he becomes Ruler according to Tholkaappiar, he will be considered as a low caste man. The Tamil equivalents of Slave and Citizenship 'Adimai and Kudimai' were frequently used even at the time of 'Tholkaappiar'. "Persons of Farmer Caste have to cultivate land and only land and nothing else according to Tholkaappiar and it also points out that importance of agriculture in ancient Tamil Nadu.

The duty of a 'Slave' is to work as a 'Salve' and do 'Slave Labour' only. In literature, they were prohibited from playing an important role. 'Tholkaappiam' describes the slaves as 'Adimaikal' 'Izhinthor' (low caste), 'Vinaivalar' (worker) and 'Yeval Marapinar' (those who are at peck and call). Their main job is to

work for the other four upper caste people. According to K.Muthiah, they did not have any other right except to do slave labour (Philosophical conflict in Tamil Literature). In Sangam Age, there was no actual buying and selling of slaves. In those days, Barter System was the only method of trade.

The Rulers had the habit of gifting slaves. Foreign Merchants brought slaves to India from abroad and best of the slaves were presented to the Kings. Some of them became the personal bodyguards of the Kings. According to 'Mullaipaattu', 'Handsome Romans' and 'Deaf and Dumb' and 'Foreigners' were giving company to the Kings. According to 'Silappathikaaram', the Roman Soldiers protected Madurai. 'Best Romans' guard the entrance by standing on the 'tall walls'. Even the Great Thiruvalluvar describes that the Slaves carried the Rulers in the Palan Queen as 'Aratharithuvena Vendaa Sivikai Poruththaanodurnthaan idai'. The slaves were not distinguished by their sex or gender, all the slaves were ordered to do any type of work according to the whims and fancies of the Rulers, and this is testified in 'Sangam Literature'.

Because of the two classes, Rulers and Slaves, many Cities and civilization based on Cities evolved. Agricultural economics depended on Barter System. Merchant is the middleman (intermediary) between the producer and the consumer is evolved in 'Marutham'. Lands where farming operation were the main vocation and the works related to 'farming'. Even at the beginning of the Tamil Civilisation, the contradiction and hatred between the farmers and merchants occurred. Whenever the merchant class tries to suppress the farmers, the Kings intervened and supported the farmers, and restore the balance. This is one of the main aspects the economic history of ancient tamils. 'The World follows the Farmers' and the farmers lynchpin became the economic philosophy of the tamils. This tradition continues even to-day.

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Slaves in Pallava Times

After the Sangam Age, Tamil Nadu was ruled by Jains who were called as 'Kalappirar'. Their Rule was considered as Dark Age of Tamil Nadu by many, but many considered it as the Golden Age. After their Rule from AD 275 to AD 897 for nearly 600 years, Pallava ruled Tamil Nadu.

Brahmins as a Class or Caste came into existence in Pallava Times. The word 'Gramam' (Village), came from the Sanskrit word 'kiramam' (method of practise). Those who had minimum knowledge of 'vedas' (modern equivalence is 10th standard or Plus2). They were gifted with Villages. That is Gramam means where those who had knowledges of Vedas lived. This practise commenced during the Pallava Times.

In the copper plates of 7th Century, it was decreed that Ezhavaas cannot climb the Palm Trees belonging to the Brahmins. Ezhavaas belonged to the caste of toddy trappers.

There was renaissance of Saivism and Vaishnavism during the times of Pallavas. Siva Saints known as Nayanmaarkal and Vaishnava saints called as Aazhvaar created a new genere of devotional literature. Thirugnanasamanthar and Thirunavukkarasar travelled throughout Tamil Nadu and spread Saivism. The temples in which they sang are known as Padalpetra Thalanganal or sacred places which were commemorated. Aazhvaars went to the Vaishnava temples and sang devotional hymns. The Vaishnava Temples on which they composed are known as Mangalasasthram seitha Thiruppathikal or Holy Places on whose praise hymns were song. Saivites and Vaishnavites did their best to reduce the influence of Jainism and Buddhism. Mahendra Varman wrote a play in Sanskrit called 'Maktha Vilasa Prakanam' satirising the Buddhist and he made fun of them.

Poet Dhandi wrote 'Kaaviya Dharsan' in Sanskrit is a treatise on grammar. It was translated as "Dhandi Alankaaram" into Tamil. Similarly the story of Paandavaas are told in Bharatha Venbaa, a short literature called "Nandhi Kalambagam" and a Classic by name 'Perunkathai' are some of the important Tamil Literary work of Pallava Period.

Historical Researchers have not concentrated much on Pallava Rule. One reason perhaps when we compare with Chola Period, the Pallava Period has not yielded enough evidences. But one thing we have to agree is whatever the growth that has happened in Chola Period either in Agriculture or Commerce or Industry or Social Structure, all these have roots in Pallava Period. The researches in Pallava Period have concentrated more on the administrative aspects of the period than on the Administrative Policies and Manner.

R.Gopalan – Pallavas of Kanchi (Madras,1928), Sri Meenachi's Administration Social Life under Pallavas (Madras, 1939) and Raja Manickanar's Pallava History(Chennai,1971) are the important works that deal with Pallavas Administration, Tactics and Strategies of war, Policy of Expansion, Administration, Land Revenue and Religious culture. Because of the close bondage between the Rulers and Brahmins, there was an enormous tax burden on farmers and other professionals were reduced to slavery. All these information are found in the above-mentioned three books.

As it was the custom in Sangam Age, in Pallava Period also, the succession of Administration was within the family. Kings were assisted by able Ministers. The Kingdom was divided into three categories of Kottam, Nadu, Uor. Those who administered Nadu are called as Nattar and the farmers who are responsible for

administration at the last unit were known as Uorar. Apart from that, the Villages, which were gifted to Brahmins, were called as Brahma Thesam and they were administered by the local Brahmins only. All these three types of Administrators looked after temple lands, water management and education, dispensation of justice and ownership of land.

After these, there were many Agencies for Administration. For example the lakes which supported farming operations were looked after by Maintenance Agency or Lake Agency. Like wise the Agency that looked after Orchards, Groves and Gardens were maintained by an 'Agency for Gardens'.

Pallava Period saw the growth of feudalism. Naturally there were slaves. Expansion of slavery is evidenced in the literary works of Pathinenkeezh Kanakku Noolkal and Devotional Literature. So these works can be cited as evidences for slavery in Pallava times.

Pallava period saw the growth of agriculture and for that reason slavery also expanded. Slaves were called as 'aal'. This word 'aal' is frequently used by the Saivite Saint Sundarar i.e. Slaves were beckoned or summoned by the word 'aal'. The Tamil lexicon Divakara Nikandu lists synonyms for slaves and one of the examples is 'aalum tholumbum adimayakum'. This phrase was used by Saint Sundarar in many places. Historians say that Vaishnavite Saints Nammalvaar, Thirumangaiyaaalvaar, Periyaaalvaar, Aandaal and others lived between AD 700 and AD 885. So we can consider them as persons who lived in Pallava Period.

Vaishnavite Saint Periyaaalvaar uses the word 'Koolaal'. The work is explained by a great commentator Periyavaachan Pillai in his 'Commentary on Thiruppallaandu'. According to him, 'Koolaal' denotes a person who gave away himself in writing for food. Similarly,

Saint Periyaalvaar denotes slaves by the word ‘Tholuthaimaar’, ‘Vilaiyar’.

‘Naaladiyaar’ describes that slaves were chained in the legs. In a song “Irumbu Aarkkum Kaalar Aai, Ethilaarkku Aal Aai, Karumbu Aar Kazhaniyaar Servar’. The free translation of the song is that ‘those who capture rare birds of the forest and imprisoned them in iron cages will be caught and chained on the legs and will be compelled to work in the farms’.

Saivite Saint Thirunaavukkarasar in his famous devotional song ‘Nammarkkum Kudi Ellom’ where he proclaims that he is a slave of Lord Siva only. Goes on to say ‘Meelaa Allai’ which means irrevocable slave.

In Pallava times, the slaves were identified by ‘Thirusool Stamp’ were used and it is euphemistically as ‘purification ceremony’. Saint Thirunaavukkarasar when he visits a temple known as “Thiruthoonganai Madam” makes a request to the Golden Feet of the Lord in a Song known as “Ponnaar Thiruvadikku Ontrundu Vinnappam”. In that he request Lord Siva ‘to impress on his body the shining Thirusool’. The same symbol was used in the Chola period to identify the slaves in the temple.

Pallava Kings and their citizens were serious temple worshippers. Many temples were built the town of Kaanchi and in other places. Temple Priests, Temple Workers and Temple Dancers were gifted with lands. Dancers were also called as ‘Adikalmaar, Manikkaththar, Kanikaiyar and Uruththira Kanikaiyar’. In stone inscriptions of Chola Period, they were identified the word ‘Thevaradiyaar’ (K.K.Pillai-History of Tamil Nadu - its People and Culture).

In the devotional works Devaaram and Thiruvaasakam, we find when it describes his state of complete forgetfulness describes a devotee ‘Naayen, Adimai, Adiyen’. The use of these words denoting slavery reflects the deep impact of the slavery system in the minds of the people including evolved persons.

The Saivite Saint Sundarar in his Thiruvaarur Pathikam says ‘Vitrु Kolveer Otri Allen Virumbi Aatpatten’. These lines show that the slaves can be not only bought and sold but also can be pledged as a surety.

Thirumoolar in his famous work Thirumanthiram uses the word ‘slave’ at many places and one song uses the word ‘slave’ eight times

“Adiyaar Adiyaar Adiyaar Adimaikku
Adiyaanai nalkittu Adimaiyum Poonden
Adiyaar Arulaai Avanadi Kooda
Adiyaan Ivan Entru Admai Kondaane”

which when translated freely means ‘I am a willing slave of the slave of the slave of the Lord. I am a slave to be blessed by grace and to be at His feet and he can called me as slave.

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Slaves in the later Chola Period

Even though many Kings ruled Tamil Nadu, it is usually described that 'Chola Period is the golden age of tamil', but when we examine the old inscriptions on the rocks and other documents, we find that during the Chola Period slavery was at its height. We usually considered AD 10 to 13th Century as the later Chola Period. We are sorry to find that slavery and slave system reached its widespread tentacles at this time.

The Kings of Tamil Nadu.

Some say that there is an interesting background regarding the additional information about the Kings of India particularly of Tamil Nadu.

In the 18th Century, Western Historians began to write about India from the European Perspective. At the same time, a movement for liberation has begun in India and people have begun to oppose the British Rule. So, a few intellectual who are also sympathetic to the cause of Indian Freedom began to write about valiant history of India. They described Chandra Gupta Mauriya, Ashoka, Akbar and Sivaji as the great Kings of India. They also identified paintings and statutes in Ajantha Hills, Taj Mahal and some temples of North India as cultural symbols of India. In their works, Tamil Nadu or Tamil Culture did not occupy significant space. In earlier years of 20th Century, Sangam Literature were printed from the Palm Leaves of 18th and 19th Century, the great Tamil Classic Silappathikaaram was discovered and it was printed. Indus Valley civilisation came into light. It preceded the Aryan Civilisation. Moreover, Indus Valley Civilisation is identified with Dravidian Culture. The comparative grammar published by Rev.Coldwell established that the family of Dravidian Languages is different from Indo-Germanic Language

Family (Aryans). All these new facts and discoveries stirred Tamil Scholars to record the contribution of Tamils for the tamil language and culture in Indian History. Thus came into existence the History of Tamil Nadu. This is the result of Tamil Nationalistic Feelings. Scholars like Sathasiva Pandarathaar and Neelakanda Sasthri did research on the inscriptions in the stones and copper plates and brought out new information about Chola Rule. According to them like Ashoka and Akbar, Tamil Nadu had Raja Raja Cholan and Kulothunga Cholan. Like the caves of Ajantha, Tamil Nadu had Cave Temples at Mahabalipuram and like Taj Mahal, Tamil Nadu had Thanjavur Big Temple. Thus, the Tamil History proclaiming the achievements of tamil came into existence.

History of Tamil Nadu was examined by Classifying the various periods in Tamil History. They are:- (1) Period of the Rule by Chera, Chola and Pandiya. (2) Period of Kalappirar Rule (3) Period of the Rule by Pallava Kings (4) Period of the Rule by Later Day Cholas (5) Period of the Rule by Nayak Kings,(6) Period of European Rule.

Historians describes that Sangam Age and Chola Period are the Golden Period of Tamil People. Chola Kings built large number of temples. Raja Rajeswaram built by Raja Raja Cholan at Thanjavur and Kangai Konda Chola Puram builit by his son Rajendran became the symbols of Tamil Art. Karikaal Peruvalathan who built Kallanai, Raja Raja Cholan who built the big Temple at Thanjavur and Rajendra Chola who conquered Sri Lanka and North India, Kulothunga Cholan and Maravarman Sundara Pandian became important names in the history of Tamil Nadu.

The Poet Jeyam Kondaan describes Kulothunga Cholan as a Avathaar of Lord Vishnu in his work Kalingathu Parani. To establish the King Rules as a representative of God, there is a Statue depicting

Lord Siva crowning Raja Raja Cholan. Thus history of Tamil Kings came out due to serious research.

Slaves:

Romila Thapar, a renowned Scholar of History, in her book, a History of India, describes the practise of slavery during Chola Times. Some offered themselves as slaves and others sold some to slavery. Slaves were sold to the temples also. The numbers of slaves increased during the times of drought and famine. But she admit the total number of slaves were small and they were not used in major productive works.

Types of Slaves:

Thurai Ilamurugu in his monograph identify the existence of 15 kinds of slaves during the Chola Times. (1) Children of Thasis (i.e. children of thasi who is also a slave), (2) those who were bought in the open market (3) those who were gifted, (4) those who were sold by the parents, (5) those who were rescued from the pledge, (6) those who became slaves to keep a promise, (7) those who became slaves due to debts, (8) prisoners of war, (9) those who lost themselves in gambling, (10) those who volunteered to become slaves, (11) those who became slaves due to poverty, (12) those who sold themselves voluntarily, (13) slaves of God (temples), (14) those who marry a female slave becomes a slave, (15) slaves for a specific period. Thus, we find there were 15 types of slaves in Chola Period. They did lowliest of the work of the Society. They are called as Dhassar, Dhassan and Dhassi. Slaves were exchanged for other slaves also.

Slaves were considered as commodities. Like gifting the Cows, slaves were bought and were donated to the temples, to the

mutts and to the Kings by the rich people. Due to poverty, the head of the family used to sell the members of the family as slaves. Some are sold as slaves not only themselves but also their successive generations. This is evidenced by the following phrases found in the inscriptions:- “myself and my descendants”, “as long as sun and moon exists”, “Vazhiyadimai”(descendants of slaves), “him and his descendants” and “the usual slaves”.

Increase of Slaves:

When the numbers of slaves were increasing, Raja Raja Cholan and Rajendra Cholan went out on naval expeditions and conquered lands. They not only brought treasures from foreign land but also brought as slaves, the prisoners of war and woman. Because of the many successful expeditions, the number of slaves increased in Chola Country. Men and Women who were captured in the War, they were made slaves and they were exploited.

Women, who were captured in the war, were accommodated in a special building called ‘Velam’ near the palaces. The Cholas had hundreds of women in this ‘Velams’(Palace establishments) to satisfy their sexual needs and entertainments. All these are recorded by professor Dawood Ali in his research Article entitled ‘a study of the use of the word ‘Velam’ in the inscriptions of chola time.

In Chola Time, the sales of slaves were registered in Palm Leaves as documents. They are called by different names as ‘Aal Volai’(Sale of a person), ‘Aal Vilai Bramaana Isaiivu Cheetu’(Affidavit consenting the price of a person and document for the sale of a slave). The Periyapuraanam which was composed during the 12th Century records the story of Saint Sundarar being registered as slave in ‘Aal Volai’. The story goes like this ‘at the time of the marriage of Sundarar, Lord Siva comes there as a Old Brahmin and says

‘Sundarar is my slave. Therefore, he has to come with me’. Moreover, Lord Siva in the guise of a Brahmin says that he has got a Palm Leaf “Aal Volai(Sale of a person). Sundarar in the pretext of examining the veracity of the document destroys the Palm Leaf. But, the Brahmin says ‘Sundarar destroyed only the true copy of the Palm Leaf document executed by his grandfather and then he shows the original palm leaf. That Palm Leaf Document was examined with the other documents executed by the Sundarar’s Grandfather and found to be true. So, the leaders of the assembly accepted the veracity of the Palm Leave shown by the old Brahmin. As a result of this, Sundarar followed in wedding attire the old Brahmin (Lord Siva).

We cannot simply dismiss the story of the Sundarar as fiction or a piece of imagination. This story establishes the practise of slavery during the Chola times. This also confirms the practise of the recording the sale transaction of slaves in Palm Leaves and one can sell to slavery not only himself and also his descendants. Lastly, the owner can complain about the delinquent behaviour of a slave to the village assembly.

Ravana, the King of Srilanka, asks Hanuman, the emissary of Rama, ‘Are you become the slave of the person who has killed Vaali with his Arrow’. In this line, the Great Kamban, the Author, uses the word ‘Aal Thozhil’ to denote labour of a slave. The words ‘Padiyaal’ and ‘Pannaiyaal” are the extension of the word ‘Aal’.

Lakshmana was commanded by his mother ‘Sumitra’, when Lakshmana was said to accompany his elder brother Rama, ‘ he should not be a mere younger brother; but he should be his slave’. Kamban also says Lakshmana should be a slave for Rama. Likewise, Laskhmana describes himself as ‘one who obeys all the commands like a slave’ to Hanuman. So, Kamban who belong to the Chola times also uses the word ‘Adiyaar’ synonyms with ‘slave’.

The slaves to escape were hunted, capture and punished. They were again forced to do more work as slaves. This command of ‘Kulothungan-III’ is found inscripted on the walls of the Temple at Thiruvaalankaadu. Even though, the Chola Times, the Kings and Rich People bought men and women and gifted them to the Temples and Mutts, there is not a single instance of a Brahmin being enslaved.

Brahmins occupied important positions in Chola Administration. All others worked under them. In order that all the other caste people may unite against them, the Brahmins encourage separate identity of each caste and solidarity of those castes and encouraged separate caste identities. Recently discovered are three stone inscriptions (AD 1222) which belong to the period of Raja Raja-III at ‘Veerapurishwarar Temple’ of Chittali in Perambalur District. In the same Town, three stone inscriptions (AD 1237) in the Varadaraja Perumal Temple belonging to the times of King Veera Someshwaran.

From the inscriptions found at Varadaraja Perumal Temple, we learn a portion of the Town Chittali was bifurcated and named as Devanna Sathurvethi Mangalam and gifted to 22 Brahmins and to the Vaishnavite Temple known as Devanna Perumal by the King. Further, a person known as Mathumatthi Akkan, as a representative of the King, donated 14 Velies of land to the temple and 32 Velies of land to the Brahmins. This we learn from the King’s General Harihara Thanda Nayakkar who communicated the gift through Palm Leaf document to the temple and to the Brahmins.

Untouchable Slaves:

Persons from the lowest castes who became slaves are known as “Theenda Adimai” or ‘.untouchable slaves’. They were branded like cattle. Slaves of the Palace were branded with ‘Tiger’

symbol, Slaves of the Siva Temples were branded with “Thirusul” symbol and slaves of the Vaishnavite temple branded with “Conch” symbol.

A stone inscription of Raja Raja-I identifies a place of a town as ‘Theendacherry’ or ‘slums of the untouchables’. According to Professor Ko. Vijayavenugopal, the stone inscription of Thirumoolanaathar Temple at Pagoor (period of Raja Raja-I i.e AD 10th Century calls the people of a particular place as ‘Theendaathar’ or ‘untouchables’.

It is only during the Chola times that slums or cherries were created for the untouchable slaves by a Kings’ decree. According to this, the upper caste people should live at higher level of the land and the low caste people should live in the low lands. Then only according to their surmise that the water that falls in their land will not be polluted with the contact of the untouchables. Moreover, the untouchables should bend and enter their huts and the entrance should be designed accordingly. The huts should not have any windows. They cannot white wash their walls. The corpses of the should be removed without any ritual. They cannot collect water from the common pond. All these were the decree of the King. These orders reflect the suppression based on caste in those times.

There is a stone inscription of Rajathi Rajan-II also known as Raja Kesari Varman, of his 17th year of his Rule and it is found in a small hamlet ‘Aachaalpuram’ near Seerkazhi. The stone inscription of the Village Assembly of ‘Thiruvazhinaattu Kulothunga Chola Sathurvethi Mangalam’ describes certain important decision of the Village Assembly. One of them relates to the slaves. This shows the ‘importance of the slaves at the gross root level’.

Even though the royal decree mentions specifically about Paraicherry in and around Thanjavur out of the 33 places, only in 19 places we find that Paraicherry (slums for untouchables) were in existence. Similarly, in Gangai Konda Cholapuram out of 7 places, in only one, there was a Paraicherry. Paraicherry in one document is classified as Uzhaparaiyarukkum Keezhacherry (Eastern slums for the farm workers who are untouchables) and Uzhaparaiyarukkum Me,acherry (Western slums for the farm workers who are untouchables). These indicate that untouchables were used for farm work. In Thanjavur, out of the 19 towns and in Cholapuram 5 towns, there were only one or two cremation grounds. Out of the total 40 towns only in 24 there were cremation grounds. Out of the 24 towns in 8 towns, there were separate cremation grounds for Velalars i.e. caste for farm workers and Paraiyar (untouchable caste). Therefore, we are able to infer the Velalars and Paraiyars live separately (South Indian Society in Historical Movement-by Novoru Krashima). Slaves of the untouchable caste had to do farming work during the days of cultivation and in other days they were employed in stone quarries and also used as Palanquin Bearers. The three important works for slaves was bounding the paddy and removing the husk, farm work and temple work. Even for small lapses in their work, the slaves were imposed with harsh punishments. Few researchers have expressed their anguish that while many historians called the period of Raja Raja Cholan as Golden Age forget about the prevalence of untouchability and dividing the people according to caste. This Empire (Chola) classified the land in which that the weaker section of the society live like Paraicherry, Kammalacherry, Vannaracherry, Oornatham, Paazhnilam (wasteland), Oodaruthupokum Vaaikkalkal as land belonging to the Crown. The same position continued till the British Rule. Whatever it may be this was the period in which Theendaacherry and Paraicherry existed. There were separate cremation grounds called as Paraichudukaadu

and Kammalachudukaadu, according to Professor Tho.Paramasivam(why celebrate Raja Rajan even to-day).

A prudent Society which began in Pallava Times reached its height till the Chola Times. Therefore, land revenue was a important source of income for the King. The procedure for collecting the land tax is enumerated in stone inscriptions found during the Chola times. A stone inscriptions of the year 1054 of Chola period records that Senthan Umaiyaal, wife of Veeraputhiran committed suicide because she could not pay the land tax. The tax collector insisted that she should pay as per the Royal Decree. Unable to bear the harassment, she consumed poison and died. The Government Official responsible for that was asked to pay 32 coins for lighting the lamp.

In some of the stone inscriptions of the Pallava Times say about 'breaking the mud pot' and 'seizing the brass vessel'. These expressions indicate to us how harsh were the tax collectors during the Chola times.

The expression seizing the brass vessels shows that the tax collector entered the house or hut of the tax defaulter and seized the costly brass vessels.

When there were no brass vessels and only mud pot, the tax collector seeing that there is no gain in seizing the mud pod smashed them as a punishment. This is indicated by the phrase 'breaking the mud pot'.

So we understand that the tax collectors of the golden period of King Chola used to break the mud pot and seize the brass vessels thus compelling into go angry.

While collecting the tax from the untouchables, very harsh words were used. According to inscriptions of the Chola times, this

is known as 'Aravathandam'. The stone inscriptions caution that the 'Aravathandam' should not be used against 'Brahmin' and 'Vellala' households. Another stone inscriptions warns that for the sake of tax arrears, a 'Vellalar' should not be imprisoned. Thus we find there were double standard in Chola Period, one for the Ruling Class and another for the 'oppressed'. So, harsh methods were not used for defaulting upper class people. In some inscriptions we find that the land of the defaulter is seized and sold.

Further, land owners and farmers had to shoulder lot of tax burden. They receive only minimum wage for their work. Society was divided into different strata and many became lowliest slaves. They were compelled to do lowliest of the work in the society from generation to generation. For them, there were lot of social restrictions. So, the standard of life was very abysmal.

The farmers were treated very badly and they became slaves. V.Krishnamurthy writes in his "Methods of Production in Chola Times" says 'for the first time the Chola period in Tamil Nadu both in Ancient and Middle Period, there was a phenomenal growth of production. Land tax for dry land known as 'melwaram' was 20% and for wet land it was 64%. For gifted lands (devadhanam) 15 kalam of paddy was collected per valey. The entire collection of paddy as tax, 100 kalams was given to the temple and 50 kalams were given to the village workers.

What was left is very meagre and this was given to the farm workers as wages which came about 5 to 10 kalams per person. For these unfair wages, the people have to toil for many hours a day. When we look at this, the farmers live in pitiable condition according to the Author. V.Krishnamurthy's work 'Methods of Production in Chola Times' clearly depicts that the farmers work like slaves during the Chola Times.

The book 'Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Chola and Pandiya Times' describes how upto 14th Century, Cholas fixed the price of land and how they measured land and how it was followed by the Pandiyar Rulers. The problems of gifted land came to light during the rule of Chola and later day Pandiyas. The book describes harsh methods of collection of land revenue and consequential sufferings of the farmers and their weak protest and as a continuation how they were forced to work like a slave.

Temple as Power Centre:

The book 'Modes of Production in Southern India – by Cathelin Cav' offers a criticism of the economic conditions of the Chola Period. The economic practises of the Chola Times depended on land and commerce only. According to Cathelin Cav, the society of Chola Period (850 to 1260) followed the Asian methods of production as described by Karl Marx. In Chola times no one had land or any other immovable property in their personal capacity. Land were administered by the Big Landlords depending upon the pleasure of the Rulers. They administered the land only with the permission of the Rulers. Cav says there were no individual property but they belong to the temples or the mutts.

Two reasons are stressed for building lot of temples by the Chola Kings, the one was to preserve the social order in the name of culture. The Army was used to build Temples and thus a sizeable amount allotted for defence was used for building temples. Another reason was as an expiation of the sin of many murders during the war, the temples were build. Someone must have told the King that he will not attract or incur the sin of brahmakarthe (killing a human being), if he builds a temple. In Chola Times, temple became institutions. The lands that were in possession of temple were gifted

by the Kings. The land from a poor farmer who could not pay tax was seized and gifted to the temples.

The farmers who lost their land became the slaves of the temple. They were marked with 'Thirisul' and that designating as slaves of the temple, they were forced to work in the temple lands.

According inscriptions of the Chola Times, the land that is gifted to the temples are called as 'Devadhanam'. It was controlled by the Temple Committee. These temple committees were able to control even the Kings. When such is the condition, would they have left the poor farmers ?

The action of the members of the powerful Temple Committee distressed the people and the slaves. A Thanjavur stone inscription describes how the farmer who lost his land and who did not get any justice from the temple committee immolated himself before the temple.

In some temple records depict that many jump from the tall temple towers in order to attract the attention of the King and support of the people to highlight the injustice of the temple committee.

In an Article in 'Puthiya Kalaacharam' (New culture), entitled 'Rule of Raja Raja Cholan': Restoration of Brahminism! Disaster for Slaves' 'The Author says, 'when there were no modern technological facilities available when there were no proper road and transport facilities to build such a huge temple how much human labour should have been spent? How many of lost their life while building them? The temple which stands for more than thousand years is the product of the free but forced labour of the slaves. This temple was created by the free slave labour only. Raja Rajan who had waged many wars during his Rule built the Temple with the slave labour of the prisoners of war'.

Further in that Article “no doubt the pyramids of pharaohs and the great wall of China are great achievement of the mankind. Similarly, the Artistic achievement and engineering marvel of the Thanjavur Big Temple is a great historical achievement but nobody calls that at the times of pyramids and great wall of China belong to the golden ages of those countries. One must make a distinction between artistic achievement and celebrating a Rule. The Big Temple of Thanjavur is a creation of slave worker and lootings of the Wars”.

Before Raja Rajan worshipping the ‘stone at the centre(Nadukal)’ was widespread in Tamil Nadu.

Destroying the tribal who were called as Veliar and creating an Empire on the plains is the beginning of the period of Raja Rajan. Warring continuously and destroying the local Chieftens or minor Kings and annexing their land and carrying away their movable properties creating the fear of the Empire and thereby forcing all to accept a single Powerful Centre was the aim of Raja Rajan. This was the basic for building the Big Temple”.

“To built the Temple, blood flowed like a River in South India from Kaanthalur(in Kerala) to Eazham (Sri Lanka), Raja Rajan lead a War of Destruction. At Kaanthalur(a part of modern Thiruvananthapuram), Cheran was defeated, on the Port at Uthagai Nagar(Kalkulam Taluk) and nearby Towns were simply burned. This is narrated in an Ilugoising work known as ‘Kaanthalur Chalai Kalamarutharuli’.

The small farmers who were not able to repay the debt due to drought and famine were forced to forfeit their land the land thus seized from the marginal farmers were gifted to the Big Temple.

‘Even for the effective function in the temple free labour were obtained from the ordinary people. To light the lamps in the Temple, cattle – goats, cows and buffalos-were gifted to four hundred cowherds and shepherds. These four hundred were called as ‘vettikudigal’(unpaid servants) and each one of them have to give every day two hundred milli litres of ghee to the temple. They have to live on the balance milk or ghee of what is left after giving two hundred milli litres of ghee to the temple. They were not given any other remuneration in any form. So, only they maintain certain number of cattle, they can fulfil the condition of the King. Thus the labour of ‘Vettikudi’ was exploited by the Temple. Those cowherds and shepherds who could not meet the ‘daily quota’ were punished by confiscating their properties. If anyone who objects the Government Order relating to the temple like chess for temples, and confiscation of properties to the temple, they will be called as traitors of Lord Siva(Rule of Raja Raja Cholan –Restoration of Brahminism-Disaster for Slaves).

At the same time, there is a point of view that the slaves could not have created such a great artistic marvel. Another perspective is that a few are technical and artistic expert built the temple with a forced labour of temple.

The temples played in a great role in ‘looking after’ (paeniyathil) the slaves. Slaves were gifted to the temples. There is a stone inscription which says Kulothunga Cholan-III donated land and slaves to the ‘Kailasanathar Koil’ in a Village of Thiruthuraipoondi Taluk.

During the rule of Vikrama Cholan, a Brahmin was caught stealing the jewels of the temple. For that all his properties were made ‘Devadhanam’ or ‘gifted to the temple’. One of the properties of the Brahmin was that slaves he owned. This is described as

Properties at Slaves in a Stone Inscription of the year 1199(Neelakanda Sashtri). There are many evidences ‘when they do not have means and ways to get food for themselves, the tamil males, females and children sold themselves as slaves’. In a publication of the Archaeological Department of Tamil Nadu called ‘Stone carvings of Tamil Nadu’ that more than hundred tamil males and females sold themselves as slaves. In a note to that it is said for ‘Veerataraneshwararmudaiyar’ temple during Raja Raja Cholan-III Rule, many slaves were bought.

This is further clarified by another stone inscription found in Vayaloor Temple. In AD 948 Chandrasekara Arasamainthan who was an Arbitrator and belongs to a Town called Nandhivarma Mangalam on Kauvery South Bank has donated his female slave who works for him for gruel by name Ooraansolai and her daughter Velaanpratti and her daughter Amainthankandi to the Thirukatrili Parameshwarar Temple at Vayaloor for fanning the deity and to sing invocation songs (stone inscriptions of Thallicherry-R.Kalaikovan). This stone inscription is said to belong to the period of Paraanthakan-I.

In AD 1002, twelve females of fisher folk sold themselves as slaves due to poverty to Srivaraaga Temple at a place called Thiruvadhanthai Perumal Koil in Chengalpattu District.

In 10th Century AD, an official donated slaves to beat the drums to the Rajasimmesjhwaramudaiyaar Temple, in Karunkulam Town in Nanguneri Taluk of Tirunelveli District. In AD 1201, a parent sold his two daughters due to acute poverty for 110 coins to the Mutt attached to the Thiruppampuram Temple.

In AD 1218-19 a slave trader by name Ethirili Cholagangai Nadaalvaan sold ten slaves and their circle of persons to Thirumarai Kaadudaiyaar Temple for 1000 coins. The same person in AD 1239

sold two female slaves by name Kazhani and Kudiyaal to the same temple.

A famous vaishnavite text by name Guruparamparai Prabavam also known as Guruparamparai Vaibavam describes how servants were sent as dowry along with the bride to serve her in her new home.

A king of a small Kingdom by name Vairaatharayan donated the female slaves brought to her matrimonial home by his wife as a dowry with her consent to the Mutt attached to the Thiruvallankattu Temple. So, thus we learn that there was a practise of giving away slaves as part of dowry at the time of marriage.

A document of Thiruvaduthurai Temple proclaim during the rule of Thirupuvana Chakkaravarthy Kulothunga Cholan that a female was sold to the temple as a slave. A Brahmin of Nangoor sold seven of his female slaves and fifteen of slaves at another time (Slaves and Tamil Kings –Thuraimurugu).

Donating the land for the King.

In modern times, it is very common to see that poor people are fed and gifted with articles at the temple on important dates connected with their leaders. The same thing has also happened in ancient times where people prayed and took bowls for their Kings.

One Chenthan Kumara ,donated 90 goats for lighting the lamp at Dashnamoorthy Shrine of Thirukkamainakkar Temple in Kaappalur. Chenthan Kumaran was a General of Raja Raja Brahmmarayar of Rajendra Cholan-I. Similarly, a Brahmin by name Dhasapriyapattan of Kaarambichettu Thiruviyaloor and another Brahmin Thatthaiyagramavithan of Sembiraatti Sarani Kullaloor and

others donated 335 Kuzhi for creating a flower garden for Rajendra Cholan and the same persons donated 1024 Kuzhi land for performing pooja for God Dhashnaamoorthy three times a day. This is revealed through Kaappalur Stone Inscription of Pozhur Taluk in Thiruvannaamalai District. The period of the stone inscription was AD 1028 and hence belongs to the period of Rajendran Cholan-I.

An official by name Aryan Ulakuyya Vanthanana Veera Rajendra Anuthra Pallavariyan of Ezhoor Town in Karaivazhi Region donated his land at Kannaadipuththur to do away the evil effects and sufferings caused by eclipse to his King Veera Rajendra Thevar in the Tamil Month Iyppasi(October-November) and to the deity Nayanaar Chitrameli Easwaramudaiyaar and Periya Naachiyaar for prasaatham.

Kings of Tamil Nadu did many good deeds so that their Rule will be a beneficial Rule and they too will be rewarded. They thought that eclipses will harm them and they try to find the ways to avoid the evil effects of the eclipses.

[upto this, the translated matter is sent for correction through message]

Female slaves of the Gods[Devaradiyargal]

Chola Kings played a great role in enslaving women and dedicating them as servants of the temple. We are not sure of the origin of the devaradiyar or devadasi. But it developed with strong roots during the Chola times.

Rengarajan in an essay ‘Thanjavur Big Temple and Devadasi Tradition’ says, ‘even before chola times temples were artistic treasure houses in the reign of pallavas. Devaram says, devasis were employed

as ‘ruthrakanikaiyar’. Sampanthar in a pathigam says ‘beautiful women singing and slim girls dancing in Thiruvaiyar’. Sundaramurthy Nayanar married a dancer of Thiruvarur temple by name paravaiyar in front of the entire public. In all big temples, they cultivated and nurture dance and music. In the temples of Kumbakonam, Thiruvaiyar, Thiruvotriyur, Kanchipuram and Others, there are story inscriptions describing the dances of devadasis. Sithannavasal, the treasure house of painting of pallava period as depicted devadasis in different dances poses. A love story ‘Radha Santhavanam’ written by Muthu Palani of Thanjavur and dasis clever traps or the minor who became wise’, a novel by Moovaloor Ramamirtham Ammaiyar helps us to understand the devadasi tradition. Since they are literary work, historical details are not much present.

During the rule of Raja Raja Cholan, devaradiyar tradition became well established. The phrase of the word devaradiyargal was found in many stone inscriptions of Chola Period. They were employed as servants of the temple. They became part and parcel of the temple. When Raja Raja Cholan built the big temple at Thanjavur, he located them in a separate area known as Thallicherry [In Raja Raja Cholan’s big temple, north outer wall of the big temple many stone inscriptions regarding Thallicherry of Thanjavur is found. Stone inscriptions of Thanjavur Thallicherry by Dr.R.Kalikovan, Siva Sinthantha Kazhaka Publication, 2002].

Man women were brought under compulsion to this Thallicherry. They were sealed with iron emblems and they were thus identified as ‘devaradiyar’. They were permanently attached to the various aspects and works of the temple. The females who were compelled to become slaves of the temple were also sent to his Harem. A stone inscription says that Raja Rajan nominated 400 women to Thallicherry.

Women became devaradiyar by four ways. One they themselves voluntarily dedicated themselves to the temple. Second those were sent by their parents because of poverty. Third is who take religious vows and began to do the duties of the temple. The fourth is the devaradiyar who were donated to the temples by the Kings of the rich people after giving the females a lot of money.

The Chola period, it was a common practise to mark them with distinctive symbols made of hot irons. The devadasis who worked in saivaite temples were scalded with hot iron symbols depicting trisul. Similarly in vaishnavite temples, they were scalded with chakra or wheel symbol. But according to K.K.Pillai, they were not scalded with hot irons. If any devadasi falls in love or became intimate with any male, they were scalded with hot iron on their thighs (From the essay Rule of Raja Raja Cholan: Resurrection of Brahminism! Sufferings of the Slaves).

Some stone inscriptions also narrate how in few instances females were sold or donated and thus they became devaradiyar.

Female devaradiyar were never allowed to marry. Since they are married to the God, they were considered as permanent sumangalies or women with their husbands. Devadasis who worked in Jaganath temple, Puri were considered as holy women and they are called as 'magari'.

Majority of female devadasis spent their lives in dancing known as 'sathir katcheri' or 'performing in the square'. Those who were not good at singing or dancing were employed in sweeping the temple, fetching water, fanning, garlanding, decorating and serving in the kitchen.

'Dancing and singing in the temple, cooperating with the temple administration and other works and since the King is equal to

Gods doing all sorts of work for the King was their jobs. For these services, the temple administrative gave them land and many grands so that they can lead a comfortable life like a rich person. Because of this, they enjoyed high status and they were considered as part of the King's establishment. According to an essay 'Act banning devadasis' by Rajendra Cholan (?).

Devadasis had the right to own properties. It is also true that they also donated a lot to the temples. But all these things that they acted independently all times. They are many stories about the torture of these devaradiyar.

In 12th Century, a person by name Arathaththar lived Kanjanur near Thiruvadurai. He wrote a few works in Sanskrit depicting Saivaite Religion. An incident that happened in his life is narrated by U.Ve.Saminatha Iyer in this essay.

One day when Arathaththar went to Siva temple at Thiruvadaimaruther, he heard the cries of a female. On the side of the temple, he saw two devadasi being punished by the treasurer (maniakarar) of the temple. The female was tied with ropes from neck to toe so that she can not stand erect and on her back they placed a stone also. Moreover she was beaten with a stick. When Arathaththar enquired about her, he was told 'she was absent for a week from coming to the temple. He scolded her. We fined her. But she is persistent in her bad behaviour. That is why she is punished'. After that, Arathaththar also became silent. It is evident that nobody bothered about the torture being inflicted upon a female slave.

In AD 1199, a local Chieftan by name 'Nattuppaanapuraththu Ganapathi Nambi alias Azhagiya Pandiapallavarayan' donated a few devaradiyar to the temple at Thiruvallankovil. In AD 1175, during the times of Raja Raja Cholan-II, four females were sold for 700

coins (kasu) as devaradiyar for the Nayanar temple at Thiruvalnkaadu. This information is recorded by K.K.Pillai in his work. D.V.Sathasiva Pandaraththar in his 'History of Later Chola' records the sale of male and female slaves to the temples (Common People and Social Conditions). All these informations are based on the evidences recorded on stone inscriptions. It is widely prevalent belief that many became devaradiyar because of poverty and the desire to earn a livelihood.

Gifts and donations given by Brahmin females are recorded by their caste name. Similarly, the donations and gifts by the Kings and his kinsmen are recorded by their name and the caste of the Kings. Like wise donations and gifts by dalits are recorded but the donations given by the devaradiyar are recorded as 'donations and gifts given by devaradiyar belonging to a particular temple'. This has to be looked closely. This might have been recorded because they had envisaged that 'devaradiyar' may evolve into a distinctive caste in future.

Initially, individuals were made 'devaradiyar' and slaves of the temple. Afterwards, families and many many more were to be sold. When a family became a slave then the children of that family also became slaves. This was the view of Durai Elamurugu in his essay 'devaradiyar' -a view.

The practise of 'devaradiyar' continued to grow in chola times. We understand there were problems in allotment of work for them through a 'stone inscription' of the Pandia King Sundara Pandian (AD 1250 to 1253). There was a disagreement or conflict between the Idaikaattur Siva Temple Administration and the devaradiyar of that temple. Therefore, all of them joined together and detailed enquiry was conducted. Finally, there was an agreement regarding the work

allotment of the 'devaradiyar'. This is recorded in the left side outer wall of the Idaikaattur Sivan Kovil.

'We usually take it for granted that the temple is a place where god is worshiped. But there is a great truth that the temple is a big community centre. Mansions of Pandias, Palaces of Chola and beautiful halls of other Kings were all devoured by the hungry time. But, how does the temples built by them are standing majestically even to-day? They were not built for a single individual. We must remember that they were built for the improvement and welfare of the society at large. There are two opinions about Raja Raja Cholan. First is that caste system evolved in his time. Second slaves and system of slavery were created in his time. But this is only a small side of him'.

'His other side is the temples that he had built, sing his praise even to-day. This is because that he had built his temples in such a way that it is beneficial to all. My friend Kudanthai Balasubramanian once told me that a person gifted 100 goats to the temple built by Raja Raja Cholan. The King sold all the goats to a farmer who lived near Seerkazhi. The 100 goats were given to the farmer not only for his livelihood but also that he has to give every month a fixed quantity of oil to the temple to light the lamps. It is thus by relating the temple and ordinary people's lives, the temple stand and continued to stand. According to Poet Vairamuthu. Even though Chola times is considered as the golden age we must remember in its background there were prisoners of war, slaves, those who lost the lands, tax defaulters, females of the temples and likewise list of slaves goes on'.

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- Research Articles of Mayilai Seeni.Venkatadasamy.
- Slaves in Chola Times – Professor Mouna Guru(A very great dramatist and researcher)
- Land Grants and Agrarian Reactions in Chola and Pandiya Times-Thirumalai
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2. “Survey was frequent, with men and women either selling themselves or else being sold by a third party. Many such persons were sold to the temple, particularly in cases of poverty or during a famine. But slaves were limited in number, since they were largely domestic slaves or attached to temples. The use of slave labour for large-scale production was not known.” Romila Thapar.(1960). A History of India. London:Penguin Books.
3. Ka.Panjankam(2004).Dalits-Women-Tamils
4. “The picture which emerges suggests that the Brahmins were in control of the powerful positions and that the non-brahmins were more or less working for them.The Brahmins naturally emphasized caste-loyalties and caste-assemblies, since this would prevent a wider basis of unity developing amongst the non-brahmins.” – Romila Thapar.(1960).A History of India.London: Penguin Books.

Slavery system during the times of Vijayanagar Empire

Only when Vijayanagar Empire reached its heights, the political power of Tamil Nadu went into the hands of non-tamil speaking people.

The once famous Vijayanagar is situated on the banks of the river Thungabhadra about 56 Kms. from Bellari in Karnataka State and the ruined treasure house of great culture is called as Hambi today. It was considered as one of the biggest city of the world at that point of time. It is surmised that the name Hambi is derived from Kanada name Hambe or it must have been originated from the old name of Thungabhadra river which is pampa.

One of the two brothers who established Vijayanagar Empire was Bukkan and his son Kumarakambanan conquered Madurai and established Vijayanagar Empire. By 1365 major portion of Tamil Nadu came under the rule of Vijayanagar Empire. The Nayakkar rule which swore allegiance to Vijayanagar Empire commenced with its capitals at Senji, Madurai and Thanjavur.

There was not much difference between the system of administration of Cholas and Pandiyas. But Vijayanagar Empire commenced new system of administration and new institutions.

Madurai, Thanjavur, Senji and Vellore were the four regions. To administer these four regions, regional officers or mandalathipathis are appointed. The Village administration, which was widely prevalent

in Tamil Nadu, was destroyed. Caste distinction and untouchability became stronger. Slavery system extended further. Both Saivism and Vaishnavism became influential. At the same time conflicts between Saivaites and Vaishnavites began to occur.

Land measurement was changed. As a consequence, land tax also increased. The lease rent also increased. The net result is common men suffered under heavy tax burden. The traditional land owner Brahmins, Vellalas and officers of the Vijayanagar empire cultivated the lands with the help of ordinary peasants. But the peasants were not given their due share. Peasants were treated like slaves.

The angered people revolted against the cruel officials. In a stone inscription of 1429 found in Korukkai, it is inscribed because there is no unity in our region they are treating as unjustly and thus we infer the people became united and revolted. Like child marriage and the horrors of 'sathi', the practise of 'devaradiyar' i.e. those who are born to serve god and they were married to deities and they are compelled to be slaves at temples. Though out India, these women were called as 'mathangi, nayaki, maaththamma, pasavi, sooli, mahe, johini, aadalkanikai, ruthrakanikai and thallicheri pendir.

The Chola times, the devaradiyars were conquered with insignia. In the Vijayanagar Empire went further and levied a special tax on the 'devaradiyar'.

'Devaradiyars' were the first to go on strike or cease work at Chennai. The 'devaradiyar' of Thiruvotriyur temple went on strike

on three occasions in the Vijayanagar Empire of 15th and 16th Century. The King Harihara who ruled Vijayanagar at that time intervened and solved the problem according to a stone inscription.

The travel notes of Ibaan Paththutha, an African Muslim reveals about the flourishing slave trade in 13th century. He records that the King of Maldeeves gifted him the female slaves of chola regime. Further he records that he bought a female slave at Madurai(K.A.Neelakanda Sastri).

The Kings of Vijayanagar had the habit of torturing the slaves and other opponents. In an essay, N.R.,Jeyachandran records ‘at the entrance to Thirumalai, there is a statue of Vijayanagar King Asutharayar with ‘vadakalai’ symbol on her fore-head. According to a story, on the night of 27th January, 1533, the God Perumal appeared in his dream and told him that the temple priest have stolen of His Jewels and they have given it to the ‘temple dasis’ and enjoying their beauty. The King immediately climbed on his horse and went in search of them in disguise. He searched the Thirumali Town. He arrested the temple priest who decorated the ‘temple dasis’ with the stolen temple jewels. He simply peeled the skins of the ring leaders and others were executed. He seized the jewels from the ‘devadasis’ and drove them out of Thirumalai. He also warned that such things should not happen in future. All these are recorded in stone inscriptions.’ From these we infer that ‘dasis’ or ‘devaradiyar’ depended on the temples and some them were executed by the Kings.

Palm leave evidences reveal slave trade transactions of the Krishna Devarayar period(1509 to 1529) and Ramadevar Maharayar period (1542 to 1565). These transactions reveal the name of the seller, purchaser and the name and descriptions of the slave.

For example, ‘Ramachandra Nayakkar of Reddy Kadalankudi sold his four slaves. Muthan and another, Velichhan and his wife Parvathi to Subramania Mudaliar of Nanganallur in Kunnamaruthur Province for a consideration of 14 soverigns of Gopalachakkaram Kuligai.

Like today’s real estate brokers, there were brokers for purchase and sale of slaves and they determined the price of the slaves. Moreover slaves were sold by hawking at markets and in squares.

In 1568 AD, King Soorappa Nayakkar of Senji gifted slaves to Kamatchi temple to work in the flower gardens. Through the work Mukkoodal Pallu written between AD 1676 to 1682, we find about the practise of ‘slavery’. In support of this

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In this 'kothadiyar' means perpetual slaves.

Upto 19th Century, the words 'aal' and 'thozhumbu' were often used to denote the 'slaves'. In the 'sudamani lexicon'(nik2andu) of 16th Century, we find the words like 'thoththu, kindakar, thasar, thozhumbu, thoru, viruthi, thondu, sedar, aal' were used to denote slaves. These indicate growth of 'slavery'.

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- Kumari Kandam-Blackspot.com
- The Essay 'Tholainokku paarvaiyil oru kalvettu' – N.R.Jeyachandran, Kaveripattinam in the journal 'Aayvu Kalanchiam'.

Nayakkar Period:

Nayakkar Rule prevailed in Madurai from AD 1529 to 1736. Nayakkars introduced the new method of administration called 'palayapattu' in 1535. Accordingly, 72 palayams were created. Each palayam was admitted by a person designated 'palayakar'. Apart from small tamil chieftans, kanadigas and telugu people were appointed as 'palayakar'.

Each 'palayakar' had their right to collect tax and dispense justice in his 'palayam'. Moreover, the 'palayakar' have to

compulsorily sent their army for the assistance of the 'nayak' kings whenever they went for a battle. Out of the income of the each 'palayam' 1/3rd he has to give to the 'nayak kings', 1/3rd they have to spent for maintaining his armed forces and the last 1/3rd he can keep for themselves.

The power centre vested with the 'nayak kings'. Next to the king, the most powerful person was called 'thalavoi'. Next to 'thalavoi' was 'prathani'. He was responsible for dispensing the justice. Next to 'prathani' was called as 'rayasam'. These three posts were considered as very powerful.

Land tax was the important source of income for the government. Land was classified according to the nature. Houses, housing plots, orchards and cattle were levied property tax. Professional tax was collected from blacksmith, carpenter, pot maker and weavers. Sex workers also paid professional tax. Apart from this, tax was collected for the maintenance of armed forces. Land tax for wet lands were collected as 'paddy' and it was called 'nelloyam'. Land tax for 'dry land' and other taxes were collected in 'bullions or gold'. The people who were not able to pay tax were treated like 'slaves'.

S.Rasu collected documents of the 'Kongu Naadu' (Salem and Coimbatore Area) and published an anthology called 'social documents of kongu naadu'. A document, which is included in the anthology supposed to pertain to 'nayakkar period' describes the conditions of the 'slaves'.

A copper inscription document of the Thirumalai Nayakkar period (17th Century) describes a barber by name Kumaran bought 'gounders' (a caste) of 'Iruppuli' and settled them in 'Oothanur' where he had built houses separately for them. Likewise, in another copper plate of unknown times a person by name 'Panisaver' had 'nadars' as slaves.

Slave trade of Portuguese:

A screw member of 'Vaskodacama' noted in his diary 'this is a very lucky voyage'. This 'voyage' helped 'Portuguese, Dutch, French and English of Europe, to do trade and commerce with India. In AD 1533, in 'Muthukuzhithurai' port of 'Thoothukudi', there was a serious and severe fight between 'Moors of Arabia' who were there for trade and the old residents of that area 'fishermen'. In this conflict, fishermen were horribly suppressed. So, to safeguard themselves, they sought the help of Portuguese who were then at Cochin. In exchange for their support, the 'portuguese' demanded that the fisher folk should convert themselves in to roman catholic sect of Christianity. The fisherfolk not only changed the religion but also swore the alldgiance to 'portuguese' King and became his loyal subjects. As a result, from 'Vethalai' in north upto 'Kanyakumari' in all the fishing hamlet came under the control of 'portuguese'.

Moreover, by paying respects to the local 'Kings' and begging them on their needs, they got the permission for doing trade and business. At that time, the Indian Kings were fighting with each other to expand the kingdom. Taking advantage of this situation, the Portuguese, apart from their routine trade, also entered the 'slave

trade'. From 1533 AD to 1658 AD, 'portuguese' control the seashores of nayakars of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. 'Like cattle, 'Portuguese' bought male and female slaves. They used to enjoy the female slaves and then sell them. Even married 'portuguese' had more than one female slaves'. According to a Catholic Priest by name 'Nickola Vassita' who recorded them in a letter to 'Ignatius Loyola', the founder of 'Society of Jesus'. This information is recorded in a book written by 'S.Venancius Fernando'.

St.Xaviour in a letter written in 1544 AD to his assistant 'Francis Mansilas' that the 'Portuguese' committed a crime of capturing 'young girls' and making them 'slaves' and selling them after sexually enjoying them to the Hindu and Muslim Traders at 'Muthu kuzhithurai and he condemned them on their acts. This is recorded by 'Britto Vincent' in his work called 'Letters of St.Xaviour'.

Moreover, 'slaves who were brought to Colombo from Thoothukudi were forced to cut trees and carry heavy loads. The famine that prevails in the seashores of 'chola region' also helped the 'slave trade'. The ships they used to transport coconut and rice now brought slaves.

Books that helped:

- The impact of the Portuguese Padroado on The Indian Pearl Fishery Coast-Venancious Fernando.
- Letters of St.Xaviour by Britto Vincent- Folk Lore Research Centre, Palayamkottai.

Slave Trade of the Dutch:

In the conflict between 'Portuguese' and 'Dutch', Portuguese became weaker and weaker. The Portuguese first lost Ceylon or Sri Lanka to the Dutch. In AD 1658, the Dutch Admiral Vankovans captured Thoothukudi Town from Portuguese. Following that in 1658 AD, they seized 'Nagapattinam' from 'Portuguese'. A few towns in the Kerala Coast also changed hands from Portuguese from Dutch.

The seashore of 'Chola Region' Nagapattinam became the headquarters for the Dutch. There the Dutch built a strong port and barracks. The port became the residence of the Governor of Dutch Company. The Dutch priest Abraham Rosar did his missionary work from Pulicat.

The Dutch were more skilled than all other Europeans in trade and commerce, in navigation, in enthroneprunerals, economics and in intellectual calibre. They established a United Company at Holland to run their business and to rule the captured land. After these, they settled weavers in Thoothukudi and exported the cloth weaved by them to Ceylon or Sri Lanka. Slave trade was also there.

The people of Madurai and Thanjavur who suffered hardships due to famine and frequent war worked upto Santhom at Chennai. Dutch gave them food. According to a letter to the Society of Jesus, when the poor peoples health improved they were transported in ship and sold as slaves in foreign countries. In Thanjavur, people who suffered in terrible famine sold themselves as slaves for one small meal. The price of a slave was fixed at 10 Shillings per person.

According to 'Sathianathaier', more than 5000 were transported from Nagapattinam to Jaffna or Yazhpaanam.

Book that helped:

- Tamilaham in the 17th Century – Sathianathaier.R.

Slavery when Marattas ruled Thanjavur, Thanjavur came under the rule of Nayakkars from AD 1535 i.e.towards the end of later Cholas. Chokkanatha Nayakkar marched towards Thanjavur and conquered its King Vijayaragava Nayakkar in 1673 AD.At this juncture, a prince of Thanjavur Nayakkars by name Sengamaladass wanted to become the King of Thanjavur. To achieve his desire, he sought the help of Sultan of Bijapur. He also sent an army under the leadership of Akoji @ Venkaji(this Venkaji is a step brother of the great Chatrapathi Shivaji). With this help, Thanjavur came under the rule of Sengamaladass.Within a year, Venkaji treacherously eliminated Sengamaladass and captured Thanjavur. Thus in 1676 AD Akoji @ Venkaji commenced the rule of Marattas in Thanjavur. They ruled continued upto 1855 AD. Commercially important Port Tarankapaadi(Tranquebar) and Nagapattinam were under their control.

During the Mararta Rule, the Government documents were written on Maratti and on paper. This script is known as Modi Script. Because they were written in Modi Script, they were called as Modi Documents. 'Modanai' in Maratti language means 'breaking up'. From that, the word 'modi' might have emerged. They are very close to 'devanagari' script. Even before Chatrapathi Shivaji's time, historical note, letter correspondence, diaries, income and expenditure

statements were written in 'modi' language. Since only those who could understand 'modi' language alone can understand this documents and thus state secrets were not accessed by all. According to Doctor B.Subramanian who did research on these documents. Only through these 'modi' documents, we are able to understand the maratta rules and the sorrowful events. When 'marattas' ruled Thanjavur, the punishments were such a way not to correct and improve the convicts but to torture them physically and to humiliate them. For certain offences, the pundits who were well versed in 'dharmastra' decided the punishments. Based on the 'sanskrit' text on jurisprudence, pundits recommended the punishments.

The caste suppression was severely observed. In Sivagangai tanks in Thanjavur separate bathing guards were created for each caste. Guards were appointed to see that people strictly followed the bathing guard caste system. The officials of the Palace acquired slaves by violence. Even young female girls were made slaves for sex. It is shocking to read that a young girl by name Rengayee who was left in the care of a householder for the debt of Rs.300/- was sold by one 'Dasi Visalakshi' to the government for Rs.400/-. The 'maratta' government evinced keen interest in purchasing young girls. This can be understood from documented information supplied by Venkatramiah. 'Daughter of the wife of Vellalar Subbu Pillai residing in Chidambaram Pillai Ali Khan Lane, aged 12, sale price 10 Chak and 'Hameen Sha' brought up by 'Ibrahim Sha' aged 6, sold to government sale price 5 Chak, confirm the sale of young boys and girls. The expansion for Chak is Chakkaram. This was the coin that was in circulation during 'maratta period'. Nine chakkarams equal to 14 Rupees of the British. According to Venkatramiah 'government bought young girls to work in the government'.

According to researcher R.Sivasubramanian 'but there is every possibility that these young girls were bought to satisfy the sexual urges'. 'Thanjavur Kings had innumerable wives and mistresses. Only the wives lived in the Palaces. Mistresses were housed in Thiruvaiyar Palace known as Kalyana Mahal'.

By compulsion many women were brought as slaves. Because from young age, they indulged in sex many 'maratta Kings' were not able to maintain good health. As a consequence, the women secretly had sexual relationship with outside males. Describing this, Rengasamy Nayakkar wrote a petition to a government official by name Govindarayar on 16th August, 1876 (Volume.2:162).

'Govindabayee and Lakshmi Ammal, mistresses of King Shivaji, residing at 'mangala vilas' are keeping Thiruvankadathaiyengar residing at Thiruvaiyar Sakaji Nayayar Agram, Thiruvaiyar and they are indulging in all sorts of nefarious activities. Even though, I have written many petitions to yourself, it has not taken seriously. Now I humbly request you to enquire in to this matter'.

To prove that anonymous letter writing were invoked like the above quoted letter, two more letters are included in 'modi documents' (Vol.2:149-153).

Shivaji-I married twenty wives and had 48 mistresses. He built a 'mansion' called 'mangal vilas' at Thanjavur to house his 'mistresses'. These mistresses were called as 'mangala vilas women'. There were not only 'maratti women' but also 'brahmins, govra naidu, christian women and tamil women were there as slaves. After

the death of Shivaji-II in 1858, a british by name Cherry was appointed as 'Resident' and when he came to Thanjavur, he found that 15 wives survived the King.(Residents were appointed as the Representative of British Crown and they enjoyed more or less the same powers of the King). Among the wives, the eldest was 'samarai sab' aged 20. The youngest queen was 'sundalia @ kamara bai' aged mere 12. When a queen herself was aged 12, there was every possibility of young girl of similar age residing at harem. All were purchased for slavery.

Not only 'marattas' but also british officials indulged in slave trade. A white official by name 'Picket' sold 16 girls from Chennai to Thanjavur according to Venkatramaiah who has recorded it his book. From 'modi document' we also understand that the 'residents' who were appointed by the East India Company, the King in slave trade.

One Sabapathiya Pillai of Kumbakonam married in 1831 AD an young girl by name 'Meenakshi', daughter of Periya Nayakkan Kothan. After two years, he went to Vellore for seeking a job. At that time Meenakshi was only seven years old. After 11 years, when he returned to visit his wife, he came to know that his wife was sold to the Government by his father-in-law i.e the girl's father. He gave a complaint to the British Resident. He also sent a petition to the Governor at Chennai. He received a reply 'nothing can be done regarding this'.

Similarly, one Chidambaram of Akkatchipatti of Thiruvaiyar Region came in search of livelihood with his two daughters to Thanjavur. While he was not in the house,the government officials

who were looking for slaves for the palace dragged these girls to the Palace. Chidambaram met the officials and begged for the return of his daughters. But he was simply told to sign a document affirming the sale of the two girls as slaves to the Palace.He was also threatened if he declines to comply, he will be imprisoned till his death. Chidambaram signed the sale bill and came out of the prison. He gave a complaint to the British Resident. But the British Resident summoned Chidambaram and obtained from him a sale document for two girls as to he willingly sold them.

Like wise, dasi Shanmugam who lived in Sannathi Street of Swami Malai bought Neelayathatchi, daughter of Lakshmi of Valangaimaan. She brought the young girl to the main street and hawked her. She was bought by 'Dasi Kannammal' of 'big temple' according to an information in the document.

Carpenter, Tinker, Stone Mason, Blacksmith and Goldsmith were known as 'panja kammalar' and the tradesmen of the five skills were called as 'panjalarkal'. They gave an agreement to the government regarding the modalities of marriage between them (Vol.1:193). This document reveals the customs that have been followed by each caste.

In 'modi document', there are two pages written in 'tamil' in paper record. In these, there is a lengthy document describing 'valangai' and 'idangai' sets(Vol.2:356-371). According to Venkatramiah, this document must have been written during the rule of Shivaji, Son of Saraboji-II(1832 -1855). From these documents, we find a caste included in 'valangai' section and 'idangai' section.

According to it there are 22 'valangai castes'. They are: (1) Reddy Vadugar, (2) Kamala Vadugar, (3) Thuluva Vadugar, (4) Thuluva Chetty, (5) Vellala Chetty, (6) Kuththi Kollar, (7) Nangaari Vadugar, (8) Senaiyar, (9) Saluppan, (10) Idaiyar, (11) Saliyar, (12) Komutti, (13) Uppiliyan, (14) Sanaan, (15) Sunnambukkaran, (16) Maraay Chetti, (17) Melakaran, (18) Valaiyar, (19) Telunga Ambattan, (20) Tamil Ambattan, (21) Vannan and (22) Vaniyan. Similarly, there are six castes in 'idangai' section. They are: (1) Mela Chetti, (2) Kaikolar, (3) Palli, (4) Padaiyachi and (5) Maravar.

Even the Shamiana that has been erected for each caste is fixed in these documents. All these goes to prove that caste differences and consequential slavery was widespread in 'maratta times'.

Books referred and essays:

- Your Library September, 2012.
- 'Modi Documents' of Thanjavur Maratta Kings & Translation and notes (P. Subramaniam, Tamil University, Thanjavur)
- Slavery in Tamil Nadu - A. Sivasubramanian.
- Political and Social History of the times of Thanjavur Maratta Kings - By Venkatramaiah.
- Sale Price Document of Maratta Kings' times - By Durai Rasu.

Slavery in Nanchil Nadu.

Kanyakumari District of to-day was once part of South Travancore Samasthan. The areas of tamil speaking people of South

Travancore became part of tamil nadu from 1st November, 1956. Kanyakumari District which has four revenue divisions which are Kalkulam, Vilavancode, Agasteeswaram and Thovalai. The areas of two revenue divisions Agasteeswaram and Thovalai constitute what we call as Nanchil Nadu. Nanchil Nadu which was once ruled by Aai Kings, Pandiya Kings and Venattu Kings came under the rule of the King of Travancore in 18th Century. During the rule of the King, slavery and casteist suppressions were forceful.

In South Travancore, there is a stone inscription of AD 1849 during the reign Venattu Iyen Adikal Thiruvadikal. In it there is a reference to a coin called one adimai kasu (slave money). From this, we can conclude that South Travancore had slavery from AD 849.

King Marthanda Varma (1729 to 1758) of Travancore defeated all the sons of his uncle. He also eliminated all the 'Ettu Veetu Pillaimar' who supported his nephews. He also sold by auction all the female heirs on Muttam Seashore in Kanyakumari District. So we can confirm that there existed the practise of selling slaves by open auction.

We learn about the news of slaves from palm leaves of 'Periyaveettu Mudaliar of Alagiapandiapuram and the palm leaves discovered by R. Padmanaba Pillai. According to Kavimani Desia Vinayagam Pillai, the oldest document of Kanyakumari District is of the year AD 1298. That document refers to the gift of a slave by name 'Chinni' by 'Pidagai Kelvi Sankaramurthy Maharajan' to his daughter-in-law Lakshmi.

Another document of AD 1389 refers to a slave of a landlord of Thazhakudi. According to this document, the said slave went away with the permission of the landlord, but he did not return on the appointed day and so the slave owner sent a message to the administrative head of Nanchil Nadu.

It was the practise to give as a Srithan or Dowry the slaves for working in the farms or for household work. Likewise, the cattles which were tendered by the slaves were usually gifted to the daughter or to the sister as Srithan. The practise of giving male or females as slaves when the daughter goes to her marital home after marriage and this practise is recorded in the documents of AD 1458 and 1470. The gift of male and females as dowry or srithan is recorded as 'Srithan Affidavit' or 'Dowry Affidavit'. This is one of the document collected by the Poet 'Kavimani Desia Vinayagam Pillai'.

Like Srithan Affidavit, Othi Affidavit, Paatta Affidavit and Loan Affidavit, there was also sale of slave affidavit. This practise was prevalent with the blessings of the State. For registering the slave affidavit one has to pay certain fee as registration fee. One can sell himself as a slave. Landlords can sell a slave of many generation to another landlord. A borrower can pledge himself or his son as mortgage slave. All these information are in the slave sale affidavit. In revenue of divisions of Kalkulam and Vilavancode, the persons who were ex-communicated were sold as slaves. Likewise, Velalas who were ex-communicated by Nattu Velalar were sold as slaves. For them certain rights were denied. In Nanchil Nattu documents we find records of persons of all communities becoming slaves except Brahmins.

There were two types of system of slavery. One was being a slave completely to someone and being sold by him others also. The other was a person offering himself for slave for certain period or season to the landlords or to the temples or to the Kings. In fact, the later system is terrible. Here the slave has a right to work only and the slave owner is not liable to him for anything. In Travancore area low caste were called as 'avarna' and those who do not come under for 'varnas' were called 'savarna'. The people of 'avarna' category were treated as slaves only. They did not have the right to enter Hindu Temples. They did not have any right to bath in common tanks or to fetch water or to stay in government chowtries. They can not have education. More than anything, they can not walk in the streets of Brahmins.

The people of 'avarna' category, cannot go even near people of 'savarna' category. The people of 'Ezhava Community' had to keep a distance of atleast 36 feet from Brahmins and 12 feet from Nair Community persons.

The people of 'Pulaiyar' community had to stay away from Brahmin by 96 feet and by 12 feet from Nair Community people. Nair Community people who considered themselves as superior caste had to stay away from Brahmins by 7 feet. The persons of 'Puthirai Vannar Community' should not be seen by people of upper caste.

The King of Travancore Samasthan had 64 categories of servants.

People who serve without any remuneration or pay: There were 'vettivelai', 'salt service' and 'palm service' and many services. Elephant service means cutting fonds for elephants. The person whose turn was fixed for duty has to do it. Otherwise, he will be punished. But, he will not be paid for the work or the cost for the fonds. Palm service means, cutting the palms and seasoning them and making them fit for writing and finally delivering them at respective offices. One cannot write on fresh fonds. The palm has to be prepared earlier. This is palm service.

Salt Service means collecting the salt from Lotus Tank and delivering that salt to 'Nagaraja Temple' at Nagercoil and Suchindrum temple at Kanyakumari District. These kinds of services are the result of social oppression and economical exploitation like slavery under the rule of the King.

According to 'Nellai Vivekandanda', the low caste slaves when they refer about their children to the high caste people can name them only by animals like 'that monkey', 'that calf'. Those who violate this rule will be severely punished. Sometimes even murders have occurred.

When slavery was at its height in Kanyakumari District, East India Company draw an Act in 1845 abolishing slavery in the territories under its control. But slavery continued in Travancore Samasthan. While the sale documents pertaining to the sale of slaves describe only the price of salve, name of the purchaser etc., there are certain notes written by Christian Missioneries, it describe brutal attacks on the slaves. In a report published in 1881 AD by Travancore Diocese

describes the death of its female slave by name 'Madaththi' is highly distressing and disturbing. "Madaththi of Thazhakudi Village near Thovalai was in advanced stage of pregnancy. She did not go to work as she was not well. This angered the landlord who summoned her and he yoked to her to a plough along with a buffalo and made her plough a muddy field. The farmer slashed the buffalo which began to run and 'Madaththi' who could not keep pace with the buffalo died on the plough". The above information given by 'Joy Gnanadasan' reveals how horrible was the slavery.

Moreover, whenever there was a preach in a tank or river, people attributed it to the anger of some deity or spirit. To appease that anger, it was the practise of burying a slave alive in the place of preach. This shocking practise was recorded in the 'annual report' of the year 1866 of 'Thittuvilai Diocese'.

Female of certain castes will be prohibited from covering their naked breast with cloth. This is nothing but total casteist oppression and slavery. In the book 'Native Life in Travancore', Samuel Mattier says 'it is considered as a respect shown by a women when she reveals her upper torso'. This was not the imposition only on the low caste ladies. Even the Nair ladies also have to reveal their upper torso also. In a proclamation by King Ayilyam Thirunal says, 'there is no need for 'nair women' to remove their upper cloth when she meets a Government Official. From these we understand that in the earlier days that even the Nair Women have to remove their upper cloth when they meet the government official.

R.Sivakumar in an essay title 'upper cloth struggle that killed the religion', 'when a 'female of sanar caste' wearing a jacket appeared before Queen of Travancore, the Travancore administration ordered to slice off her breast. All the witnesses of 'sanar caste' were made to stand before the Judge 64 feet away and were examined.

Ayyappan in his book 'Social Revolution in a Kerala Village' says Ezhava Community people of Kerala, Thiya Caste of Malabar, Pillarar of Karnataka, Idigars of Andhra and Paswan of Bihar are equal to Nadar Community in culture and work'.

Nellai Vivekananda in an e-article in website 'muththukalam' says 'women between the age of 16 and 35 have to compulsorily pay 'breast tax'. Any failure will be punished by tying by their hair to a tree and beating them. Sometimes, the females who failed to pay the 'breast tax' will be asked to bend with a pounding tied to their hair and a stone will be placed on their back. Sometimes they were made to stand like that for days together. Many women died while undergoing the punishment. The breast were sliced off from the women who did not pay the 'breast tax'.

For the women who attend Church, Charles Meit designed an upper cloth. Mrs. Charles Meit taught the women how to wear the dress. This was a loose fitting apparel from neck to hip. This was called 'kuppayam'. Samuel Metier records 'since this resembles the dress worn by upper caste people, there was an opposition'.

Sanguni Menon who was a Dewan and a historian records that 'for upper cloth struggle, Meit was the leader. K.A.George who did a research on the upper cloth struggle records three distinct periods of struggle. First period was 1820-1823, second period 1828 to 1830, third period was 1855-1859.

Because of these struggles and of the pressure of English, the Travancore King and the Dewan allowed that the 'Nadar females' without any religious discrimination can wear the upper cloth known as 'kuppayam'. A Government Order was issued by GO No.26 dt.July, 1859. But they were not allowed to wear upper cloth similar to upper caste women.

Even though the social changes in Travancore Region is due to Christian intervention, their religious pressure and educational upliftment. The real social change could have made permanent impact is 'Ayya Vaikuntar'. He was born in 1809 at 'Poovandanthoppu' in Kanyakumari District. He was an eye witness to the oppressed being treated as slaves. When he began to share his wisdom which he got after long penance, the officials had begun to look at him as an enemy. He was imprisoned for his anti-caste views. After undergoing imprisonment for 140 days, he established a religious sect. He stressed that there are no caste differences between poor and rich to be abolished, religious tolerance; he was also against sacrifices, meaningless rituals in the temples. He said 'dharma is defending the lowest'. According to the Lawyer and Writer Rajapathi Roy 'the Ayya Vazhi Movement established by 'Vaikundaswamikal' is a separate religion. It has uniqueness to that extent. It can be compared to 'Sikh' religion which began and attained growth during 1469 to 1538.

'Vaikundaswamigal' movement which is against idol worship, received sacred book, wearing a turban and stressing equality are the similarities between 'sikh' religion and the movement of 'Vaikundaswamigal'.

According to Nellai Vivekandanda "because of the revolutionary teachings of 'Ayya Vaikundar' against caste, many social changes began to occur. Women folk were compelled not to wear any upper cloth began to walk proudly with upper cloth on the streets.

Devaradiyar System which was part of slavery was prevalent in Kanyakumari District also. The manner of temple worship was greatly impacted by the attacks of Cholas. At that time, Raja Rajan settled many 'devaradiyar' to Suchindrum temple of Kanyakumari District. References to 'devaradiyar' are found in the stone inscriptions of Guganatheshwarar temple at Kanyakumari in Kanyakumari District. The date of the inscription is AD 1040.

The stone inscription of AD 1253 found in Cholapuram Temple and the stone inscription of AD 1257 found at Suchindrum Temple refer to 'devaradiyar'. Not only that in few stone inscriptions, the name 'devaradiyar' is found. Kanthan Solai, Kanyakumari Bhagavathi Temple, AD 1040, Senkodan Poovandi and Komalavalli(Cholapuram Temple AD 1253, Kuntrandi Kuravandi and Arumuga Perumal, Suchindrum Temple AD 1275, 1459). We can easily note that these are all pure tamil names. So the observation 'devadasi system was introduced in Kanyakumari District from Tamil Nadu' by K.K.Pillai seems to be correct.

During the festival times, 'devaradiyars' were sent from small temples to big temples and in ordinary times from big temples to small temples.

There were two divisions in 'devaradiyar' as 'mel ilangam and keezh ilangam'. This division came to force in 14th century. Temple work and services were divided between them. This is evident from a document of the year 1867. Their work starts at 4.00 AM by singing 'thiruppalli ezhuchi' (hymns to wake up the deity). Attending the royal women to visit the temple is one of their duties. For first family 'devaradiyar', the title 'royar' is given. This was in vogue till 1874. 'Devaradiyars' were given residences near the temple Suchindrum, Parakkai, Boothapandi, Kanyakumari and Nagercoil in Kanyakumari District. Apart from this, they were paid by the temple and it is called as 'karanmai'. They were paid according to their ability. A share of the food served to the deity is also a part of the salary. This also was determined according to their ability. 'Devaradiyars' who used to sing and dance were given two bowls of cooked rice and the old women were given one bowl of cooked rice and 'devaradiyars' who were won the title 'royar' were given three bowls of cooked rice. During the festival time these will be doubled.

Their retirement was also fixed when they were become old or weak in health, they will be permitted to be retired. The rituals connected with the retirement are mentioned in a document of the year 1822. They have to apply for retirement to the temple administration. If it is accepted, the date of retirement will be determined. On that date, they have to appear before the Executive

Officer of the temple. He will find out the reasons for retirement. Then he instructed to remove the jewel ear stud. That is the symbol of retirement. She can not wear that jewel afterwards.

In the course of time, there appeared a distinction as 'tamil devaradiyar' and 'malayali devaradiyar'. In the Travancore census of 1901, 'tamil devaradiyar' of South Travancore were registered as 'devaradiyar patham' and 'malayalis devaradiyar pathamangalm'. There were some differences between two. 'Malayala devaradiyar' wore white dress. They wore ear studs. They did not participate in the functions of the householders. These are considered as some of the important divisions.

'Devaradiyars' lived in comfort and with status and influence. They built 'mandapams' (Halls) for the temples. Moreover, royal personages used to help the temples only through them. A stone inscription of the year AD 1257 at Suchindrum Temple records 'Chokkathaandal' wife of Veerapandian donated 200 'pure gold coins' to the Suchindrum Temple through a 'devaradiyar' by name Kuntrandi Thiruvandi. A stone inscription of 1490 narrates that 'Veera Ravi Verma', King of Venandu helped the temples through 'Muthal Kudi Royar Devaradiyar'.

In 1930 Act abolishing devasi system came into force. So, 'devaradiyars' were not allowed to work in the temples. So a male member of their family was given an employment in the temple. 'Devardiyars' were given a bowl of cooked rice every day and Rs.9/- as pension.

Books and Articles that helped:

- 1) Story of South Kumari – Prof: A.K.Perumal.
- 2) Hidden History – Joy Gnanadasan.
- 3) Article by Nellai Vivekananda in a Website of Muthu Kmalam.
- 4) Slavery in Tamil Nadu-A.Sivasubramaniam.
- 5) Struggle for Upper Cloth which cut the roots of the religion-by R.Sivakumar in the journal 'Vizhippunarvu'.
- 6) Temples of Kumari District.- S.Padmanaban.
- 7) Agasteeswaram and its temples –by S.Ananda Kumar, T.Lajapathi Roy and P.Mayildev.
- 8) Website of Keetru.

Slavery System under British Rule

Learning that there is plenty of wealth in India, Europeans were very eager to commence trade with India. Englishmen set foot in India in 17th Century. Queen Elizabeth -I permitted East India Company to trade with India. The Company commenced as a commercial venture began to indulging local politics.

East India Company bought Chennai in 1640 from Chennappan Naicker and in 1641 built Fort St.George for their protection and safety. Similarly, they rented Bombay(now Mumbai) in 1661 at the rental of 10 Sovereigns per year. The representative of the Company who met Emperor Jakangir requested permission to establish a warehouse and godown at Surat. In 1690, they obtained the similar facility i.e. to establish a warehouse at Calcutta from

Emperor Aurangshep. They kindled enmity between Indian Kings and began to sell them Arms and Weapons. They gave lot of concessions to the Kings who wanted to buy weapons from them. James Mill in his 'History of British India' records that 'East India Company traded for a profit of 100%'.

Nawab of Arcot who was under the control of Nizam of Mysore began to assert his independence. The British East India Company who established itself in Tamil Nadu as a result of First Two Karnatic Wars, established its supremacy in South India through two Mysore Wars.

'Palayakars' created by Madurai Naiks began to act independently. In these circumstances, the East India Company bought in 1781 AD the right to collect taxes. Poolithevar, Kattabomman, Oomaithurai, Maruthupandiyar and Dheerthagiri (Theeran Chinnamalai) and others resisted the tax collection and at one point of time, they wage a war in which they lost their lives.

For the first time in 1792, the lands were surveyed and the tax rates were fixed on that basis. Between 1792 and 1801, the lands which were cultivated by the farmers were given titles in the Salem, Coimbatore and Madurai Districts and finally in Chennai. Even then, by 1830 one third of the cultivable land was with the Mirasdhars. The British Government, which manipulated the Mirasdhar system for their own enrichment, did not bother about the untouchables and the slaves. The Government at Madras Presidency began the auction the people who did not pay the land tax as slaves.

They were compelled to work for the Government without any wages (The struggle for the land rights-by Sivakami).

The Vellore Mutiny (Vellore uprising) in Vellore, protesting against the imprisonment of sons of Thippu Sultan in 1806 was an important one. After his brutal suppression, there was no resistance to the rule of East India Company.

The Madras Presidency excluded the Kanyakumari District, Senkottai Taluk in Tirunelveli District. Most of the areas in Pudukottai District, the rest of Tamil Nadu was under the direct control of East India Company. Moreover, certain areas of Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra were part of the Madras Presidency. Kanyakumari District and Senkottai Taluk of Tirunelveli District was part of the Kingdom of Travancore. Similarly, Pudukottai was ruled by King of Pudukottai.

Chennai (Madras) was the capital of Chennai Presidency (Madras Presidency). The Governor was the executive head of the State. The State was divided into 25 Districts and each District was under the control of a Collector. Every district was divided into many Taluks and every Taluk was divided into many Firkas. Tashildar was the head of the Taluk.

Land Tax was the important source of revenue for East India Company. Private ownership of land was permitted and land tax was collected directly from the land owner. They called it as 'ryotwar system'. Palayakar System was abolished and Zamindar system was came into existents. Zamindars, Zahirdars and Mitadars were

entitled to collect tax from the small landowners in their specified areas. They were entitled to retain a portion of the tax collected and remit the balance to the Company.

The farmers of the Tamil Nadu produced the best cotton in the Country. The East India Company bought it at the cheapest rate and exported it to England. Earlier they had an agreement to the weavers of Tamil Nadu to produce cloth at cheapest wages and cheapest rates. When the price began to rise, they compelled the weavers to produce cloth for them at the old rates. If the weavers resisted, the Company Officials, they slash them with whips at public places.

The economic exploitation by the British of Tamil Nadu affected it terribly. They compelled the persons to cultivate cash crops instead of food grains particularly the Cotton and the 'avury plant' for dyeing the cloth were cultivated under threat and force. At the same time, they determined the final price. Thus the Tamil Nadu farmers lost their right in determining the price for the products they are produced. This is illustrated in a folksong 'a person cultivated cucumber in his garden. But the white man ordered them to sold at 2 for 1 pie'. After the first Indian war of independence (Sepoy Mutiny) in 1857, Tamil Nadu came under the direct rule of the British Parliament instead of East India Company. This resulted in many changes in agriculture and the consequent drought leading to change in slavery system.

The Kings who ruled Tamil Nadu always showed considerable interest in increasing water resources and maintaining

the same. But the irrigation system was regulated during the British Rule. Ryotwar system was introduced and many new Mirasdhars came into being. Many famines happened continuously. In 1878 known as 'famine of dadhu year is the most severe one'. The small land owner who got into the clutches of big land lords and money lenders lost their rights over their own land and became agricultural coolies or they came into the Towns with their bags and packages. The already existing agricultural coolies became serfs or slaves of the farms and bonded labourers. The land tax, which they were all along paying in grains, now they were compelled to pay in cash. The farmer lost his rights in determining the price of their own produce. The middleman or the brokers began to fix the prices. So, the middlemen made more profits than the actual producers. Moreover, they began to export all the grains without retaining for the local market. Again an artificial famine was created. People in thousands died. A folksong illustrated it 'Oh, God hundreds of corpses by the forest side, hundreds of corpses near the houses, hundreds of corpses by the house side and hundreds of corpses by the road side, hundreds of corpses by the high ground'. The English men converted this famine to their advantage. They employed the famine-stricken people at very low wages and compel them to build railways and canals. The Buckingham Canal, which runs through Chennai, is created thus. As a consequence to this famine, the tamils were sent as indentured labourers to the other colonies of the British like Burma(Myanmar), Malaysia, Fiji Islands and South Africa and there they developed tea, coffee and rubber plantations. But they did not get the life and material gains that were promised to them instead they got 'tamil coolies'. Every year the British Collectors of each District used to send to the Revenue Board at Chennai, a detailed report called

Gazetters in which all the particulars regarding bonded labourers, serfs, farm labourers and padi-all (பீழை தீர்) sent with names.

The word 'Mirasu' used by the British is equivalent of the work 'Kaani' in the times of King. It not only indicated their right over the land but also indicated the social status and privileges that goes with the title.

David Laden records that the 'Pallars' poor became bonded labourers in Tirunelveli District 'it is economics that determine the transformation of a peasant to a slave. The cash advanced and the materials which are available with the 'Mirasdars' (மீர்சார்) were needed by them. That made them to fall in the net of slavery. Majority of the 'Pallars' were the Kuththaigaidars' who used to pay a fixed rent to the 'Mirasdars' (மீர்சார்). When they were unable to pay the tax and they did not have anything in their savings, they began to offer their labour in exchange for the debt they have to pay and thus became bonded labours to the families of 'Mirasdars'. They were liable to be sold, pledged and given as a dowry and sometimes sold along with their land' according to David Laden.

Since slaves were 'marketable commodity' many human beings were abducted for being traded as slaves. In Thanjavur, two female children were abducted by a female in the year 1825. In 1826, an Army man, two children(boys) were abducted from Thanjavur. Likewise two girls and a boy were abducted from South Arcot District and were sold to a dancing girl and a barber at Thanjavur, according to a letter written by the British Resident of Thanjavur to the Collector of South Arcot District.

A person called Rengasamy Naidu has written elaborately about the then prevailing bonded labour system in the year 1834.

If a person buys a female with a child, then it is a clear case of bonded labour. The maximum price of slave was 3 pagodos. The price of a male slave never exceeded half-a-pagoda and the price of young girl who has not obtained puberty never exceeded one pagoda. One pagoda is equivalent to 300 Rupees. Only the master can sell the female who has been bought by him as a bonded labour. If a female did not have a owner, then her mother's brother has right to sell her. If the female is an orphan, then she will be called as 'paradesi koththu'. Then the person, who wants to buy her, has to approach or contact the Village Chief. In these types of sale, the price of the slave will increase. The sale of the person will be written in a palm leaf. A bonded labourer can marry off his daughter only with the consent and approval of his owner. The owner will bear the marriage expenses. He will give gift to her at the time of Pongal. He will bear the expenses for her confinement, birth, and death of the child.

Similarly, a slave has to get the permission of the owner for getting his son married. The owner will give brides money, sarees and mangal sutra(thali). At the same time, his own children will be the property of the owner. If the slaves or bonded labour had some property or cattle, they will also belong to the owner.

Velalas of Thondai Mandalam(Coimbatore and Salem) had the right to buy and sell and give as gift the 'parayars' and other castes of that area. The slaves were mostly used for agricultural work

and for taking care of the cattle. When they did not have work with the owner, the owner used to rent them to some other person for a wage and he will collect the wages.

‘In Tirunelveli, a landlord had five hundred slaves. Since he did not have sufficient work for them in his farm, he used to send the extra slaves to others. In exchange, he used to get fixed amount of grain’ (Tharma Kumar).

Not only that, the slaves were given a pledge or mortgage for a long time. When the owner wants to sell the land, he used to sell the slaves also who used to cultivate at that land. We learn from the publication of A.Subbarayulu titled ‘Thiruchirapalli District Palm Documents’ that a landlord in the year 1852 sold a family of five slaves to another landlord.

The Mirasudhars were duty bound to maintain the water bodies for the land owners. In 1830, a notification was issued by the Collector which says ‘Mirasudhars who received an advance to maintain the water bodies gave only a portion as wages to the slaves and retain the other portion with themselves. The work was very slow in repairing and maintaining the water bodies. That is the work was done without affecting harvesting and the maintenance work which began in one year will be completed in the next year’ and this is recorded by Davind Laden in his book. The bonded labourers, if they wanted to get released from bondage, then they have to pay twice that of the then prevailing rates.

‘Even though, there was a widespread opinion for the abolition of slavery the British Regime wanted to continue that. One important reason was that they thought the freeing of the bonded labourers will result in fall in agricultural production. We can take the note in the revenue records of Madras in the year 1819 as an example for this”

The note says, ‘the land owners had slaves as their personal property. It is unjust to interfere in it. It is dangerous to disturb the relationship between them’. In a letter sent by the Collector of Trichy to East India Company as written ‘it is very dangerous to abolish the ‘Pallar Slavery System’ which will result in lot of disturbance. It will have serious repercussions. As long as there are caste differences and a prohibition on Brahmins from cultivating, it is necessary to have the Pallars. If the Pallars are freed from bondage, it will have negative consequences for them. Even if they are freed, their position in Society will be much lower than now. They will have to search for more hazardous jobs and occupations’.

In 1800, Collector of Thanjavur has issued an order prohibiting the bonded labourers of Thanjavur from going to other Districts for work. He has advised the Police that they have to work only in Thanjavur Landlords and to the Government and to that effect, Police have to compel them.

Likewise, in 1828 a few slaves of Brahmin Landlords went to Coimbatore District for work. Collector of Trichy wrote a letter to Collector of Coimbatore requesting him to send back the slaves to Trichy.

In 1830, Collector of Trichy, has written to Collector of Salem requesting him to return the ten slaves who had ran away from Trichy to Salem District. In that he says 'they are the slaves of this land. They have no right to go away from the farms in which they were working. Because of their desertion, the land lord is not able to cultivate his farm. If we are not able to help the land lord to establish his rights over the bonded labourers, then not only, his lands were become barren but also the Government will lose revenue. The Britishers who proudly proclaimed that they gave civilisation to India used to inflict uncivilised punishments. The Villages who could not give tax were tortured by tax collectors. Some were yoked to ploughs. Some were punished by placing a stone on their back and tying a rope on their neck. So that they will have to remain in bent position. Soem were placed on stock boards.

These tortures are recorded in the documents of the British Government. A committee was constituted in 1854 to enquire about the torture in Madras Presidency and they are left records. This is quoted by Karl Marx in his book 'on India'. The person who could not pay tax narrates the torture that he had undergone.

'Myself and few others were given in custody to a few persons, they made us to stand in the hot Sun and we were made to bend and they will place a heavy stone on our back and we have to stand in the hot sands. We will be allowed to have some foods only after 8 'O' clock in the night. These kinds of torture were continued for three months. We gave petition to the Collector. But the Collector refused to receive them. Then we went to the Sessions Court and

gave petition. The Sessions Court forwarded the petition to the Collector. We are yet to get justice.'

Another tragic history is that the British Government sent many from Tamil Nadu and India for the development of its Colonies in various Continents. More than 130 years ago(1880), due to poverty and severe famine, the tribes of Bihar known as 'Souriya Pahariar' of Barhana District migrated to other places in large number(the phrase 'panja pahariar' became 'panja parariar'). The English induced them to board ships and send them to many colonies. To escape from the famine, many sold themselves as slaves.

The first Indian slave ship is 'Whitby'. A few officers of the ship captured 'Santhaa Tribals of Bengal Province'(Jarkand) as slaves. They were taken to the islands under the control of French i.e. Trinidot, Jamaica, Karinam, British Gayana, Kothloop and Martinic Islands. They never had any hope of seeing their motherland again. A few Chinese who were captured along with them committed suicide.

The only far off place known to Tamils is Andamans because the British Agents used to spread the 'sweet words'. Sugarcane harvesting work at Andamans. Two days journey by ship. One year contract. Handful of wages. Tempted by this, many opted for the horrible journey in the hope they will get at-least food.

Minimum water and food, Stuffy unhygienic surroundings at the lower deck of the ship made them succumb to many illness. Many deaths followed. Those who survive thought new life is going to

commence for them. Only when they disembarked from the ship, they learned that never ending work without rest, harsh life and poverty awaited them. Every waking minute they have to spend backbreaking work. While harvesting they have to work for 18 hours in a day and the pregnant women have to work till the last day of pregnancy. They were fraudulently made to sign a contract that they work for ten years. Even if they go beyond two kilometres from the work spot they will be imprisoned for two months. If they revolt and beat a white man, they will be stamped by hot iron on their faces and on their back. The slaves who were unable to bear these hardships committed suicides and the number of suicides increased. To compensate for these losses, they brought more slaves from the Colonies.

Those who were come with their families especially the females have to suffer sexual harassments from the fellow black slaves and Indian slaves. As a result there were frequent clashes and murders among the slaves and it became routine happens. To compensate these loss of slaves, the British Government compel that 'there should be forty female slaves for every hundred slaves. Therefore, prostitutes in the brothels and young widows in the villages were forcibly shipped. Britain, France and Holland are the three nations, which exported slaves from India to their colonies in far off islands, is the history.

In Chennai, slaves were registered and sold at Santhom and Choultry Gate at Fort St. George. Slave Traders boarded them in ship and sent them to the Colonies of Portuguel, Dutch and British. From the notes of the whitemen, we learn that at least five lakh Indians

and most of them tamils were exported to Karibian Islands between 1838 to 1917.

Because of the opposition to slavery, British Parliament enacted an Act in 1830 abolishing slavery in territories ruled by British. But British East India Company said "slavery is the part of the social system. For settlements depending on lands slavery is inevitable". As a result, the act abolishing slavery was not enforced in India. At the same time, when the Charter for the East India Company was renewed in 1833, the British Government ordered the then Governor General of India to reduce the hardship of the slaves and to abolish the slavery totally soon. After ten years from that, an Act abolishing slavery was enacted in India. The Act abolishing slavery in 1843 and the enactment of Indian Penal Code in 1861 even though gave some relief to Indians, they did not get any freedom in reality. Socially, they were continued to be treated as slaves. The census of the year 1871 records in the following manner. "Though they are liberated from the slavery and its consequent legal harassment by the British Government they were the lowest level in the social structure. A 'paraiya' cannot even show his face in a boat used by common people. A same situation prevails in the Government Schools and the Government aided Schools."

The tortures inflicted on the poor Indian by the Britishers were continued by the others also. The Zamindars who were created by Britishers is described as 'great philanthropist' and 'patrons of religions'. But they collected taxes from the citizens by adopting highly despicable methods. A Zamindar in southern district brought a family which did not pay tax residing in western part of this district stripped

them and made the co-sanguinary relations, mother and son, father and daughter, brother and sister in a locked room. Varghese who did research on the Zamindari System of Madurai district record that in order to collect taxes they used to whip them with a whip of at least five strands. That is they will beat them after stripping them with whips of five strands. This will create a permanent scar on them.

Tax were collected for dead trees and barren trees. Tax Collectors threatened the people with guns and lathies. For tax arrears, the properties of the peasants were confiscated and sold in option. The Zamindar himself will participate in the auction. Being afraid no one will bid higher than him. Because of this, lands which were worth between 1000 to 2000 rupees were purchased in auction as low as one 'ana' (6 paise) or two anas (12 paise) by the Zamindar himself. Even though slavery was abolished, it continued in other versions called padiyal or pannaiyal (serfs). Not only that to work in Foreign Estates, a new system called indentured labourer was created. Reason for that is a person cannot be made to work as a slave. But a new system came into existence by which if a person is appointed on the basis of contract, then he can be made to work based on the contract.

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Changes in Slavery System

Farm Slaves (Serfs):

According to Historians, the land in Tamil Nadu and Karnataka were under the control of Brahmins and Sath Sutrars AD 1200 to AD 1350. Vellalas, Vokaligas and Kammas were called as Sath Sutrars. Those who work for Brahmins for wages are called as 'Pallars' and those who work for Sath Sutrars are called as 'Paraiars'. The relationship between land lords and these people was farm slavery and is routed through caste and culture.

The Tamil Nadu Mirasdhars till a few centuries ago has slaves to work in their fields and they are farm slaves (serfs). This farm slavery system continued upto the middle of the twentieth century. The sufferings undergone these slaves cannot be measured. The landlords comprised of the castes Brahmins, Pillai, Mudaliar, Chettiar, Naidu, Padaiyatchi and Thever and likewise the farm labourers also had castes called 'Mudaliar, Pandaram, Paraiyar, Pallar, Padaiyatchi, Thever' etc. For example, Mudaliar caste people will be farm slaves for the same Mudaliar caste people. But, the farm slaves did not get any concessions or privileges from the landlords belonging to the same caste.

The land owner happens to be a Brahmin then the farm slave will address him in the most respectful manner like 'as my god wishes' 'as my master says', 'as my god desires'. If the land lord happens to be a Pillai or Mudaliar or Chettiar, then the slave has to address him as 'sir and yes, boss'. If the land lord happens to be 'Padaiyatchi' or

'Thever', then he has to address him as 'as my god desires'. Like wise, even the form of address differ from caste to caste.

Those who were permanent slaves were 'cheruman' and 'pulaiyar' in Kerala, 'Holaiars' in Mysore, 'Malas' and 'Mathikar' in Andhra Pradesh and in Tamil Nadu 'Pallars' and 'Paraiars'. The life of Scheduled Tribes in Travancore area was still worst. In a slave contract agreement of the year 1833 with reference to tribals says 'we can sell or kill as per your desire irrespective of the fact that the slave is a male or female'. The tone of the statement is that it is not a crime to kill a slave. Like wise there was a prohibition of transferring a slave from South Malabar District to other Districts.

The day of a farm slave used to start before the crowing of the cock, when a horn is sounded from the centre of the village. The farm slaves who were residing in huts outside of the main village have to start in hurry. They will have to wash their faces in any brook on the way. The males have to assemble on the first horn sound and when the second horn is sounded, the females have to come for work. The females have to bring the food for their husbands in a small mud sport containing gruel and the side dish is nothing but few grains of salt and green chilly. The dress of the male is nothing but a loin cloth. In winter they can cover themselves in old gunny bags. The females have to wear a tatted sarri above their knees. They have to make a sound 'ohh' when they enter the field. With the sound the supervisor who will be in a distant place will know that the farm slaves commenced the work. Their work would have reached the full swing before the Sun rises.

Noon is lunchtime. If they enter the field again after lunch they can come out only after the darkness as set in. If the work was not completed even then, then they would have a lantern on a pole in the middle of the field and they will have to complete the work in the poor light.

K. Veeraiyan in a book 'The Brave History of Kishan Movement in Tamil Nadu' says about the farm slaves working for the Mirasdhars household in the following manner. "They have to reach the house of the land lord when the cock crows and they can return only in the night when the mosquitoes begin to bite them. For this work, they will be paid as daily wages three small measures of paddy and one ana(6 paise). If they are given lunch one small measure of paddy will be reduced. He cannot eat his food either on leaf or on a brass vessel. They will have to take their food in a mud pot known as 'mallai chatti', which were given to the prisoners in the olden days. It is also called as 'Kapparai'. Beggars also were supposed to use it. This was the special for farm slaves. If the farm slaves does not have the 'chatti', then he will be given food in iron vessel". There was separate force to supervise these farm slaves. They also cannot go home till the farm work is over. Only privilege these supervisors enjoyed was, they can go home for lunch. These supervisors were called as 'maniakaran'. After finishing the farm work, the farm slaves have to follow the 'maniakaran'(supervisor) to the house of the 'Mirasudhars' to collect the wages. They can go home and bound the paddy they received as wages as rice and then they will have to make gruel. The males of the farm slaves used to catch snail or crab on the way and make a side dish out of it. That was the dinner. This was also every day moved.

When the male farm slave goes to the field for work, then his wife and children have to look after the cattle in the house and tend the gardens. The farm slaves are not permitted to educate the children. The unwritten law was when the child attain the age of fourteen, he has go to the field for work. The hut of a farm slave will not be of more than 3 feet height and it was covered with mud. So much so, a man has to totally bend himself to enter the house. The yield from the creepers like pumpkin on the thatched roof is also belong to the 'Mirasudhars'. Likewise, the yield from the trees in the backyard of the huts will have to be given to the Mirasudhars. Only when they do not want, they can use it. The ashes from the houses of the farm slaves had to be collected and given to the 'Miasudhars' as manure without any payment.

When the cow of a farm slave gives birth to a calf, then the slave has to give the calf to the land lord. For that, the land lord will give a dothi and a sarry to the farm slave. Tomarry off their children, they have to get the permission of the 'Mirasudhars'. If the Mirasudhars says not this year, then they have to accept it without any murmur. If the mirasudhar grants permission, then they will request a loan to celebrate the marriage. This is called as 'kalyana sivantha panam' (red money of the marriage). He will give a bag of paddy or Rs.30/- and get a 'promissory note' from the farm slave. In certain villages, it was a custom of the new bride to spend the first night with the landlord.

The farm slave cannot wear dhothis. Lian cloth is the dress. Once in a year, the Mirasudhar will gift him a dhothi. Till it is torned

into pieces, he has to wear. A female cannot wear sarry below the knee. When the landlord beats her husband in front of her and the children they cannot weep loudly. Likewise, when the landlord beats his wife or children, he cannot cry loudly but he has allowed to put a cloth in his mouth and muffle his tears. Even whenbn the mirasudhars' agent beats him, he cannot cry 'ayyo' but only 'ayya' (sir). The low caste farm slaves suffered maximum. When a farm slaves drive his cart in a upper caste's street, he cannot sit and drive. He has to get down from the cart and walk along the bull. He cannot even step into 'Agraharam'.

A barber will not attend to a low caste farm slave. The farm slaves used to hide a sharp piece of a glass from a broken piece of a bottle and used to save one another.

The low caste people did not have structure of a temple separately. They will have a stone under a neem tree and they will offer a pot full of toddy and a piece of dry fish. They can worship the gods, when the upper caste people celebrate a festival from a long distance. They will be given mutton meal on leaves and they will have to take it to their slum and eat it. They used to make a small balls of the food and each will have one or two balls.

In the village dramas, the upper caste people will sit on the first rows and the other caste people in the next rows. To separate these castes, they will place a rope made of hay. Only in the last row, the low caste people can sit. During the drama, they cannot stand and watch it. If they try to stand to have a better view of the stage,

they will be beaten. Being afraid of the beatings, many used to stay away from the drama and other entertainments.

When the farm slave fall sick, he will be attended by the country doctor belonging to the caste of 'valluva pandaram'. They also belong to the upper caste. The farm slave has to stand at the distance and narrate the symptoms. The medical man say that they are threaten by 'muni' or 'evil spirit' and he will give a handful of holy ash. The slave has to put the ash in his mouth. For that the 'pandit' will receive a 'marakkal' of paddy from the slave.

If the farm slave dies, his relatives have to receive an advance from the landlord and for that they have to execute a 'promissory note'. Only close relatives can attend the funeral. Others have to attend the farm work.

Every night, the farm slaves has to narrate the works done by him to the 'mirasudhar'. Then the head man will narrates his side of the story and identify the late comers and who all talked back to him. He will also exaggerate about the few he did not like. Next day, the concerned slave has to come to the 'mirasudhars' house. If the delinquent slave happens to be a 'parayar', then with the help of a 'pallar' slave, he will be tied in to the pole in the house shed. Likewise, if the delinquent happens to be a 'pallar', he will be tied into the pole by the 'parayar'. Then whipping will commence. The whip is usually made from tamarind branches.

Whip is known as five-stranded whip. Each strand will be twisted separately. At the end of the each strand, they would have

tied a small pebble. When the slash with the whip, the pebble will cut the skin like a saw and the blood will spurt out.

The person has to whip till he is tried. Then the headman will continue. If the headman also did not whip properly, then the 'mirasudhar' will take over and slash him with the same whip.

To prevent the victim from shouting and spitting from the face of the master, they would gag him with the piece of cloth. When the slashing is over, the victim will be placed on a hay stake and cover him with a gunny bag. He will be fed with rice and 'rasam' from his master's house hold. Somu Subbiah when he writes about the horrible punishment underwent by the farm slaves in Thanjavur district says:- 'The slave will be whipped by the whip which usually hangs in the front of the house till he swoons down. Then he will be taken to the portion of the house shed reserved for feeding the sick house. There he will be compelled to drink cow don milk. If he refuses to drink the cow don milk, he will be beaten again.(Cow don milk is made by mixing cow don with water in a pot. It will be filtered by pouring through a piece of cloth. The filtered liquid is known as cow don milk)'.

Another terrible punishment was 'catching the cranes'. Delinquent will be made to stand in hot sands on single leg. Another is tying the legs by inserting a stick between them and they will be made to walk. The farm slave who can bear the excruciating pain will fall down like a cut tree and 'mirasudhars' will have a good laugh.

Another method was to hanging down from a tree and they will spread thorny bushes and sharp instruments below so that he cannot hang down his hands. If his hands hang down, then the thorns in the sharp instruments will hurt him. Far worse is the punishment meted out to the females. They will put a stick between the breasts and turn the stick till the veins in the breast burst and the poor victim will cry to the enjoyment of the on lookers.

A writer by name Subash Chandra Bose, when he describes the punishment undergone by the females says “the hungry females of the slaves, if their ‘sarrees’ go below the knees, then they will be punished for their arrogance and they will ask the supervisor to beat her. To the supervisor, it is a ‘delightful’ job and he will beat her to his heart’s contents. She cannot spread her legs when she receives the blows. If he does so, she will be beaten more.

It is horrifying to lead about the ‘mirasudhar’ by name ‘Sikklandhi Iyer’. When he rides his cart, the persons on the way have to move out on hearing the bells tied to the bulls. If any one dares to stand even at the edge of the road, he will be whipped.

Whenever the ‘mirasudhar’ is suspicious of his farm slave, then he will be tied to the tree. Then they will summons his wife and asked her to urinate on the mud pot and compel the husband to drink that urine before it becomes cool. If he resists, he will be beaten till he drinks it.

‘Mirasudhars’ usually will have deep pits to plant young coconut saplings. One ‘mirasudhar’ had a peculiar habit. Whenever

a farm slave talks ill of him, he will be summoned and he will be killed by severe blows from pole. When the victim dies, he will be buried in the deep pit meant for coconut sapling. Then the ‘mirasudhar’ will plant a coconut sapling in the pit. Another ‘mirasudhar’ had a different habit. When a delinquent farm slave dies after a severe beating, his body will be cut into small pieces and it will be mixed with a meat of a old bull which will be slotted along with him. So much so, whenever a bull dies in the land lord house, they also know that a farm slave also had met his end.

The sufferings underwent by runaway farm slaves cannot be described in words. In ‘Anthapattai’ at Nagapattinam, there was an depot to export farm slaves. It is a Company to export farm slaves to Buram, Singapore and other Countries. The farm slaves who are not able to bear the torture of the landlord used to runaway and take refuge in that depot. The tamils who were doing business in the far away lands used to recruit their workmen from that depot. These slaves can write a letter to home only after ten years. That letter also will be delivered only to the landlord. Then the landlord will give the letter to runaway slave’s father and ask him to write to his son to return home. The father also writes. The son will return the home happily. But the landlord will beat him in such a way that he will not dream of going abroad.

There was a farm slave by name ‘Silamban’ belonging to ‘Omakutti Pillai’ a Zamindar of ‘Palayakudi Village’ near ‘Vedharanyam’. One day, he attacked the Supervisor and ran away to Burma. After thirty years, he returned home wearing dhoti and cropped hair. He consumed toddy at a toddy shop and there the

landlord's watchman recognized him and reported the same to the landlord. Silamban was summoned and he asked 'how are you boss' that is all. He was caught and ropes of hay was circled on his body and doused with oil and he was burned. To hide this, they also burned the trash bit. They narrated the incident as a freak accident.

Long time ago, in Thanjavur District, each farm had its own design of seal with which they used to brand their slaves. From that one can identify to the farm to which the slave belong to (struggle for freedom by a farm slave-N.Ramakrishnan).

A complaint was sent to Madras Civil Court that a slave has been murdered and another has been tortured very cruelly. The Court directed to the Juries to decide whether the farm owner was guilty or not. The Juries consisted of six Indians and six English men. At the time of trial the Indian Juries said that the accused was not guilty. But the English Juries said that the accused was guilty and he should be punished (Theory of peasant economy - Shiv Kumar). J.H.Hutton, in his book Caste in India notes that "the farm slaves who could not do hard work were beaten by the Farm Owner and his henchmen with sticks and iron rods".

In these unbearable circumstances began the exodus of tamils to distant places as indentured labourers. During the British colonial days, many tamils went to Malaysia to work in the Sugar, Coffee and Rubber plantations without any promise of remuneration or privileges. Many tamils from North Arcot, South Arcot, Salem, Coimbatore, Trichy, Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Chengleput, Thanjavur and Tirunelveli went to Malaysia as settlers.

Indian Settlement in Malaysia (1786 to 1957-?) was extensively researched by Karenel Singh Santhu. These farm workers were classified as "Agricultural work caste". According to him, in tamil nadu, there were three different types of farm workers, farm slave, farm servant and padiyaal and the same was continued even when they went to Malaysia and the same caste distinction was also followed. To supervised the farming operation, the system of 'Kankani or Supervisor' which was followed in Tamil Nadu was followed there also and the person was appointed as "kankani or supervisor" based on his caste.

Padiyaal System

In 19th Century, the system of farm slavery underwent some cosmetic changes. Even though, the system of farm slavery was abolished in paper, ignorant 'liberated' farm slaves went back to the same 'Mirasudhar' to work. Now they are called 'padiyaal'.

The word 'padi' denotes measurement and 'all' denotes slaves. The 'Mirasudhar' used to disburse each 'padiyaal' paddy or other grains. For this, both of them used to enter into an agreement. Apart from the grains given to the 'padiyaal', he had right to collect or gather the grains scattered on the thrashing floor. This is called 'kalavaasam'. The 'padiyaal' were given 'gruel' during lunch. During the festival times like 'deepavali' and 'pongal', the 'mirasuhar' used to give a dress or one rupee. Similarly, when there is a marriage in 'mirasudhar house', they used to give one dress. When a child is born, they were given four or eight anas (25 or 50 paise), a small quantity of 'gingili oil' and three measures of paddy. When there is a death in the land lord's house they will be given one rupee and 12 measures of rice. If they borrow some money from 'mirasudhar', it would be deducted from the paddy given to them. There were families which served as 'padiyaal' from three to four generations(P.J.Thomas- 'Some South Indian Villages). Even if a 'padiyaal' joins the farm after executing an agreement, it did not offer him any relief except that he can initiate legal steps. The 'mirasudars' executed such type of agreement to prevent the 'tribals' from the hills running away from the farms. The agreements help the land lord,

to escape from the crime of slavery. For example, we produce below a 'padiyaal' document of Salem District.

“For the 37 Rupees, I have received from you as loan, I pledged my three sons who will work in your farm to clear the interest and they will be paid wages at the rate of 1 rupees 50 paise per year and 12 measures of 'raghi' as wages. If my sons did not the work in the farm properly, then I will be liable for the damages. Further, I can be proceeded legally and punished”.(F.J.Richard)

When we read this document, it reveals to us that this document helped the land lords to keep the 'padiyaal' perpetually under their thumbs. If the 'padiyaal' did not mend his behaviour after severe beatings and the stamp paper with the picture of Queen Victoria help the land lords to punish the worker on the basis of the registered document.

Sengo who did research how the 'Irulas' of Coimbatore District were enslaved says from the three 1872 documents of the area 'Siruvaani Vellingiri', we learn certain features. One 'Kubban' son of 'Sukkini', an Irula, received Rs.35/- from a 'Kounder' and he agrees to pay the amount during the month of 'Chithrai' and till then, he has agreed to work as a farm slave in the Kounder's farm for which he will be paid as per the custom in that area. Moreover, he has agreed that if he runs away, then he will be liable for the damages caused.

This 'padiyaal' document looks as though, it is written that it should keep the person under perpetual slavery. The reason being at

that point of time the whole of South India is reeling under severe drought. So, lending 35 Rupees on personal bond is a surprising factor. In those days, for 35 Rupees, a 'Kaani' land could have been bought. Therefore, it is amount was imposed on 'Kuppan' so that his labour can be exploited.

No legislation compelled any one of the escaped farm slaves to go back to their land lord. But, on the basis of the 1859 Violations of Contract Act, the persons who escaped were treated as 'agreement violators' or 'contract violators' and captured and brought back to the land lord. Otherwise, they were imprisoned in the prisons and treated with harshly. The fact that the hundreds of innocents were punished severely can be seen from the note of Chengleput District Collector Trumen Hireail. They are not slaves. At the same time, they are doing the work for the amount they received as loan but they were tortured by the land lords according to the District Collector 'Trumen Hireail'. The land on which the low caste people had built their huts, the land lords contended that the land belongs to them. They collected rent for such huts also. When they are not able to collect rent from them, they confiscated the gourds'. Moreover the land lords were angry that how dare the 'padiyaal' to own any piece of land. In Chengleput District, a 'paraya' requested the Collector to grant 'patta' to a piece of land that was in his possession, but that was stiffly opposed by the 'mirasudhar'. He not only prevented him from getting 'patta' but also destroyed his crop by making cattle to graze on it. This was published in 'The Hindu' dated October 1st by a Christian Priest William Coody.

This 'padiyaal' system has not changed much slavery system. This 'padiyaal document' English Translation found a place in the reports of 'Madras Revenue Board'. The practise continued throughout 19th Century.

The 1968 incident at Keezh Venmani, Thanjavur District is the bloody tears of farm slaves who suffered from generation to generation and from time to time.

Out of the 30% of cultivable lands, only 5% remained with the owners. 55% of the lands were controlled by people who were not any connected with the farming under tenancy. Thousands of acres belong to the Temples in Thanjavur District. Ordinary people does not have even a piece of land, say 'kuzhi'. The oppression of the land lords and the 'varanasiramam' suppression combined to torture the sons of the soil.

In 1952, Government of Tamil Nadu introduced an Act to protect the farm workers of Thanjavur District which was confined to Thanjavur District only. Rajaji who came for electioneering said that 'the farmers of Thanjavur are under the evil spill of communism. This Act will liberate them from that evil spill'. One can imagine what a reaction the word 'communist' would have created in the minds of Brahmins and Land lords in those days and this statement is to prove that.

When the Act came into force, farm worker system was abolished and the daily wage system was introduced and that made the workers to agitate for fixed working hours. Those who worked

day and night now demanded that they should be made to work only for fixed hours of work. To announce to the workers that the day's work is over, a person will claim a nearby tree and announce it by beating the 'dum dum'. In some places, they waved red flag and similar methods to announce the end of the day. Then the workers will claim out of the farms.

To prevent the agricultural coolies from forming a trade union and then to raise the demands the land lords formed a Union. It was named as 'Food Producers Association'. Later on the name was changed into 'Paddy Producers Association'. Its first president was S.S.Ramanatha Thevar. The first meeting of 'Paddy Producers Association' held at Nagapattinam was presided by 'Sivaji Ganesan', the Actor. Except the Communists, all the other Parties supported the Paddy Producers Association.

The Government order clearly stated "when local labourers are available, labourers from other Districts should not be engaged". The land lords violated that order. But the Government and Police did not take any action. For the local workers, they gave wages as 'Paddy'. But the workers from the outside District, they gave rice. To prevent it, the local workers who demanded justice were driven away. The Police fired on them. In that firing, a coolie by name 'Pakkiri' died.

A few days after that murder, Tamil Nadu Government arranged for a tripartite talk at Mannarkudi. For the Paddy Producers Association, Irinjyur Gopalakrishna Naidu became its new

President. He is responsible for the terrible murders at Keezh Venmani.

Later, Chinna Pillai was abducted on murder by Paddy Producers at Irinjyur Village. On October 15, 1968, a meeting to condemn the brutal killings of 'Chinna Pillai and Ramachandran' was held at Nagapattinam. On the same day, the Paddy Producers Association held an emergency meeting at Sikkal. When the farm workers were returning from the meeting at Nagapattinam, Sikkal Pakirisamy was brutally murdered.

In a public meeting organised by Paddy Producers Association on 13.11.1968, it was openly declared with higher caste arrogance that they will burn down the slum at Keezh Venmani. On hearing this, the local slum dwellers to protect themselves kept vigil day and night waving the red flag on 21st, 22nd and 23rd December.

Muthusamy who was the leader of Venmani Slum Dwellers also ran a Tea Shop and the thugs of the land lords compel him to join in their Association. Since, he refused, he was beaten up and dragged the house of Ramanuja Naidu where he was tied to a Pillar inside the house and locked him in. On hearing that a few locals went to the house and broke open the lock and brought Muthusamy safely back. This shocked the slum dwellers. On 25.12.1968, the local slum dwellers kept vigil in the mid night with sticks and stones. At the same time, they were encircled by the thugs of landlords who attacked them with Guns and Plazing Torches. With a torch, they burned the huts and shot at the people who tried to escape. They burned almost all the huts and the slum dwellers who could not escape collected in

a small hut measuring 10 feet by 7 feet. The angry mob of the thugs of the land lord locked the hut and burned it down.

When the Police came next day, they could discover only the charred remains of men, women and children. Totally, 44 had died. Their only mistake is to demand for the rights from the landlords. What else?.

The basic necessities of life food, shelter and cloth are obtained from land only. The classes who control the rights of the land reduced the have-nots as slaves without any rights on the land and they are made to eke out their daily living and they were prevented even to walk on the common path and fetch water from the common tanks and they became 'dalits'(oppressed) without any rights.

- 1.Slavery in Tamil Nadu by A.Sivasubramaniam.
- 2.The struggle of the Dalits to acquire rights on land by Sivakami.

Contract Labour System

According to Robert Bamhart, the English Etymologist, the word 'contract' is derived from the Latin word 'Contractors'. The word 'Contractors' means in Latin is 'join' or 'agree'. In 13th Century, the paralytic stricken legs are called as 'Contractors'. During 1548, the word 'contractor' was derived from the Latin Word 'Contracteyr'. The word 'Contract' meant abridging, shortening or making small in size. Similarly, to keep ones outside establishment and to extract work from him is called 'contract'. Consequent to the contract between East India Company and British Empire, the East Indian Company came to India and then captured power.

The impact of Industrial Revolution in England had its impact on India also. The British capital is began to commence many factories in the area controlled by them in India. At that time, the solidified feudal society was slowly yielding to capitalist society. At that time not only roads but other infrastructures were developed. In all these endeavours, only contract labourers were engaged.

While this was so, to work in the coffee and tea estates both in India and abroad, the villagers were marched like cattle at gun point.

In 19th Century, slavery was abolished in West Indies. So, the Estate Owners were looking for cheap labour to work in the estates. They cited the estate workers in neighbouring countries. So,

they kidnapped these workers and brought them to their estates to work as contract workers.

The poor and famine stricken workers went to South Africa, Ceylon, Fiji and other East Indies Islands to work. They worked as 'coolies' in tea and rubber plantations and in the mines. They were treated worse than slaves. They were treated worse than animals also. The South African Government recorded about them in the documents as 'barbaric Asians and uncivilised Indians'. The Indians were already slaves of the English could not help in any way their suffering relatives in Foreign Countries (K.K.Pillai-History of Tamils and their Culture)

Even before the enactment of Act to Abolish Slavery, many were transported from Tamil Nadu as contract labourers. Even as early as 1825, the Thanjavur District Collector Cotton wrote to the Government at Madras that many children were trafficked to work as 'estate workers abroad'. He ordered the officers in the Port that only after careful examination that ships should be permitted to sail(Paramarthalingam). Between 1843 and 1867, 14,40,000 workers went to Ceylon. In 1883, 2432 persons went as 'contract labourers' to Ceylon. To prevent these workers from returning to the native land, an Act permitting Estate Owners to prosecute these workers under Criminal Law. So, those who dreamt off returning to the Home Land after fixed tenure in estate abroad were cheated. The English Estate Owners created a new kind of slaves.

But, this not only exploitation of labour but also violation of human rights. Now and then the Indian workers revolted against the

oppression of the British Capitalists. As a result in 1860 whitely commission was constituted. It recommended abolition of 'contract workers system'. But the British Government did not accept it. Later, in 1872, the third Indian Law Commission drafted a bill for Indian Contract Act following the English Contract Act.

Since majority of the workers were employed under Contract System, the British Capitalists were not able to control them. So, to solve their problem, they appointed middle men called as 'Contractor'. The British Capitalist justified the appointment of contract labourers because it solved their problems like reducing the production cost and the power to terminate anybody at any time.

In 1926, Trade Union Act, in 1936, Wages Disbursement Act, in 1946, Permanency Act, in 1947, Industrial Dispute Act and in 1923(?), Workmen Compensation Act were enacted. In 1970, Contract Labourer (Regularisation and Abolition) Act was enacted.

In our Country, the workers are employed in four kinds of organisations. They are Government Departments, Public Sector Establishments, Joint Ventures of Government and Private Sectors and lastly Private Sectors. We need not talk about the Private Sector. But the conditions of the contract labourers in Government and Government related sectors are pitiable.

"To-day, Government Sectors and Public Sectors are treating 'contract labourers' worse than 'bonded labourers'. In these Sectors, there are direct contractual system, inter-changeable system where the workers are shown as contractors and where the contractors

are given service fee and then engaged the workers on contract. Actually, contract agreement is valid only when the workers are appointed as per Rules. But, the Contractors engaged contract workers and extract work from them, the Government Rules regarding labour will not applied to them. Without any sense of shame, the human rights of the workers are violated. As far as contract labourers are concerned, the workers are victims of 'silent terrorism' of the State and Central Government (Denial of Human Rights to Contract Workers-Virudhai Gandhi-Trade Union News).

Untouchability is Indian Face of Slavery

Indian System of Slavery is different from the slavery system of Greeko-Romans. Unlike Greeko-Roman Countries, slaves were used only for labour in India including Tamil Nadu. They were never employed in any intellectual work. The reason being casteism. Even among the slaves casteism was observed and consequential untouchability prevailed. One cannot find a doctor or a teacher among Indian slaves. They were employed only in farm work and in household work (Devaraj Sanna-Slavery in Ancient India).

Many slaves of Greece and Rome were well versed in Literature. Senata says that one Glavises Sebinus had 11 slaves who can recite poems of ten poets including Homer. Not only that the slaves were employed as short-hand writers or scribes. In the Libraries and in the services of the Empire. Ambedhkar says the Roman slaves were employed in intellectual activities.

In Tamil Nadu, there were not many slaves during the 'Sangam Age'. They worked in houses and in temples. In Tamil Nadu,

production was restricted in very short area. The Cholas wanted to create the surplus in production and so slaves become necessary for them. Consequentially, number of slaves increased in Chola times.

At that time, the Brahmins and Vellalars controlled the production based lands. Temples joined them. As a result temples became big power centre. Majority of the labour classification was centred around the rituals and stages of hierarchy in the temples. At all levels, the concepts of purity and pollution functioned. As a result, a section called 'untouchables' were placed outside the temple. The caste groups like 'paraiyar' became slaves of South India (Shenbagalakshmi – Trade Ideology and Urbanisation).

Economic differences created slaves. But Brahminism made slaves into untouchables. Chola Kings were proclaimed that the main aim in administration is "to see that 'Manu Dharma flourishes'" and they were very careful in protecting 'Manu Dharma'. Moreover, they went overboard to follow 'Manu Dharma'.

For example, according to 'Manu', a Brahmin can enslave another Brahmin. But during Chola Times, a Brahmin cannot enslave another Brahmin. Likewise 'Sutras' can enslave other 'Sutras'. But Raja Rajan-II who ruled during 14th Century, in an Rock Edict, 'Kuyavar' (Pot Makers), Uvacher(Washerman), Nesavalar(Weavers), Navithar(Barbers) were prohibited from being enslaved. In these manner casteist suppression was nourished.

Much information about the caste called 'parayars' are found in literature and in inscriptions on the rock. During Chola Times, the

'parayars' lived in separate 'Cheries'. They had their own funeral ghat. They were full-fledged citizens with right to property. K.K.Pillai establishes from evidences of stone inscriptions that during the times of 'Goperum Singan', 'parayars' living in Thirukoviloor Region were kept in a very low strata.

Eventhough 'Paracherry' is mentioned in the Government orders of Chola Times, in 33 towns of Thanjavur region, only 19 had 'paracheries'. Likewise, in the area of 'Gangaikonda Cholapuram' which had seven towns, only one had 'paracherry'.

A very despicable system of slavery was untouchability and it is far worse than 'Padiyaal', 'Pannaiyaal', 'Contract Coolie' and 'Opentha Coolie'. Ambedhkar comments it about in the following manner Slavery is not a free social structure, at the same time can you say untouchability is a free social structure? There are differences between untouchability and slavery. This is far worse than 'slavery' and it is created a social structure without any freedom. Slavery was never compelled. But untouchability is permanent. A man is permitted to slave another man. If he is not willing to become a slave, he cannot be compelled into. But an untouchable have no other way. If a person is born as an untouchable, then he has to suffer all the sufferings of an untouchable. The Slavery Act permitted freedom or liberation to a slave. If a man becomes a slave, he need not be a slave throughout. But there is no chance to escape from untouchability. Once an untouchable always an untouchable.

A man was become a slave knows that he is a slave. This awareness is a first struggle for freedom. But an untouchable does

not know that he is an indirect slave. To say a person you are a freeman and you have got all the rights and then tighten his noose is an act of cheating. Without being aware, that they are being enslaved is the untouchable slavery. Since he is not aware of it, it continues even to-day.

In a social structure where a slave is without freedom, the owner is responsible for taking care of his life and body. A slave is freed from his responsibility of finding food, cloth and shelter. The owner is responsible for providing all these things.

A slave earns for his Master more than what he spends for him. So, he is not burden to his Master. So, even though, there is not work, he will get his food. He is not only employed but he was also given food and it is responsibility of the owner. Even when the slave owner flourishes in his trade or is in decline, the slave is guaranteed his food. But, a person branded as an untouchable what guarantee he has got for his life?.

In Rome slaves were never employed in marshy lands or asked to work in places where malaria was widely prevalent. Cato advised Roman Governors not to employ slaves in such places. Because slaves were valuable. So, he should not allow a valuable property to be spoiled by Malaria. This proved beneficial to the slaves. As a result, a slave was better cared for than any other person.

Slaves can be liberated at one time or other. They can lose their identity as slave. But a status of a suppressed person is far worse than that of a slave.

Land is the basic thing for the people. It is the basis for growth of humanity. Any Government- from Monarchy to Democracy-has extensive and unlimited power over the land. In primitive communities, land which was developed by the primitive group became vested with a King during Monarchy and he 'graciously' permitted its Citizens and Army to cultivate and produce food from it. Whenever, there is a change of Government, the Government's control over the land was re-examined and land was re-distributed. When all others were allowed to own lands, the suppressed people alone were not permitted the right to own land. Realizing that the ownership of land alone will give them freedom and to realize that they had to undergo innumerable sufferings.

“Taking advantage of the illiteracy and poverty of the 'parayars', 'mirasudhars' stole their land and money. Tremen Here, Collector of Chingleput records this in the following manner 'From the money they received after working as a cooli in Chennai and savings some amount, the 'parayars' will buy a small piece of land in a Village, the 'mirasudhars' will execute a sham sale. After the sale, they will delay the issue of 'patta'. In the meanwhile, they will prompt the Government to confiscate the said land for the land tax arrears'. Thus the untouchables lost money and land.”. According to Sivakami[Dalits' struggle for land right].

Tremen Here, Collector of Chingleput, wrote a letter to the Government in which he says, “Always eating meagrely, wearing only rags and being uplifted with terrible diseases like leprosy, living like pigs in small huts, forbidden from education, not being shown

any sympathy, live 'parayars'.”. He requested the Government that they should be given land in order to liberate them from slavery and lead a life of peasants. So, the Government asked him to submit a detailed report.

In his report, he says, “Right to own land is denied to the suppressed people. They are not able to approach judicial forums. Reason being not only, they are uneducated but the Court is full of power people. So the barren lands and forests must be distributed to the oppressed people. In those places, wells must be dug for irrigating such land. If the suppressed people of the cultivating tenants, then the rules regarding tenancy must be modified in such a way, their status in life is upgraded. To free them from slavery, they must be granted 'pattas' for their dwelling units. The Government should re-examine the Act prohibiting violations of contract. But the Board of Revenue, did not accept his report, but ridicule it. It asked when a person who cannot growth himself where he will go for money for farming operations? A hut is enough for a person who works through out the day. Where is the need for dress in a Country as hot as India?. He would like to remind as a dirty person”. He is used to be a slave from time immemorial. So, there is no necessity for him to become a land owner and so it rejected the report.

In 1876-1877, there was a terrible famine . Then priests like Hadem Andrew, William Coody and others brought to the attention of British Member of Parliament the pathetic plight of suppressed people of India. It became a matter of discussion in the British Parliament. In the News Paper like Guardian and The Hindu, the outburst regarding the status of “Aathi Dhiravidas”, they published in

'letters to editor' column. The news paper 'London Times' on 30th July, 1891 wrote exhaustively about the necessity for distributing land to the suppressed people. In 1892, British Parliament enacted an Act permitting the distribution of land to the suppressed people (Government Order No.1010 dt.13.09.1892).

In 1916, Ambedhkar sent a secret report to the British Government urging it to distribute land to the suppressed people (Letters and Speeches of Ambedhkar). The massacre of thousands of Indian in Jalianwalabagh in 1919 was condemned by News Papers as horrible and cruel. Ambedhkar said that the suppressed people who do not have right to life or land is far worse than that (Collected works of Ambedhkar Volume 12 & 15). In an interview to 'Bombay Chronicle', Ambedhkar said education for Dalit is for their future. But, right to land is for their present and future. He started in 1936, Self-Reliant Labour Party for liberating agricultural coolies and tenants from the clutches of 'mirasudhars'.

"The persons who own land grew economical powerful and they possess political power to-day. To distribute this power, land should be distributed to the 'Dalits'. Forty four dalits who struggled for rise in wages in 'Keezhvenmani' were burned to death by the remnants of 'mirasudhari system' based on castes" Sivakami (Dalits' struggle for land rights).

"Forty four comrades died in Venmani. Their records are kept safe by Communist Party of India (Marxist). They preserve it because their view is it is a class struggle. They are not pointing out the character of caste suppression. Out of the forty four persons

who are brutally killed in the struggle, there was not even a single brother from 'mukkulothor' community. Not even one belongs to vanniar or chettiar or gounder or pillai. Workers from slum (cherry) alone were brutally killed. There are two kinds of workers, one, workers from the powerful caste and another from workers from low caste. Since this was massacre of the suppressed caste workers, it did not register deeply the minds of the people". -Thirumaavalavan-Cross the limit (Atthumiru, Page.140). According to 1991 census, about 63.54% of the Indian Dalits were depending on agricultural work for livelihood. Their annual income from this profession on average is Rs,15,039/-. Monthly income Rs.1261/- only. As per 1971 census, 62.7% of the Dalit were agricultural workers. When the income from the profession is becoming less, it is painful to note that their number increases. This is distressing. -Sivakami (Dalits' struggle for land rights).

We cannot reject the view of Periyar, "The casteist differences including untouchability is not an act of foolishness, it was a selfish dishonest system created on the basis of economics and for preventing their coming up.

Reasons for bondage and their different faces.

Reasons for bondage:

Poverty, loan which cannot be repaid, lack of education, unemployment, prevention of owning lands, casteist differences, oppression by the higher caste and migration due to poverty are cited as different reasons for a person becoming a bonded labourer. They are inter-related.

According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), there are eight methods by which a worker is made a bonded labourer.

Physically compelling a person to work for somebody. This is called as slavery. This is mostly prevalent in Gango, Liberia, Sudan and other Countries.

Becoming a slave because of death. All the wages of the worker are spent for accommodation, transport and food and so, they have to depend upon their masters for other expenses. They cannot escape from who give them job or the capitalist. The reason being they have to depend upon them for every expense. Moreover, workers are compelled by them only to work for them. They would be threatened. Moreover, these workers would have come from far off places. These type of bonded labourers are found more in Polivia, Brazil, Gautemala, Haite, Mexico, Praguay, Beru and other Countries.

Bonded Labour System. This is also the result of receiving loans. The person who received loan will have to work for a lower wages and hence, he cannot repay the loan. He has to

receive loan repeatedly and he would be caught in a 'death-trap' from which he cannot escape. This method is widely prevalent in Bangala Desh, Nepal, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka and other Countries.

Trafficking. Trafficking is transporting a person against his will and keeping in locked-up and selling. Moreover, a person who has been trafficked and sold will have to work very hard. Without his willingness, he will be tortured mentally and physically. This method is widely prevalent particularly in Albania, Bosnia, Brazil, China, Columbia, Equador, France, Gana, Haite, Hungery, Israel, Italy, Korea, Lovos, Malaysia, Mianmar, Netherland, Nepal, Nigeria, Phillipines, Poland, Rumania, Russia, Thailand, Ukraine, England, America, Vietnam, Yugoslovia and other Countries.

Servants being used in an illegal manner. For receiving amount in advance, domestic helps are made to work as slaves according to the whims and fancy of the person who have given the amount in advance. This method is widely prevalent in middle-east countries, France, Haite and other Countries.

Prisoners as workers. Employing prisoners for their income and torturing them. This is practised in Australia, Austria, China, France, Germany, Newlands, Madagaskar, Malaysia, America and other Countries.

Compulsory Labour. Workers are compelled to work the hours prescribed by law, particularly workers constructing roads, bridges and other infrastructures have to undergo this type of hardships. This is found in Cambodia, Middle Africa, Kenya, Mianmar, Sierralon, Switzerland, Tanjania, Vietnam and other Countries.

Mercenary Labour. Compelling the ordinary people to work for the Government or in the Military against their will and concern.

Poverty:

Number of persons caught in the mire of poverty increased due to famine that happened in the Country. When poverty reaches its maximum limit, slavery and its continuation, bonded labour system also become strengthened. The basic reason is poverty. Even though famine is there from time immemorial, its impact was common. So, majority of less affluent persons were pushed down to poverty. But, after arrival of Englishmen, famine was artificially created. This sowed the seeds of slavery, according to researchers in history. One can ask a question, where there not famine before the arrival of Englishmen? The famine in Orissa between AD 1109 to AD 1143 and famine in Maharashtra in AD 1336 are to be noted. In the Central Region of India, that is Deccan Plateau, famine prevailing from AD 1630 to AD 1632, more than two lakh people died. By that in India according to statistics, fourteen famines took place between 11th and 17th Century. They happened due to paucity of rain and consequent drought and they are small in nature. But these famines did not spread throughout India. On the contrary, when India was under the control of East India Company, 25 famines occurred in India.

There are three famines “that shook India”. They are ‘Bengal Famine of 1770, Dhadhu Year Famine from 1876 to 1878”. Then the Indian Famine between 1943 and 1944. Between 1769 and 1773, Bengal was under the grip of severe famine. One third of the total population of Bengal was died. According to Research Report about one crore people died. The famine spread from Bengal to Bihar and

Orissa. When we talk about these famines, it is necessary to know about the ‘contribution’ of the Englishmen to it.

After ‘Sepoy Mutiny’ at Vellore, Madras Presidency came under the direct control of British Crown. After that the English paved the path for famine. First, the bungling of the administration of water irrigation. Second was exporting the grains from India after securing the market due to colonialism. Third was unbearable tax burden. The fourth was giving priority to cash crops and consequential change in agriculture. By these, conscious mal administration, the Englishmen created artificial famine in India.

For many Centuries each Village having its own strategy to fight and control the famine. The water sources, which were control and administration of local administration groups, were taken over by Britishers and so local people were not able to understand the needs immediately and take speedy action. The people have pushed to seek the help of the Government for each and every thing including water management. As a result water sharing which was happening amicably for many Century was stopped. When famine was at its height in 1770, the English raise the tax rate by 10%. The people have squeezed even during the times of famine. As a result, tax collection which was at 1 ½ of Crores in 1765 increased to 3 Crores in 1777. Taking advantage of famine, they took over grain trade and it became their monopoly. The English confiscated the cattle like goats and cows of the tax defaulters. Due to severe drought, villagers became bone drive and looked like funeral grounds. The people who could not bear hunger left their villages in droves. Even for water, they have to go here and there. Along with famine, small box was attacked them. There was no one even to remove the corpses lying on the footpath.

“A dog which happened to snatch a bone was chased by a crowd, the dog was killed, and for that single bone, they quarrelled among themselves”, according to a report by a Hunter. Even after such a severe famine, export of grains from India to England was not stopped. Ship after Ship carried wheat, cotton and other food grains from India. Cotton, which was considered as a cash crop and called white gold, and the East India Company compelled the farmer to grow cotton in the entire Bengal and obtained them for a pittance. Farmers were treated as slaves.

Vinitha Damodharan who did research on Bengal famine calls it “Indian History is indelible strain of sorrow”. In 1770, 35% of the land was abandoned. 12% of the people went to the forest in search of food. In a village in Birgham region, 60% of the people died in the famine”, according to her.

In 1838 G.Thomson records “the roads, tanks and canals built by Hindus and Muslims for the welfare of the nation are getting dilapidated due to poor maintenance”. Montgo Mary Martin observes in 1858 “the East India Company not only did not commence any developmental activity but also did not repair and maintain the existing public places”.

John Bright, who spoke in the British House of Commons on 24th June, 1858 said the amounts spent in India till the fourteen years from 1834 to 1848 are far less than one year’s expenditure of Monchester for water”.

Not only that, Village Famine Relief Fund kept in every village was corroded by the indirect taxation of the British. So, Village Bodies became ineffective. All the arrangements to fight the famine became ineffective.

In 1876, the daily wages of males was reduced 5 anaas per person to 2 anaas per person due to famine. Since they were not able to purchase the grains with the meagre wages, in many places, they were given small quantity of grains instead of the wages. The Indian People who are ready to obey anything for food were treated as slaves. The Santhaal and Mundaal Tribals of Chotta Nagpur Region protected themselves from eating tubers in the forest because of the poor paddy yield. Trying to imitate the Tribals, many villagers ate poisonous tubers, which they could not identify and died.

Robert Litton was the Viceroy during the famine of “Dhadhu Year”. His careless administration increased the impact of famine. Cholera and Malaria was also tortured the people during the famine of “dhadhu year”. The report of the Governor Robert Williams records “people dug the ant hills for grains during the ‘dhadhu year’ famine. The cries of the people in hunger and while dying pervaded the air”.

On 16th October, 1942, a severe cyclonic storm lashed the sea shores of Orissa and Bengal, in it more than 30,000 people died. About 20% of the standing crops were destroyed. After these, in July, 1943, the Bengal Famine happened. According to John Key, more number of Indians died in the Bengal Famine than the number of people who died in the two world wars.

In the beginning, the Englishmen created a Famine Relief Authority. Richard Temple was the Commissioner for Indian Famine Relief Group. He introduced new methods of famine relief. Accordingly, only handicapped and children were given free food. In Famine Relief Plan, males and females were given 1 anaa(..£¾) each and a small amount of grains and it was called as “Salary of Temple”. According to the information given by the Commissionerate, about 30 lakhs people died in the famine. The peasants sold away

their entire land holdings or pledged them. They became slaves. Many became bonded labourers by crying 'give me something for hunger'. Many committed suicide when they could not get even that. Dr. Jeyabharathy, a Historian, who did research on the famine says "political conspiracy created the famine. The aim of the British Government was to blunt the Indian's thirst for freedom and the struggle for it".

Further "Japanese captured Burma in 1942. As a result, rice which was coming from Burma was stopped. The fear that the Indian National Army and Japanese Army may enter Bengal and captured Calcutta created war psychosis in the administration. When the enemies entered into our land, they should not get water or food and so they destroyed water bodies and crops. Thousands of refugees were pouring into Bengal from Burma. To prevent that, Boats that can carry ten or more people were confiscated. More than seventy thousand boats and small ships were confiscated. So, transportation through rivers for which Bengal was famous came to a standstill. Food, Grains, and natural resources like Jute could not be carried from one place to another. Even fishing was affected.

The serious conditions of famous Bengal Famine was discussed in British Parliament. For the Indian population of 40 Crore, only five lakhs tonnes were imported for two years. But Brittan with the population of five crores, more than 1 crore tonne grains was imported. At the same time, 25 lakhs Indian fighting for Brittan (Bengal Famine created by the British-Dr. Jeya Bharathy).

Madhu Shri, an Indian Scientist and Writer accuses Churchill as solely responsible for the death of 30 lakh Bengalis due to hunger in the famine of 1943. According to her, about 15 lakh people did not die due to scarcity of food but due to hoarding of food grains by the affluent. The famine became a social looting.

Even after making basic change in the Indian agriculture, things did not go out of control. Even in 1943, when lakhs of people died due to severe famine, 80 thousand tonnes of food grains was exported from India to England (Violations of Nature's Rule: Decline of Indian Agriculture-Sangeetha Sri Ram). The Indian Famine created a chance for English to enslave Indians and extract work from them. So one can say that they welcome the famine. Trevelyan commented, "famine is the one of the measures to reduce excess population". He was the Governor of Madras during 1859-1860. He married Mechalay's Sister.

Similarly, British Governor Lord Wavell said "people were happy during British Rule and they ate very well. As a result, the famine came. That was his sarcastic remark. This pride and arrogance is not the feeling of an Individual, but the mind set of British Colonial Government".

Present conditions in India

In India to-day, poverty is widespread. According to Indian Planning Commission in 2004-05 years about 27.5% of the people live below the poverty line. It was 51.3% in 1977-78. In 1993-94, it was 36%. 75% of the poor live in the villages. Most of them are daily-wage earners or persons belonging to self-employed people and other landless workers.

According to World Bank estimate for the year 2004-05, 42% of the Indian population live below the poverty line of the international standards. It was 90% in 1980 (According to International Poverty Line, people who earn Rs.21/- per day in the City and who earn Rs.14/- per day in the Villages are supposed to be below the International Poverty Line). The International Table, India ranks 66

of the 88 Countries where people go without food. In India, more than 67000 tonnes of food grain are lost as un-consumable because there are not enough godown to store them.

In the United Nations Human Resources Development Index for the year 2007-08, India is in 132nd place. In 1992, it was 122nd place. India has large number of individual deficient in nutrition. India has 230 billion people who lack in nutrition. Moreover, 43% of the Indian children below five are underweight. This number is the highest in the world [nclusive Growth and Service Delivery: Building on India's Success (PDF-World Bank 2006-07)]. The growth percentage of the Countries of the World depends upon many factors. India's Growth Index is not to be proud of among the 155 Nations. It ranks at the 98th place for primary education. 17th place for market functioning. For electricity, roads and other infrastructure facilities it ranks at 86th place. Modern Commercial Facilities, it ranks at 44th place and for new discoveries, it is at 39th place (Aanaimuthu/†©È@Á£Í£Á).

Even then Indian Economy has grown in the past two decades. But it's growth is not uniform. Poverty is at its maximum in the villages of Odisha and Bihar ("Development Policy Review" –World Bank).

The warning given by "Trans-National Food Principles Research Institute" at Washington D.C.in America is worth taking serious note. It says, "More than the past, in the next twenty years, India has to struggle more for food". It says, as the gap between poor and rich gets widened, in the average man may not be able to purchase food and consume it. In the 8th Five Year Plan, the agricultural growth rate was at 4.7% only. In the 9th Five Year Plan, it was reduced to 2.1% and in the 10th Five Year Plan, it has declined to 1.8%.

The main occupation of India is agricultural only. If it (agriculture) falls, none can prevent rising of poverty and more and more Indians become slaves. But, according to writer Sainath, Indian Government is not interested.

The UPA Government in 2005-06 cancelled the tax of the Multinationals to the extent of 37,40,937 crores in Indian Rupee.

In the Budget presented by the Finance Minister for the year 2012, he has cancelled the tax of the Big Business too, to the extent of Rs.88,263 Crores.

On average the annulment for big business works out to 240 Crores.

Every day the same 240 Crore Rupees are transferred illegally to foreign Banks (Economic Research Institute, Washington-Global Financial Integrity-has given this information).

In the Budget, the worst hit was agricultural sector only among the economic service sectors (Information: Tata Institute of Social Sciences).

Not only the amount to be paid by the Big Business has been cancelled but for future also they need not pay excise tax to the tune of Rs.48,798/- Crores (Only half of this amount is spent for public distribution through Ration Shop in the entire Country).

The Corporate Hospitals which are run like Five Star Hotels were given an exemption in excise tax to the tune of Rs.1,74,418 Crores for importing Modern Medical

Equipments from Abroad (These Corporate Hospitals say falsely that 30% of the Beds in the Hospitals are for the poor and get the concession. In truth, they do not offer any free treatment for any one in these Hospitals).

For Big Business, the Budget has granted an excise relief to the tune of Rs.1,98,291/- Crores (For the last year, Rs.1,69,121 Crores).

By granting exemption to certain Industries in Professional Income-tax and Customs and Central Excise from 2005-06, the total exemption granted till date is Rs.21,25,203 Crores (Rupees Twenty one lakhs twenty five thousand two hundred and three crores).

In the last year's budget, it was stated, "the tax concessions granted to the big businesses and the tax, they have not paid are increasing and it has necessitated in restructuring it". But, in the Budget for this year, there is no change. Furthermore, tax reliefs are granted again and again.

The Government, which grants reliefs in Crores and Crores to Big Businesses says, it does not have sufficient funds to grant subsidy for food articles. It reduces the subsidy for food. The Financial Estimate Report of the UPA Government itself admit that in the past five years, the food grains available to every individual is only half of that available fifty years ago i.e.in 1955-59! (The article of P.Sainath in The Hindu,dt.07th March,.....).?

The poverty conditions that prevailing in Tamil Nadu to-day causes the fear regarding employment. Because they have strong family-ties like marriage, birth, death and other rituals. It is not easy for them to

extricate from these bonds. So, without the slave label, they are willing to work like a slave without any reflexions or they give consent. According to them, since they do not have any property, they have no other choice but become bonded labourers (India Chronic Poverty Report, towards Solutions and new Compacts in a dynamic context).

We can understand how the poverty creates bonded labourers from the following case studies.

Poverty –Case Study:

1. Periya Suruli belonged to Seepala Kottai near Uthamapalayam in Theni District when he died his son Suruli Muthu was only eight years old. So, Suruli Muthu has to necessarily bear the family burden. So, he was sent to work in a 'Murukku Factory' in Uttar Pradesh by his mother Parvathy. Suruli Muthu was working as a bonded labourer in Murukku Company near Kasiyaan Main Road Railway Station in Uttar Pradesh. Apart from twisting murukku, he has to cleaning the toilets also daily. He has to work for twenty hours a day and if he sleeps off he will be beaten up or he will be signed with red-hot iron rods and other serious tortures. After 17 years, when he was 25, escaped from there. Then complaints were given. After many enquiries, he was given only Rs.39,000/- for the 17 years of work.

2. Davamani belonged to Vadugapatti near Usilampatti in Madurai District. He sells tender coconut. Because of family circumstances, he sends his 17 years old son Vairamani to work in a 'Pappat and Murukku' (பப்பாட் & முருக்கு) Company in Keralur Region of Gujarat after receiving Rs.2,000/- as advance. After one year, he rang up the Company owner to enquire about his son. The owner casually replied "your son is missing". Davamani rushed to Gujarat. He was informed that Vairamani unable to bear the torture

of the owner ran away from the place. Davamani searched for fifteen days and he filed a Police Complaint regarding his missing and came back home. One day, a friend from Gujarat ranging up and said that they had found his son. When he went there, he found his son with injuries and bruises and mentally unbalanced. He brought him home and treated him.

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Due to debts:

Enslaving people by giving them loans commenced in India about 1500 years ago according to the Researcher Cavin Bales. Krishna Upadhyaya says that it was only in Bihar in the year 1858 bonded labourers were identified. Even though India is a pluralistic society due to language and race, India is unified with regard to bonded labourers. In a research project to study the people who become bonded labourers after availing loans reveal that in Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal have large number of bonded labourers. Even though various professionals borrowed loans, it was found 80% of the bonded labourers are agricultural coolies. When a bonded labourer is unable to pay back the loan, then his entire family and his heirs also become bonded labourers. This is because they borrow loans mainly to celebrate marriage or for funeral expenses. When a bonded labourer is handed over to a landlord, it will be just like a commercial sale transaction. Even when he goes to another landlord, his debt will follow him. Skinner says that many agricultural coolies who were become bonded labourer have committed suicide because of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. In 1956, under the supervision of the United Nations, an agreement was reached in which slavery, trading of slaves and similar practises and the organisations who indulge in it are discussed. It is said that whatever be the legislation relationship between the capitalist who had given the loan and the workers who had received the loans degenerate into bondage of labour and none can prevent it. The bonded labourer's relationship with the master did not leave other members of his family. These people caught in an invisible net or unable to come out of it. The stress due to inability to pay the loan pushes them to commit suicide.

From 1997 to till date, 1,80,000/- farmers have committed suicide because of the 'debt threat'. The Indian Government has waived

agricultural loan of the farmers to the tune of 13 billion dollars, which the farmers have availed through Banks. But, a research by Dutch Government reveals that 88% of the farmers have borrowed money from private individuals.

Dr. Rish Paul in his book says “the farmers including the people who raise cattle like goats and cows are unable to repay the loan, they have received. Since the wages they received from their master is very low. They can pay back neither the capital nor the interest. For two minutes a day there are sad stories of children becoming bonded labourers. Apart from this, old persons who are abandoned by their children also become bonded labourers”.

In a research study conducted in Madhya Pradesh, it was found that many had enslaved themselves for the loans they have received as meagre as 11 dollars. In this, 90% are the dalits. The reasons that large number of dalits becoming slaves is that they have only one property i.e. their labour. Thorat emphatically says unless the dalits are released from in the loan syndrome, they can never achieve social justice.

Likewise, persons who compelled to work against their will or the persons who do work as a punishment are also bonded labourers. The worker who is under constant threat of loss of revenue and many threats are exploited and they do not get even minimum wages. These workers who work under compulsion are in two categories. One who are bonded labourers for a long time. Another who become slaves whenever there is need according to Thorat. By whatever way you look at it, a worker under compulsion is also a bonded labourer and he will be treated as a bonded labourer. The basic reason for this is the loan that he has availed.

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Globalisation....., Liberalisation....Privatisation.

“Preliminary attempt for poverty amelioration and human development” is an organisation connected with Oxford and supported by United Nations Development Programme has released a report ‘entitled many indices of poverty’. It says that more than 42 crores and 10 lakhs people are poor in India and they are spread over Bihar, Chattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and other States. This figure is higher than the poor people who live in 26 Countries of Africa and their number is 41 Crores only.

This figure of 41 crores of poor people is the ‘achievement’ of Privatisation, Liberalisation and Globalisation. The percentage of poor in India is increasing more than its billionaires. The other increases due to the loss of another. When more and more people become poor, the handful of rich becomes richer and richer. ‘Rich become more rich and the poor become more poor’ has become the rule of globalisation.

India’s growth rate has risen to 8 and 9 %. It is necessary to look at the major fields or areas which has a major share in domestic production. Only through agriculture and industry, the Country gets its real permanent and long standing income. Only through these Sectors, the Country can get dependable income every year. But these productions has declined. Agricultural production which was 21% in total production has reduced to 2% now.

Our production has increased only through real estate, sand quarry, granite and marble quarry and coal mining and these sectors destroy nature. Once we destroy these natural resources, we cannot redeem it. Next comes the service industry. This also cannot assure fixed returns.

The income that comes from services like I.T., B.P.O., Communications, Banks and Insurance cannot generate fixed incomes, but we imagine that our gross income has risen due to these service industries.

The Forbes Journal which enumerates richest people of the world declares that total value of 40 Rich Indians is about 35,100 Crore Dollars. Except the 5% of the Indian Population, the rest struggle to earn an income to meet their needs. This is the impact of the Globalisation for the past fifteen years. The Statistics of the Government of India itself reveals it.

According to the report of Arjun Sen Gupta Commission on the unorganised job sector that 77% of the people live with a wages of Rs.20/- per day. In the lowest strata, about 7 Crores of people live in just Rs.9/- per day.

In Rajasthan, the families that go without food go by rotation that one member of the family will not have even a morsel of food. This is hunger by rotation. Such a condition prevails in Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan, Odisha and others. In Anandhapur District of Andhra Pradesh alone, more than 1800 farmers committed suicide in the three years between 1997 to 2000. Since committing suicide is a crime, the District Crime Record registered many a suicide as love failure, fear of examinations, suspicion of the spouses conduct and other similar reasons. But, in Anandhpur, only less than 5% had committed suicide in this manner. Maximum number i.e. 1601 died due to ‘stomach ache’. The agent for these deaths is the insecticide of ‘Ciba-Gegiey”. This pesticide is distributed free by the Government. This alone reaches the poor people immediately (Essay by Sainath).

According to Mr. Ganoya Weens, President, International Fund for Agricultural Development, a Unit of United Nations Organisation that there are more than 100 Crores of people who live in constant hunger throughout the world. Out of these people, 1/3rd of the people who are hungry always live in India i.e. 33 Crores. In India, the mortality rate is highest in Galakanthi District of Odisha. It is usual for these people to die of dysentery, which is the final result of hunger. One Mathan Naik says "In this Village, if a man falls sick he has to die. He is the one who lost his wife and child one after another for dysentery. In this region of Galakanthi-Polankir, Goraput where people died due to hunger for the Lok Sabha election, seven crore paths contested.

Near Galakanthi, the Kaashipur Region where agricultural has failed, people loited for food. Tribals and Small Farmers had sold away their small holding for a pittance and has become agricultural labourers and slaves. When crops failed, they grind the shells of mango and eat it. Because the people consumed fungus infected mango shells in 2001, 54 people died due to diarrhoea.

The Green Revolution of 1960 to 1970 whose aim is profit only destroyed traditional farming. It resulted in poor nutrition for the people. Green Revolution increased production. But the subsidy for the purchase of agricultural tools for the farmers went abroad.

The Green Revolution is possible only for the big landlords. It forced many small and marginal farmers to commit suicide. In all the states number of the suicides are increasing. The Economic Reforms commenced in 1990 is responsible for the decline of Village Economy and problems in agriculture. To an unbelievable level economic disparity has risen. At the same time, the hunger in India has reached in a new height in the last ten years. Village Economy has collapsed throughout India. Or on the verge of collapse. This is

because of the liberalisation policy of Government of India from 1990s. (Dr. Marvin J. Setron-Founder Forecasting International).

Professor Woodsha Patnaik, a leading agricultural economist, says that in 2007, a poor family consumed less than 100 Kg. less food than in 1997. The Government by encouraging people from switching over from cultivating traditional crops to modern cash crops has increased the cost of agricultural inputs. Likewise, market forces decided the price of the cash crops. Sainath says very high number of suicides by agriculturists is due to the cultivation of cash crops.

Agricultural income suddenly fell. The general investment in agricultural was reduced. Job opportunity is declined. There was a stagnation in employment in non-agricultural sectors (In recent times, the National Rural Employment Scheme alone brought some relief). Millions of people moved towards Cities and Metropolitan Cities. Even there, jobs were few. Since there is a planned attack on agriculture because of Indian Economic Policy, people are running towards Cities in search of livelihood. They eke out their living in City by doing construction jobs or laying out loads in hot sun. In the last fifteen years, 85% of the rural families have become landless or marginal farmers or below marginal farmers. In the last fifteen years, nothing has happened to change their lives for better. On the contrary, many things happen to make their lives more miserable.

They stayed in the City as long as they get jobs and then they returned to their Villages and again when they suffer unemployment and hunger attacks them they ran towards the Cities and this has become their life pattern. The poor usually resort to migration in search of employment and it resulted in jobs for few. But, to-day, those who are ready to migrate to get temporary job, but even those temporary jobs are not available. For example, the people from Odisha used to go to West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh

and Punjab every year for getting jobs. But, the people who went in search of jobs from Odisha were disappointed when their wages were reduced. So, many returned to Odisha again. But, the local administration is not ready to meet the reverse migration. Those who returned could not get even the right to vote if they had vacated their dwelling units (Sainath).

The only change that has happened due to Globalisation is the prices of many commodities which were available at a lesser rate than the International rate have been jagged up to the rates of the world market. The labourers in unorganised sector live without job or social security and they live below poverty line. This is the 'gift of Globalisation'.

There are certain yardsticks to measure the speedy rate of Globalisation. First is the number of people who enjoy the global resources. Let us take a look at it first. In 1960, the 87.5% of the total income was spread over to 32.5% of the people. In 1978, 82% of the world income went to 25% of the people. In 1991, only 15% of the people cornered 80% of the world income. The 17% of the people from the advanced Western Nations consume 85% of the trees, 70% of the fuel, 75% of the metal and 60% of the food.

Another Index for Globalisation is problem of Un-employment. International Labour Organisation of United Nations says that even as early as in 1991, 80 lacs job have vanished. The expectation that the Globalisation will increase the investment from the Global Organisation and consequential employment opportunities has become a lie.

Because from 1991 to 1997, 208320 lakhs of dollars were invested. Out of this, 71503 lakhs i.e. 34% alone came from abroad. The balance 64% was mobilised locally. As a result, at the beginning

of Globalisation itself about 50 thousand small industrial Units were closed. In 1992, 37% of the people lived below poverty line. In 1996, it short of to 48%. Rise in prices and reduction of subsidy in chemical fertilizers has pushed farmers towards suicide. Handloom Sector declined. Free Kitchens were opened.

Next important index is land. In the last five years, Government has acquired land, which is equal to what it has acquired during the past forty-five years. In Odisha, the Government has acquired 1 lakh acres of land for the benefit of Multi National Companies. In Goa, 11.5% of its land in its total extent is acquired for Multi National Companies and Mineral Mines. In the next five years, further 7.5% of land is scheduled to be acquired. In Tamil Nadu, the Government cast an eye on the land for Special Economic Zones. The move for privatising basic services has started. The Government is slowly moving away from its responsibilities. In Globalisation, retrenchment of workers and engaging more on contract labourers are happening. The method of 'hiring' persons when they want and 'firing' them when the job is over is becoming the order of the day. So they can start a Company whenever they want it and close it whenever they do not want it. As a result, the Trade Unions can be weakened. The legal protection for labourers will become minimum. The Companies need not go to the Court again and again. Growth can be planned as per Market Demand. These are all beneficial factors for Capitalists. Cars which are for the American and European Market are located in India and these factories are emitting enormous amount of carbon waste. The globalisation has made as the reception of the maximum amount of industrial waste.

We do not have faith on our tradition and culture. Capitalism takes advantage of this. For example, for our Country in which hot weather prevails for 200 days, Khadhi cloth is the best. For producing

khadhar considerable investment is necessary. So, the price of khadhar is slightly higher than terelene and nylon. Our people because of the foreign grace and less price buy only that. Terelene Cloth increases the stretch. The Capitalist Countries noticing this induces to buy Air-Conditioners. Then they will sell to us Air-Conditioners even at cheap rate.

In the last twenty years India has achieved enormous economic growth. But, in the Human Resources Development Index, 2011, India is far ahead of us and India is the last of the Nations in South Asia. In Health and Hygiene Sector, Nepal and Bengala Desh are at a much better position than us. At the same time, Pakistan is at the same level with us. With reference to Male-Female equality, all other Countries are ahead of us except Afghanistan.

Amirthia Sen and Jean Deries inform us “in 1990s India was at an enviable place next only to Sri Lanka among South Asian Countries with reference to total social indices. But, to-day, the same category India is in the 2nd worst place. Only Pakistan is below India. One important point to be noted is, Bengala Desh whose per-capita income is just half of the India’s per-capita income is better than India with reference to Infant Mortality, Average Life Span, Male-Female Ratio, Immunisation and other Factors”. This is a frank description of our Country which abandoned 40 years of Socialist Poverty for uncontrolled Capitalist Path of Growth.

This economic policy kills people and makes a particular group to thrive. In the Public Distribution System, Public Sectors and Nationalised Banks are for the people to grow and not for profit making. Average Indian does not want India to be a Super Economic Power. He wants only a Welfare Government, which will ensure average living for all.

So, we must understand growth means the important factors for human welfare like health, education and environment (which are not only important for us but for the necessary welfare of the entire World) and other factors should be freed from the aim of profit making and market forces. It should be happened if not totally, atleast to a maximum extent. On the contrary, after liberalisation of the Market, things have happened a just opposite manner. These Sectors are sold to the Highest Bidders. When nobody bids for them, then inefficient greedy Government Sectors eats away these Sectors. (Dr. Nissim Mannaththukaan).

Globalisation should ensure that each and every Nation is mutually benefited. But what happens to-day is Developed Countries are swallowing Developing Countries. The present context India’s Economy is determined by the Share Markets of America, Singapore, Europe and other Countries.

The times that we have achieved 8% Growth have gone and we are doubting whether we will achieve 6% of growth. India’s basic infra-structure development is only at the name sack level. The expectation that we can achieve growth without improving roads, power generation, health and water is laughable. Upto March, 2012, the infra-structure work for **7½ lakhs crores** are stagnating because of the Government’s lethargy, according to the April Report of City Group Global Markets.

In April, 2012, Standard and Poor Rating Organisation has downgraded India from ‘Stable’ status to ‘Negative BBB’. India occupies the last place in BRIC-Organisation of Brazil, Russia, India and China. As a result, Standard and Poor warned India in May, 2012 that India may have to go down by another step. Even though, these threads by Rating Organisations are biased towards Developing

Countries to the fact that having embraced Globalisation, India cannot shut its eyes to the loss of respect in the World.

Our culture is deep rooted and wonderful. The lifestyle of our ancestors was a high standard. India is rich in its culture, language and arts. We have long and rich History. But, we are forgetting about us and our ancestors. We had forgotten our traditional occupations, abandoned our self-reliance and we were enslaved for three hundred years. Yesterday Colonial Forces enslaved us. To-day, Globalisation rules us. During our Slavery, our traditions and professional expertise were destroyed. At present, they are being further destroyed.

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Unemployment Problem

In India including Tamil Nadu, every year about 86 lakhs youngsters registered themselves in Employment Exchange after finishing their studies. In Tamil Nadu alone, about 54 lakhs youngsters are waiting for job opportunity after completing their education. Out of this, 17 lakhs are women. Out of 8 persons, one is unemployed in Tamil Nadu. It is not a factor to be proud of to know that the Tamil Nadu tops in the number of unemployed youngsters. Economic consequences of unemployment can push a person to accept any job. This is the first step for slavery. A ‘few’ an American N.G.O. conducted survey of 4018 persons during the months of March and April and the people were from the Hindi, Bengal, Tamil, Kanadam, Telugu, Gujarathi, Marati and Oriya speaking regions. Even though the survey urban and rural population were more or less equal, the results were evaluated on the basis of urban and rural sectors with reference to population. The people who participated in survey was mostly worried about unemployment problem (80%). Next comes rise in prices (79%). After that it is the gap between rich and poor (72%), Grains (71%), Corruption of the officials (70%). Corruption in industrial sector(65%). So these five are the greatest concern and worry of the Indian People.

From the survey, it came to be known that only 38% of the people have faith in India’s economic policy. This is 13% less than the previous years survey. Rich Indians are more confident about India’s economic conditions and future opportunities than the poor Indians. 72% of the Indians are of the opinion that the gap between the rich and poor is the major problem.

Suppose there are five thousand jobs in the I.T.Field then 5 lakhs persons are graduating from Engineering. So educated youngsters suffer because of unemployment and low wages.

While many Tamilians are occupying very high positions in Multi Nationals like Microsoft and IBM abroad, in another corner, a Tamilian struggling to live looks for free dhothis and sarrees.

During 1991 to 2000, the Country has witnessed a growth of 6.4%. But another statistics rings a warning bell that 70 lakhs persons are unemployed. Government job has become a distant dream.

Rural employments are getting destroyed without any trace. The small scale industries which generate more job opportunities are destroyed and with any care or concern permitting direct foreign investments are the dangerous happenings of the present.

The sectors like agriculture and hand-loom which employ 70% of the people are pushed down and sectors like computers and bio-technology which gives job only to a few lakhs are boosted up and encouraged by the Government. According equal status to all subjects, depending upon number of vacancies has been neglected, according to Intellectuals.

For half of the expenses that the Company will have to pay in USA or London, Indians will finish the job in double speed and so many Companies come to India. Indians considered these job opportunities as great. But these Companies can leave India at any time. The reason being for half of the expenses that incurred in India is sufficient for Africa. History tells us the increase in unemployment will result in social disasters in the Country. The social diseases like suicide, murder, robbery, stealing, prostitution and illicit liquor will increase.

It is the responsibility of the Government to design plan that will remove poverty and illiteracy. It is the responsibility of the every Democratic Country to create basic infra-structure facilities and to create job opportunities which will help a person to lead a life with self-respect. But based on the income of the 20% of the persons who work with Computers and in BPOs, from house rent to vegetables and price of all commodities are increased. These affects rest of the 80% of the population. Countries, which are very smaller than India, receive higher per-capita income. In Japan it is 23,800 dollars, in Singapore 10450 dollars and in Taiwan 8500 dollars and in Malaysia 2160 dollars. But it is only 340 dollars in India. We must think over how small Countries which have less natural resources and less population have become powerful Nations.

They receive advance through Agents and they work like slaves from quarries to all the sectors. Due to unemployment, the pathetic condition of the rural youth are working in Murukku Companies in other States and they are forced to send their young children to work as slaves in Hotels and other concerns in Abroad prevail. In a survey conducted in Tirupur, due to unemployment and due to the work culture there, many suicides takes place. In this, more number of males (58%) commit suicide. The reasons for suicide is investigated, gap in the income occupies the first place. In a suicide letter written by a senior citizen by name Subramaniam belonging to Sarkar Periyalayam of Tirupur we find “32 years have passed since I came to Tirupur till 5th of July interest that I had to pay is Rs.21,660/-. Being unable to repay the loan I am very much distressed for the past four months. I am not able to get a job which will help me to pay the loan. I do not have any desire to live further. I do not know how to come out of this misery. I am commencing an unknown journey. I do not have any problem with my children. I wish my last daughter gets a proper bridegroom”-Front Line.

When this news was published that the District Administration created a "Suicide Prevention Cell". At first, Trade Unions were not given representation in it. After the repeated request, they were invited for offering advices. The CITU workers representative G.Sampath who participated in it says working without any holiday including Sunday and not insisting on 8 hours work by the Authorities are the reasons for suicide".

We must feel ashamed that our economic system has created unemployment and bonded labourers inducing more number of people to commit suicide.

ABSENCE OF LAND HOLDINGS

The French Revolution in 1789 destroyed the social structure based on feudalism and sowed the seeds for a Capitalist Social Structure. The powers of the Catholic Churches were plucked. Lands were retrieved and Religion was removed from education and law. The new Social Structure had powers over Government, Property and Law and also including Religion.

England which looked at with fear on the violence of the French Revolution and participation of working class on it did not destroy land ownership by Social Revolution. Gradually the Monarch's power was reduced and parliamentary democracy was brought in. Many European Nations, which were afraid off the revolt of the ordinary people, did not want to give up totally the Religion and Culture based on the Feudal Set up. Religion was necessary for them to suppress the political awakening of the workers. This was how the Capitalist Class without destroying totally the Social Structure based on land ownership it allowed its place in Cultural Sphere. In 1917 Revolution in Russia was lead by workers. They threw away the Capitalist Structure Lock, Stock and Barrel and sowed the seeds for Society based on Socialism. The Capitalist throughout the World joined hands with the Forces owning lands and they did not want to destroy it. Brahmanism, with the blessings of English retain its hold on India.

Brahmanism is a Feudalistic Society having its base in land and agriculture and the religion 'suitable' to it. It is a peculiar Land Ownership Social System. Even though it has got many common characteristic with other Feudal Societies, it has got its own peculiar characteristic called castes. Its unique characteristic of castes functions on its feudal economic structure. During the British Rule, the upper crust of Brahmanistic Social Structure controlled Government,

Government Machinery and Jamindars, the castes of the lower category were used for occupations involving physical labour. Lakhs of persons were sent abroad to work in the Estates of Englishman as slaves.

Sutras and persons belonging to panchama castes lived in Villages in their allotted spheres and they worked in the professions allotted to them and they lived with things that were given to them. They cannot even dream off education or business or any alternative profession. These persons were the reserve labour forces available for the Britishers to work in their Railways, Estates, Factories and Military. To say it openly, upper caste people became Judges, Lawyers, Industrialists and Chief Executives and the middle caste people became Clerks, Police and Small Traders and the lowest castes were used for hard physical labour.

Even after the departure of Britishers, these scenario has not changed. Because of the few reforms during the past fifty years, few persons belonging to the suppressed castes occupied high positions, majority of the people lives still in the Casteist-Feudal Social Set up. That is they do not own lands and they have to work only as coolies to earn their livelihood. During this time, they are not able to raise their voice for owning lands.

Right to own land is a basic demand for livelihood by the Dalits. This is not only an economic demand but a demand that will give them confidence against social oppression and will make them self-reliance. Out of the total agriculture labour force in India, 77% are Dalits. Among the agricultural labourers 85% do not own lands or small marginal land holders. The last 15% of the agricultural labourers are involved in labour not directly connected to agriculture. It includes the Dalits who are a majority in building infrastructure, laying of roads and conservancy field. It was declared that through

the Land Reforms Act, 1972, 20.23 lakh acres will be distributed to the landless. But, not even 1/10th of the land has been acquired.

In the total population of Tamil Nadu, the Dalit population is 19.18%. But the land i.e. in the use of the Dalits is only 7.1%. Among the Dalits, the Arunthathiar Community has been completely prohibited from owning lands. Arunthathiars are more ostracized. Arunthathiars who are in larger numbers in the Western Districts of Tamil Nadu own very little land. (Sons of the soil who are denied rights over land- (Gowtham Sakhivel).

Feudalism has not yet been abolished totally in India. In Political Idiom, it means that democratic revolution has not been completed. When Feudalism alive, how can its super structure vanished? In fact people are got between Capitalist Factors and Feudal Factors and they are struggling (Prakash Karat).

On the basis of the recommendation of J.H.A. Tremeneere, Chengleput District Collector of Madras Presidency, the British Government allotted 12 lakh acres of land freely for use of Dalits and this is called as 'panchami' lands. Understanding deeply living conditions of the Dalits, a Rule was created by him by which no one can sell and buy his land. The Dalits converted this forest and barren lands into fertile lands. But out of the 12 lakh acres of this land, only 1,26,013 acres only with the Dalits. By violating the Rules specially created for these lands, 10,17,000 acres of lands with the non-dalits against all laws.

These Dalits' lands are occupied by non-dalits only during the Rules of D.M.K. and A.D.M.K. That too only after 1972, the statistics reveal that maximum area of lands were occupied. The land gradually decreased to 3 lakh acres in 1982 to 2 ½ lakh acres in 1996 to the present 1 ¼ acres of land. What is the reason for

converting these occupied lands as raffle range and cement factories? These questions are being asked now (Stalin Rajangam). Major grievance of the Dalit is that they do not own land. This becomes the basis for all the grievances. The Land Reforms has not been implemented properly. So, 75% of the Dalits are still landless.(Sukhadeo Thorat).

In a survey of 300 persons, only 99 persons hold lands. Out of these, only 3 have more than 10 acres. 48 persons own less than 10 cents. They constitute a big group. In that survey of 300 persons, the land belonging to 247 persons are occupied by others. The land of 21 persons are under the occupation of private organisations, the land of 19 persons by the Government, 7 persons land by the Christian of the upper caste and land of 5 persons are by the Church. Among the persons who lost the land, 17 persons lost more than 10 acres and 170 persons lost from one to five acres is the shocking information.

Another distressing factor is 30 dalits have lost their lands for Kambu, Raghi and Rice. Lands were obtained in writing from 5 dalits by giving them toddy. In 1965, Government allotted four acres of land to one Senkani belonging to Melpanthal Village in Villupuram. He alienated that land for two days liquor. To-day, that land's value is Rs. 1 crore and 25 lakhs.

The lands of five lands were snatched away after giving them a sumptuous meal. For example, one Munuswamy belonging to Kuthiraichanthal Puhithai of Villupuram lost his four acres of land for five measures of rice and Rs.100/- only. A Dalit in Dindigul District alienated his one acre of land to a Tea Shop Owner for drinking Tea continuously for two months as loan on the compulsion of the Tea Shop Owner.

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Refugees

People of Tamil Nadu used to go Kodaikanal to escape from the summer heat. But, the tragic life of Tamil Refugees from Ceylon who were working as bonded labourers in Coups made the cold place make very hot (1996). The entire Nation turned and looked at the incident.

In Kodaikanal stripping the pines off their barks with the permission of the Forest Department has been going on for many number of years. These barks are the raw materials for seasoning the leather and so organisations like TAN India, Viscose and others bought them wholesale at Kodaikanal. After bidding successfully the auction conducted by the Forest Department, they will have to cut down the trees at the notified places in the Forest and then strip the trees off their barks. Throughout the year, the job will be going on. But, the places in which the trees are available will be different at

each time. Lot of labourers will be required for that. Since the work is too much, organisations like TAN India, after bidding the auction successfully will entrust the Contractors to strip the trees off their barks. Then they will collect the barks from the Contractor. For the job of extensive travel in the hilly and forest region it will be difficult to get labourers for the Contractors. At this juncture, they were able to get refugees from Sri Lanka as workers.

The Sri Lankan Refugees who were doing odd jobs in shops or as coolies were tempted with the liberal promise that they will be given woollen blankets, their children will be educated, medical care for all in the family and we will give houses for you and gave them hundred or hundred and fifty rupees as advance and they were taken to the coups in the forest. After that their life will end almost in the forest itself.

The reason being the Contractors will not give them the salary they promised for the work they had done. So they could not go out and work elsewhere. While so, a group of student studied their life for the project and then only, the news began to leak out. One Siva Santha Kumar gave a petition to the Sub-Collector Kur Nikal Singh that “Refugees are treated as bonded labourers by the Contractors” and then the problem became hot.

After receiving the petition Kur Nikal Singh directly visited the coup. On seeing the Sub-Collector, the workers who were stripping the trees and collecting the barks surrounded him and pleaded “they are not giving us the wages for the work that we had done. Every day we are dying of hunger. Please save us”. The media also highlighted the problem.

We will be wondering and shocked at the same time that all these things happened just thirty years ago. The words they poured out still brushing our memory even after many years.

The Sri Lankan Tamil Refugee by name Kasirajan deposed “after landing from Sri Lanka, we were temporarily sheltered in Mandapam Camp and we were sent to Pudukottai. There the Tasildhar gave as Rs.3000/- as capital seed money. So that we can start a fresh life.He said we can do some small business with this. At that time, a few persons approached us and they said they will help us to get substantial relief and collected from us our Passport, Rs.1000/- and Ration Card. That is the last time we saw them. The little money that we had was also spent. Then these people came to us and tempted us with sweet words and we landed in the coup. Only after coming over here, we learned that we were cheated. A tree fell on the legs of my wife Sivapackiam and she died for want of medical care. The very next day, after my wife’s death, I was forced to returned to work. In the other NMR Coup, there were forty two families and six persons died in the same month. Two women lost their life when trees fell on them”.

Subbiah, a Refugee, has studied upto S.S.L.C. He registered himself in the Employment Exchange at Pudukottai. Since he was told, “You will get a job soon”. He did not try for a job elsewhere. So when he was struggling to get a square meal a day, he was tempted to come to coup. We came here with great expectation. My wife and I worked for twenty days. But, they deducted so much of money for this and that and they gave us only forty rupees. At one stroke, they collected our signatures on stamps in many white papers. Even the meagre wage, they are not giving regularly. To receive that regularly we have to give 10 rupees to the Maistry(Supervisor). Otherwise they find fault with the work that have done in stripping the barks or in the weight of the bark stripped. Even after doing the work, we were not given agreed amount. I went to Pudukottai to renew my employment exchange registration. They told me “we sent you interview card twice. Why you have not come”. Then only I

understood the Contractor unjustly did not inform me of the call letters because he thought I will leave with this job for the Government job”.

One Tharmakannu said “my wife in advance stage of pregnancy and I were working. When a tree fell on my wife, she fell down and swooned. There was no public transport available at that place. I gave 50 rupees to the Lorry Driver transporting the trees and took at a Hospital in Kodaikanal. The Doctor advised a surgery immediately. My wife and child died during the operation. I buried both of them at that place itself and came home walking and lied down. At that time the contractor came and asked. “Why are you lying down here?”. I told him that my wife and children died. For that he retorted angrily, “to lie down here will your wife come back? Go.....attend to the work of stripping the bark. I told him that I may be granted leave for that day only. He shouted “I do not care who dies, I want barks.Go to work or get last”. Having no other option I went to work. He said and cried. They were transported from Dindigul in Lorries and the Lorries as soon as reached Batlagundu, it will be covered with Tarpaulin so that they will not know the route in which they are going. Only after reaching the coup, the Tarpaulin will be removed. Their problems and sufferings will start from that minute.

When a husband falls sick in the coup and when he has to go to the Doctor, his wife will remain there as a hostage. Similarly, if the wife falls sick, the husband has to remain back as a pledge and the wife alone has to go. If a children falls sick then the husband and wife alone has to go. Both of them cannot go together. If they ask money for the medical expenses then their left thumb impression will be taken on a white blank paper and then only they will be given money. They will not be even allowed to eat sumptuously. They will be told that they cannot work hard, if they eat full stomach. The real reason

being if they eat well, they gain strength and run away from the coups and that was the fear of the Contractors. Above all the sufferings they underwent due to severe cold weather and the biting the poisonous insects are beyond description.

Sub-Collector Kur Nikal Singh commenced tough action against the Coup Contractors. He published openly that in a particular Coup, there are 42 families of bonded labourers and the list carried their names also. He warned the Coup Contractors to settle the arrears of wages for the bonded labourers. Similarly, the local Manager of TAN India was also warned.

But in a few days the whole scenario changed. The Ruling Class decided to teach a lesson to the Sub-Collector who acted in support of the workers. On the contrary without budging an inch Kur Nikal Singh began to initiate actions. The Collector of the District made a somersault by saying “This is not a bonded labourer issue. This is a simple wage dispute between Contractors and their workers”. He also ordered an enquiry by D.R.O. The straightforward dealings of Kur Nikal Singh in eradicating bonded labourers was not pleasant things for the politician. They printed and pasted posters against the honest man. But Kur Nikal Singh stood firm like a rock. The Government unable to tolerate his firmness transferred to him Thiruvannamalai from Kodaikanal. Unfortunately, the sad thing was the political parties also did not take cognizance of the transfer issue or the bonded labourers’ issue.

At the same time honest and socially conscious citizens approached swamy Agnivash and through him filed a petition before the Supreme Court. A bench comprising of Chief Justice P.N.Bhagawathy, Justice Kalith and Justice Osha heard the petition and cancelled the transfer order of Kur Nikal Singh. The Supreme Court also ordered in the Writ Petition, “The information that is

narrated regarding the plight of affected Sri Lankan Tamils is shocking. Therefore, the status of Ceylon Tamils working in Kodaikanal to strip the barks of the trees is to be studied and a report has to be submitted to the Supreme Court. Therefore, this Court appoints the Managerial Trustee of SOCO Charitable Trust as the Commissioner. Dindigul District Administration has to extend all helps to him. Before the submission of this Report Kur Nikal Singh should not be transferred anywhere”. In the enquiry, Mohaboob Baksha confirmed that 44 Sri Lankan Tamils worked as bonded labourers. The Supreme Court ordered the steps should be taken for their proper rehabilitation.

Dindigul District Administration initiated cosmetic and superficial rehabilitation for the bonded labourers as announced by Supreme Court. They initiated superficially that they can practice Rabbit rearing in Farms. Mohaboob Baksha submitted in his report to the Supreme Court, “These people are not accustomed to that “Rabbit Rearing”. Moreover this(Rabbit Rearing) will not generate sufficient income for them. Justice Bhagawathi seeing that report expressed his unhappiness over the actions initiated by the Government of Tamil Nadu. After that, it was decided each affected family shall be given three acres of land and milks cows. The land was given to 44 families in Gundupatti Village of Kodaikanal Region and Nilakottai Region and they were also given milks cows.

OCCUPATION OF BONDED LABOURERS

Quarry Workers:

Benz Skinner, a journalist, who writes articles on bonded labourers after detailed research says, “the moment somebody says ‘bonded labourers’, the memories of ‘quarry workers of North India come to mind.’

Kings used ‘bonded labourers’ for building Forts and Castles and for Temples. Even after the exit of the Kings, the same type of work and the miseries of bonded labourers still continue. Stones are necessary for the modern concrete jungles, multi-storeyed buildings, building infrastructures like road, prevention of sea-erosion and for other essential activities. For that, rocks are detonated with gelatine sticks and then they are further broken into small stones. The saddest thing is for breaking the rocks and chiselling them into small pieces, considerable numbers of labourers are made to work as bonded labourers.

To-day, the present condition in Tamil Nadu about 5.5 lakhs are working as bonded labourers in stone quarries according to Gnanamani, Founder of Tamil Nadu Bonded Labourers Union and day by day the number of bonded labourers are also increasing.

Even though minimum wages for stone quarry workers were determined in Tamil Nadu, some six years ago, till date it has not been implemented anywhere. Further, AITUC Deputy General Secretary K.Ravi says that 20% of the stone quarries are illegal. The second Conference of the Tamil Nadu Stone Quarry Workers affiliated to AITUC was held at Dharmapuri and the following resolutions were adopted. It was pointed out that Labour Welfare Legislations are not followed in Stone Quarries and so the Government should cancel the lease to the quarries, which do not

practise the welfare legislations. They also observe lessees of the quarries have the clout of Political Backing and they are mafias. They do not any respect for law. The Government Officials are also reluctant to take action against them. To prevent the unbridled exploitations of natural sources, the Government of Tamil Nadu must come forward to run the Stone Quarries. The prevailing Modern Bonded Labour System in Stone Quarry should be put to an end, employing Child Labourers should be abolished and stringent action should be taken on those who indulge in such practises.

The Conference further resolved that till such time the Government takes over the quarries they should leased out to Women's Help Group and Workers' Co-operatives. It also resolved that the Government should take measures to prevent fatal accidents and loss of limbs. In big quarries where more than 30 female workers are present, the Government should take steps to compel the Contractors to provide crèches. Moreover, the women workers of the quarries should be guaranteed with maternity leave and pay protection during that period.

The Conference demanded that the Quarry workers should have one day in a week as a holiday. Even though the men and women workers do the same kind of work in some quarries, the male workers are paid higher than the female workers are and these disparity should be removed forthwith. Workers should be provided with ESI, PF and Gratuity benefits. The habit of foisting false cases whenever they organised into a Trade Union and consequential termination from employment is a frequent phenomena. The Government should intervene effectively and see that the workers are given enough protection to form a Trade Union.

Skinner says "being unable to repay a small loan, workers are held in bondage for generations". If they run away from the Quarries,

Skinner points out that the Contractors will unleash unimaginable violence on them. These statements are not devoid of truth.

Vellaian, aged about 40, was working in a Stone Quarry at Thiruvakkarai in Vilupuram District. The hinge men of the owner of the Quarry entered his house, thrash him severely, and track him away. They accused him of stealing him of a big hammer from the Stone Quarry. The reason for suspicion being that he sold his colleague Veerapan's big hammer for Rs.300/- on his behalf. There is no enquiry for the suspicion.

Vellian pleaded before his boss Durai that he did not steal. At one point, even he pleaded with him to deduct the amount for big hammer from his wages and let him go. The boss unmindful of his pleadings said only if he is given exemplary punishment, the others who are watching the proceedings will stay away from any misdeed. So, he asked somebody to bring a pot and went to a hiding place and after a while he came with his own excreta in the pot and shoved it in the mouth of Vellaian.

This atrocity drama was enacted in front of Vellaian's wife and other colleagues of the Stone Quarry. Even after that, Vellaian was brutally assaulted. His wife, who wanted to go away from the scene, was beaten and compels to watch the entire proceedings. All these happened because Vellaian was a bonded labourer. Vellaian, who was attacked in Thiruvakkarai, originally belong to Salem Region. His father and grand fathers were also bonded labourers. Due to poverty and because of wandering like nomads their children cannot pursue education and so having no other go they also become bonded labourers. When they died in an accident or lose a limb, they are not compensated. When they questioned the action, they have to face brutal assault.

The owners who employ these people have close links with politician, bureaucrats and rowdies. So, it is not big deal for them to suppress those who oppose them. The Stone Quarry workers not only suffer on the hands of the Quarry Owner but they also suffer bodily. Whenever a big rock is blasted, they have to inhale the rising silica dust, which causes them pulmonary diseases or diseases of the lung. The Silica Dust, when they spread in the lungs, it causes a disease called silicosis. It will definitely result in death. A study found that among the 200 workers in a Stone Quarry in Singapore, 78% of them suffer from silicosis. After that in Singapore, they adopted spraying with water on the rocks to be blasted and gave facial masks to the workers. It was found in a study after ten years that the number of those afflicted of this disease gradually decreased. It was also found that a delayed cancer called “Mesotheliumia” and “Tuberculosis” afflict people who inhale the dust from the rock for a long span of life.

Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) also warned in a Report that about 30 lakhs workers who work in Mines and Stone Quarries are easily prone to the attack of Silicosis. The Report further stressed even at the beginning of the diseased, the Medical Department should be informed and such labourers should be examined through X-Ray every year.

In the States of Jarkhand, Rajasthan and Gujarat, many Stone Quarry workers died because of the disease “Silicosis”. A NGO found that 68% of the workers working in the Lal Qua Quarry near Delhi are in different stages of Silicosis. It came to be known through a Survey that 32 workers working in Musafoni Quarry in Jarkhand died of Silicosis in the year 2002. The Human Right Commission in its report of March,2011 found fault with the Government of Jarkhand and Delhi and it emphasised on further remedial actions and granting suitable compensation to the families of the diseased workers. In a

Seminar to create awareness of the Silicosis Disease organised by National Human Rights Commission in 2011, the Labour Welfare Department of Government of Tamil Nadu submitted a Report how the pollution is controlled in the Stone Quarries of Tamil Nadu. But the Report was silent regarding number of persons afflicted with the disease Silicosis and the number of persons died with because of Silicosis. Recently, Tamil Nadu Health Minister (13th April,2012-The Hindu) announced that they are going to provide 23.8 lakhs to control the disease Silicosis among the Stone Quarry workers. A study has established that many workers who inhaled Radon Gas in the Mines of Czechoslovakia during the years 1940 to 1950 were afflicted with Lung Cancer. Majority of the Cancer Afflicted workers were non-smokers. When pipes were fitted with Mines to expel the Radon Gas, situation improved for the better. Radon Gas is measured in the unit of Becquerel (BQ-Becquerel). It is measured as so many Becquerel in one cubic metre of air and so many Becquerel in one litre of water. Radon Gas will found more in near Granite Buildings and in the Stone Quarries and the buildings nearer to the Quarries. A team lead by Engineer Ningappa which studied the prevailing of Lung Cancer in the Stone Quarries around Bangalore City it measured the Radon Gas and found it is much higher than the normal limit.

When the rocks are blasted in the Stone Quarry, one can easily see that the dusts of rock spread like a smoke screen in many places. According to law,the Quarry should be situated at least 500 metres away of dwelling units and the rocks should be blasted only during the day time and the rock dust should be suppressed by showering water over them. But none of these is followed.

Madurai District which has been severely affected by indiscriminate store quarry has more than 400 stone quarry pits. From 1991 onwards in the Villages of Kilaiyur, Keelavalayu, Thiruvathavur, Thiruchunai, Kadambur and others, stones are quarried from small

and big pits. For the hazardous job, not only local labourers but also workers from Bihar, Jarkhand, Odysha and other places are compelled to work as bonded labourers.

The State President of Sugar Cane Farmers Planichamy said that stone are quarried not only from the lands which are permitted by the Government but also from patta lands, panchami lands, porambokku lands, canals, tanks are occupied and the work goes on intensively as a consequent farmers are worst affected. The small farmers who had lost their land due to this operation are compelled to go to other places to seek their livelihood. The welfare of the stone quarry workers should be guaranteed. The youngsters below 14 years should immediately be released from their bondage and proper wages, bonus and compensation for the fatal accidents should be ensured. Moreover, if any worker is afflicted with lung diseases or others should be given proper medical treatment. Usually when a quarry worker is afflicted with the tuberculosis will be sent home and in his place another member from the family will be employed. Thus, the stone quarry work will go on. But the person afflicted with diseases will become serious and die. His family will not be given any compensation. The solution for all these miseries should be found.

Regarding this, a self-help group by name Pandhuva Mukti Morcha filed a petition against Government of India before the Supreme Court. The Bench comprising of P.N.Bagawathi, R.S.Bagath and others delivered judgement on December 16,1983. The judgement of Justice P.N.Bagawathi is of historical importance. To clear a debt incurred due to poverty, a person has to work for many-many years as a bonded labourers and it is not in consonance with the new social and egalitarian economic society, which we are promised to build. This bonded labour system is not only against the human dignity but also against the tradition of our Constitution. These

are the words of Justice P.N.Bagawathi in Pandhuva Mukti Morcha Case.

In 1996, SOCO Trust played an important role in liberating stone quarry workers working as bonded labourers. Tempted by the sugar coated words of one Agent from Sencheri Village, quite a few villagers from Perambalur and Thiruvalluvar Districts went to Gujarat. They were assured that they will be given Rs.1000/- for quarrying one cubic foot of granite and they will also be given food, shelter and medical care. Believing those assurances, 18 workers went to Etar City in Gujarat State.

Depending upon the size of the family, each one was given Rs.350/- to Rs.750/- as advance. No facility was available for the Tamil Families when they reach Etar. They were treated as bonded labourers only. They were not given proper wages for the stone they quarried. When the workers demanded proper wages from the Agent, they were threatened with dire consequences. Even the meagre salary was not regularly paid. Saying that their advance amount is being deducted, they simply started the workers taking pity on them, the local people gave them wheat rotis and thus saved their lives. They were not permitted to go near the shop in that area. They were prohibited from writing or receiving letters from the families. The requests for medical facilities were not listen to. When the workers wanted to take pregnant women to the Hospital for delivery, they were told that they could have it in their own huts. Because of this, a few lives were lost.

All these information were given by one Subramaniam, who escaped from that area and narrated the same to an NGO called "Indo Trust at Perambalur". They passed on the information to the kind attention of Shri.Mohaboob Baksha who was a managerial executive of the

SOCO Trust. All these happened in the year 1996. Based on these, SOCO Trust and Indo Trust jointly initiated action. After camping in Gujarat for ten days, they retrieved 10 bonded labourers. The Agent was also arrested. When the same team went to Boothikavala Village in Javor District in Rajasthan to liberate the Tamils working as bonded labourers, the quarry owners sensing the arrival of the team from SOCO Trust, they hid more than forty families in a hurry. The SOCO Team was threatened with Guns and tempted with sweet words. The retrieval group from SOCO and the District Collector of Javor and Sub-Collector conducted inspection on more than 10 quarries and liberated 13 persons.

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AGRICULTURE

As per the Tamil Nadu Commissioners' Report for the year 1995, the undivided North Arcot District and the Districts of Coimbatore and Dharmapuri had maximum numbers of farmers. About 6% of them were bonded labourers. Even eight or nine year old children were bonded labourers.

‘Because of the various social changes and Land Reform Act during the previous years, the numbers of agricultural workers working as bonded labourers have been reduced considerably. The old bondage system has been transformed into a new bonded labourer system. That is, the farmer becomes a bonded labourer without he being aware of it.

For example, a villager might have leased a particular land from the landowner; the landlord will advance a loan to purchase seeds and fertilizers. The lease holder shall have a share in the produce. But that will not be sufficient for the loan he has borrowed for fertilizers and seeds. He will not be rewarded for the toils in the land. So he will be compelled to go as a cooly to the landlord. When he goes, he will be treated as a bonded labourers. Majority of them are Dalits and Migrants. In this, women and children will be tortured by the land owner.

To study the conditions of farmers, a group under the leadership of Sharma Marla did extensive survey in ten States including Tamil Nadu in India. In the thousand villages the group selected, the group met approximately 4 ½ lakh farmers. In their

research report, they pointed out that 86% of the bonded labourers in farming sector are Dalits and Tribals. 25% of them are less than 20 years of the age. Around 30% of them became bonded labourers under compulsion. 55% of them became bonded labourers due to debts. The bosses for these bonded labourers comprised of:- 45% upper caste, 15% backward classes and 35% Dalits.

A Federation of Scheduled Tribals of Puducherry submitted a complaint to the Officials on 1st April. In that it was said 35 Irular Families are kept as bonded labourers and treated very harshly in Peravoorani near Thanjavur. The Thanjavur Tashildar enquired about this and collected affidavits from the affected persons. The Irulas were used to capture Snakes and Rats. When the Government imposed many restrictions to that also, they began to languish in poverty due to unemployment. Taking advantage of their difficult circumstances, one Kaliasurthy gave an advance from Rs.2000/- to Rs.3000/- and they were asked to work in Sugar Cane Farms. On enquiry, it was found that 41 Irular Families are in Kaliasurthy's net.

Every year, they were compelled to harvest Sugarcane from November to June in Sugarcane Farms in Thanjavur and Pudukottai. For a two member family, one Kg.rice and Rs.10/- as wages were given. For families above two members, 2 Kgs.of rice and Rs.20/- as wages. For lack of shelter, children and women were compelled to sleep in the open.

For seven years, they were paid above-mentioned daily wages only. That apart, they were not paid even a pie as wages.

Those who resisted and did not co-operate were thrashed severely. Whenever they demanded etc.wages they were threatened that interest for the advance amount of Rs.2000/- or Rs.3000/-, the interest is not cleared.

R.Murugan(43 years) belong to Thandikudi Village in Kodaikanal Taluk, Dindigul District. He belongs to Scheduled Tribe category. He lived there with his father, wife and children. He and his wife were agricultural coolies. At this juncture, one Gunasekaran, a Clerk in Thandikudi Higher Secondary School approached him. He said they will be given Rs.2,400/- per month and it is enough to work in the day time only and they can stay in his garden. Believing that, Murugan also went there. Murugan narrates what happened to him there below:-

“I went there believing his words. But, in 11 acres of land, one has to plug Coffee beans and harvest in pepper from pepper vines by claiming trees. One has to work day and night. When they found difficulty in working Kennedy threatened them that he will be murdered. One has to wash the plates of the guests. We were often scolded as “Tribals roaming in the Streets and we were scolded by calling our caste names” . I was not allowed to go outside. I ran away after three months. Two months ago, when I was buying Kerosene in the Ration Shop, Kennedy saw me. He scolded me in un-parliamentary words and beat me with his chappals. All these happened in front of public. He further shouted either you come to work or you will be killed. I gave the complaint to the Police. I was told that my complaint will be accepted if I remove the Casteist allegations, I wrote as they directed”.

Their affidavits confirm that bonded labourer system still prevails and continues.

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BONDED LABOURERS IN RICE MILL

National Women's Commission conducted a survey a few years ago and found that there are more than 10000 bonded labourers in Rice Mills in Red Hills area of Thiruvallur District. They are all employed in 500 Rice Mills in this District. They had become bonded labourers because they had borrowed money from Rs.100/- to Rs.50,000/-.

They have to work for 16 hours a day. Their wages are disbursed in a strange manner. If a family of four work continuously for four days, they will be paid Rs.240/-. That is each one of them will be paid at the rate of Rs.15/- per day. This is 1/8th of the prescribed minimum wage.

About thousand families of the bonded labourers belonged to Irular Caste. They have to reside within the Rice Mill Campus. So going out or educating the children is ruled out. If the Rice Mill in which they are employed does not have sufficient work, 'they will be rented out' to other Rice Mills. Suppose the Rice Mill is closed, then they will be sold to the owners of other Rice Mills.

Majority of those work in the Mills are from other Districts of Tamil Nadu. They have received advance to the maximum of Rs.5000/- before joining employment. Because the rate of rate of interest is high the amount that is borrowed gets increased if the interest is added to that. Therefore, their heirs also have to work as bonded labourers in this occupation from generation to generation. They have to reside necessarily in the huts nearer to the thrashing

floor of the Rice Mill.(Kannan, Ramya-1000 families in bonded labour).

Nearly five years after the release of all these news and information , the bonded labourers working in Rice Mills of Thiruvallur District were released and the news that many more are being released is shocking.

There are large number of Rice Mills and Thrashing Floors in Thiruvallur District. Lot of people from other Districts Cuddalore, Viluppuram and Thiruvannamalai believing the tempting words of the middlemen, they come over here and work. Each family is paid an advance ranging from Rs.25,000/- to Rs.50,000/-. They will get a reduced amount because major chunk is taken away by the middlemen. They build up small huts without any amenities near the work spot and work.

The few who escaped gave information to Revenue Divisional Officers and they came and rescued others from Rice Mills. In the last year, Revenue Officials rescued 434 bonded labourers after a surprise check in Rice Mills and Brick Kilns of Konthavakkam, Aattanthangal, Balavayal, Pulikulam and other areas. Recently 47 bonded labourers working in the thrashing floors including 15 women and 17 boys and girls were rescued by the Revenue Officials in the Aattanthangal area.

Similarly, Ponneri R.D.O. rescued the bonded labourers working in Rice Mills of the village of Sekanyam near Kummudipoondi Town. So we can infer that bonded labourers are still working in Rice Mills.

BONDED LABOURERS IN BRICK KILN

Even to-day Brick Kilns employed lot of bonded labourers. Even though it is vehemently denied the recent incidents show that there are bonded labourers working in brick kilns as in the past. In 1995, the Supreme Court constituted a Committee to do a survey regarding the workers of Brick Kilns in two States of India. As per that report, in Pudukottai District alone 25,000 workers were employed in Brick Kilns. Among them 80% are bonded labourers. They became bonded labourers because they had borrowed money to the tune of Rs.5000/- to Rs.10000/-. They were paid only 60% of the wages for the work they have done. The balance amount is adjusted towards the loan and its interest. There is no fixed hours of work. In continuation of this, it was found that there are bonded labourers in Brick Kilns in other Districts also. Majority of the bonded labourers are Dalits and that too who had migrated from other places, according to that report.

Apart from that recently Isabelle Guerin of University of Paris did a research on the Brick Kilns of Tamil Nadu says, “the growth of Brick Kilns has affected agricultural operations. At the same time, they get a higher amount as advance. So even though they have become slaves, their purchasing power has increased. At the same time, the level of exploitation has also increased. Without political pressure, it is very difficult to rescue the Brick Kilns workers who have received loan or advance.”

According to Venkatesan, a Researcher, “To meet the demands of the increased infrastructural works, many workers are

attracted by the higher amount of advance to work in the Brick Kilns. Among them 76.7% are agricultural coolies. They are given a higher amount as advance. In 2000, they were given Rs.8,444/- (?). Now it is increased to Rs.16,214/-. Even then they spent 91.3% for food”.

The incidents that happened just before three years ago, show that there are bonded labourers in Brick Kilns even after all these years.

One Muniyammal (28) belonging to Hindu Irular Scheduled Caste of Pinnannur Village of Villupuram District sent a complaint to National Human Rights Commission has said, “Myself and my husband were tortured by Mariappan, the owner of the Brick Kiln, as bonded labourers. We have to get up at 3 O’ Clock in the morning and commence work by 4 O’ Clock. He also insulted us by talking about in humiliating manner. When asked why he was talking like that he thrashed us. He also talked ill of my character”. Muniyammal had received Rs.15,000/- as advance from the Brick Kiln owner. Similarly Chandran of Kallupalli Village in Thenkanikottai Taluk of Krishnagiri District said “13 persons of my family including me worked as bonded labourers in the Brick Kiln owned by Babu Reddy of Muthukottai Thinnai Village near Aanaikkal in Karnataka State. He used to whip us with his belt. We were locked up in dark rooms. We escaped from there. Now he is threatening us and we are full of fear”. All of them have received an advance. They were paid Rs.900/- per week as wages. Out of that 1/3rd will be deducted for loan.

Rajamanickam (39) of K.Thattumaal Village of Kumbakonam Taluk in Thanjavur District, a bonded labourer, who was rescued last year says, “My wife Radha and I received at two

stages Rs.15,000/- as advance and we went to work the Brick Kiln belonging to Thazhai Paramasivam of Thevanancherry Village. We were accommodated in huts measuring 5 ft X 5 ft. We were compelled to stay there and became bonded labourer. When we could not work due to sickness we were thrashed with heavy stick(?). We worked for a year and repaid the loan. But the Kiln owner said there is an arrears of loan to the tune of Rs.17,000/-. In the quarrel due to that I was attacked by three persons. My skull was broken and I was admitted in a Government Hospital where I was stitched at 12 places. My elder sister Vijaya who tried to prevent assault was attacked on the legs and on her head. Her wrist was fractured. Even though a case is registered against them, they are compelling as to pay them.

More than 63 persons belonging to Irular Scheduled Caste were working as bonded labourers in a Brick Kiln in the Pakkam Village near Thiruvallur. Aasaimani sent a message to an N.G.O., “We are here as Bonded Labourers, rescue us.” Aasaimani told us,

“I was living with my wife, son and daughter in Krishnapuram of Senji Taluk in Villupuram District. My son and daughter were studying in School. We belong to Irular Scheduled Caste Community. I was working as a cooli. Even though, I was not paid much, we were leading a contended life with what we have got”.

“In the last 2007, Lakshmanan of Senji came to our village and met me. He tempted us with a word, ‘They are recruiting for a Brick Kiln in Pakkam Village of Thiruvallur District. You bring your Community people. You will be given a free place to stay. Before you report for work, you will be paid an amount as advance. Apart

from that you will be paid salary every month'. I conveyed the information to my relatives. They expressed their desire to work. I informed Lakshmanan of the desire of my people. He gave a small amount as advance and asked me to keep it. We divided that amount among ourselves. On the assurance of Lakshmanan, about sixty of us belonging to eighteen families went to work in Brick Kilns. Among us, nine are below 18 years of age. Children education stopped with that'

"There were about six hundred persons working in our Brick Kiln. Of them, 350 are males. More than sixty are children. In that Kiln, majority of them are Irular Community people from Panruti and Aarani".

"For the migrant labourer families, they had built houses in the Brick Kiln Campus itself. Each house measure 8 ft X 8 ft. Each family is allotted a house irrespective of the numbers of the family. Like that there were 26 houses. There was no electricity. There were no toilet and no drinking water. No security for life and belongings. Nobody will listen to our grievances. For very meagre wages, we have to work for long hours. There is no chance for us to go out. There were separate persons to watch us".

"We have to mix the sand, put the bricks on the blocks, arrange them in Kiln and heating them up, all the aspects of making bricks have to be done by us. The work, which used to commence at 6 A.M. will go up to 11 O'Clock. Again from afternoon to midnight we have to work. This is the fixed hours of work. On most of the days, we have to work beyond these hours."

"There will not be any time to eat after rest. Even if he is not well, he has to go to work. Otherwise, they will make fun of us by saying 'Irula boys are fit only to catch rats'. More over they will make fun of our women folk and pass lewd comments. When we ask why are doing all these?. They will threaten us by saying Oh, Are Irulas talking back to us? Returned the advance you have received and run after vacating your places. Otherwise, we will kill you and burry you here.'. We used to keep mum".

"For cutting thousand bricks, one will be paid Rs.250/- as wages. In it, they will deduct Rs.180/- for the advance, they had given us. They will give only Rs.70/-. After all these deductions, they will say your advance amount has not been cleared even after three years."

"One time two children of us were got in the mud readied for making bricks. We begged the Manager to rescue them by using J.C.P.Machine. He flatly refused. Then all the workers in the Kiln got into the mud and rescued the children. So the work did not give us any happiness or any income. We did not know what was happening in the outside world. We became to worry about the future of our children. At this juncture, two among us escaped. We were rescued after they told about our sufferings".

To-day, in Brick Kilns, a bonded labourer system called "Pathuriya" is growing. In that, a Unit consist of Husband, Wife and their Children, the owner will give advance to that Unit. To-day, construction work is growing. There is a huge demand for Bricks.

The Brick Kiln Owners think that it is better to employ labourers from outside than the local labourers. The reason being one can extract work for long hours from the workers from other areas and pay them meagre wages. Therefore, they want families to come and live in the Brick Kiln campus.

Isabelle, Bukuth Agendra, Parthasarathy, Venkatasubramanian and others belonging to “French Institute of Pondicherry” of Puducherry conducted a survey for International Labour Organisation (ILO) regarding the working conditions of labourers working in Brick Kilns of Tamil Nadu.

As per that Report, majority of the workers working in Brick Kilns have received an advance. Out of that advance, they spent 20.5% for day-to-day expenses, 24.7% for clearing old loans, 23.3% for marriages and funerals, 9.6% for medical expenses, 6.8% for repairing their houses, 2.7% for School expenses.

The Brick Kiln work depends on hard physical work of the workers. Minimum investment is enough. Labour is the most important thing. But wages received by the workers are very meagre. This is a continuous job. So, there is no chance for the owner to suffer a loss. Even then, the condition of the workers is pitiable. Reason being not adhering to the Labour Welfare Legislations. So, no one can deny in the present circumstances, mild form of bonded labour system prevails in Brick Kilns. In May last year, there was a Conference on Demand by the Brick Kiln workers at Thanjavur. “In that “Families of labourers working in the Brick Kilns of Tamil Nadu are shattered because of the Bonded Labour System. Many families were broken. Workers have to be rescued from the clutches of the owners by

abolishing this System. The System should be banned immediately. They and their children working there should be rescued and children should be enrolled in the Scheme Education for All. Minimum wages for them should be determined taking into account rise in prices and living expenses.

The Government of Tamil Nadu should take immediate steps to establish crèche for children and palwadies in the Brick Kilns where 30 or more women work. The Government should take steps for reduction in wages for the Bricks damaged in the rains and deducting 50 to 70 bricks for every 1000 bricks as damages and they should pay wages without any denial” were the resolutions passed in that Conference.

Among the Brick Kiln workers, whether they are bonded labourers or not, only a few of their children go to School. The reason being the children of the bonded labourers cannot come out of the Brick Kilns. They have to work there even deaths have occurred there.

For example, the Village Bodinayakkanpatti under jurisdiction of Erumaipatti Police Station in Namakkal District, there is a place called Alankanaththam and in a Brick Kiln in Alankanaththam, an incident happened. In this village, there were more than ten Brick Kilns. In them many persons from various Districts come there to work in the Brick Kilns and stay in the Brick Kiln Campuses. Among them, more than 90% are bonded labourers. One Kasi of Kan Nalam Village of Senji Taluk in Villupuram District received Rs. 17,000/- as advance to join one of the Brick Kilns as the worker. Since he was

not well, his wife and one of his three sons aged about twelve by name Anand work in that Brick Kiln.

In the present juncture, Kasi has stood guarantee for a few others to join the Brick Kilns as workers. Among them three persons had ran away unable to bear the hard and tough work. The owner of the Brick Kiln, one Murugesan called Kasi and shouted and threatened, “You are responsible for the four run away persons for whom you have guaranteed. You must bring persons who will do their work. If you do not bring that will be end of you”. After that Kasi along with his two sons Kaliappan(10) and Murugesan (6) joined the Brick Kilns as workers. Soon, Kasi’s health worsen and so he and his wife were sent to the native village for treatment.

His work was shared by his three children, who are working in the same Brick Kiln. One day Kasi received a phone call from the Brick Kiln and he was informed “your son Kaliappan(10) died. Come and take his body”. But Kasi suspected his son’s death and so protested and agitated. Only after agitation, Police registered a case. Postmortem was conducted on the body of the boy Kaliappan after a lapse of 78 hours.

As far as Tamil Nadu is concerned, Brick making is done to a very great extent in Chengleput area. There are about 15000 workers in this Industry. As per the enumeration of International Labour Organisation, there are 8000 workers from Villupuram District, 3000 workers from Madurai District and 4000 workers from Tirunelveli District to work in the Brick Kilns of Chengleput area. Since the brick makers go with their entire family to work, the education of the children is seriously affected.

In Thiruvallur District, there are lot of Brick Kilns in Poonthamalli, Thiruvallur and Ponneri areas. There are lot of workers employed there. Particularly, thousands of workers from Villupuram, Cudalore, Velore Districts come with their families stay in the Brick Kiln Campuses and work there. They go with their families during summer to the places were bricks are made. As they move from place to place, they also take their children. Because of this, education of their children is seriously affected. As they stay in their native village for only six months and in their work sport outside the homes for six months, the Society must take a special interest in the education of brick kiln workers, according to Social Scientist.

Government must take steps to ensure they receive steady income throughout the year. The Brick Kiln workers should be formed into Co-operatives and the Government should help them to receive loan from Co-operative Societies and they should be encouraged to form Co-operative Brick Kilns. The Government should monitor whether the Brick Kiln workers are provided with proper meals, shelter and whether the children are employed in the Brick Kilns.

There is a demand for Brick Kiln workers in other States. To join them, many persons below the poverty line are migrating to such places. Particularly, many from Ponnagaram Taluk of Dharmapuri District go to work in Brick Kilns of Karnataka, Andhra and other States. There are many middlemen in this place who sent workers to other States. Many labourers are employed through middlemen who are paid substantial amount and these workers are employed throughout the year. Taking into account the poverties of

these families, the middlemen give to these workers a substantial sum of Rs.10,000/- to Rs.20,000/- and send them to Brick Kilns. There, they are given food three times a day and shelter in places but paid only meagre wages. In the initial stages the workers do not bother about the meagre wages since they are paid a substantial amount in advance. But, sooner, they realised that they had become bonded labourers and the sufferings are numerous. Even though there are groups to rescue the bonded labourers in each district, they are not allowed to function or give advice.

In the dry Ramanad District, there are hundreds of tanks in Paramakudi, Nainarkovil, Pokalur and other places. In this district, agriculture is the main occupation. Due to very poor rains in the last few years, Vaigai River and tanks have become bone dry. So, throughout the District, karimootam and Brick Kiln works are in full swing. For brick making, clay, sand and water are essential. Whether it is private land or any other land to extract sand, the permission of the District Mines and Mineral Department is essential. The Rule says that one can extract clay up to 3 metres in tanks and up to 2.15 metres in private lands. But the brick kiln owners have the support of political leaders and with the connivance of the officials, looting of sand takes place, according to Trade Unionists. Recently, on the demands of the Brick Kiln workers, there was a discussion between the Centre and State Labour Departments and International Labour Organisation in which Trade Union representatives also participated.

EDUCATION OF BRICK KILN WORKERS

The Brick Kiln work is from January to August. After that rainy season begins and so there is a slackness. In these circumstances, the Brick Kiln workers leave from their homes to other Districts and quite a few to other States. The children bonded labourers who worked in Brick Kilns are not able to study. But in general, a child of any Brick Kiln worker is not able to study.

So, the National Nodal Officer of International Labour Organisation Maria Sathya says “under Education for All Scheme i.e. Education for Children between six to fourteen, arrangements are made for the Brick Kiln workers’ children to study in the Brick Kiln itself. To pursue education in regular Schools certificates are issued.” Even to-day bonded labourers are released from Brick Kilns. That proves even to-day there are bonded labourers in Brick Kilns.

But, Mahendran, Project Officer for Villupuram says, “there is no need for the Brick Kiln workers to be unemployed for four months in a year. They can join National Rural Employment Scheme and receive wages for every day. They can avail this and avoid migrating to other places.”

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CHILD LABOURERS: WHY THERE ARE CHILD LABOURERS.

Child labour and bonded labour are inseparable. The strong social compulsions are the basic reason. Poverty, Unemployment and Illiteracy are the reasons for these two national shames. Andhra, Bihar, Odissa, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh are the States in which there are maximum number of child labourers and in other States there are considerable number of child labourers.

Even to-day, in Tamil Nadu, we find child labourers in Tea Stalls, Hotels, Mechanical Workshops, Vulcanising and Puncture Workshops. In rural side, the children are made to work in Brick Kilns, Rice Mills and other occupations. They became bonded labourers to should the family burden. In many places, the shameful thing of selling children as bonded labourers for few thousand takes place. When serious studies were made to find out the reasons for this situation for children, it was found that since 70% of the children are below the poverty line and 20% of them become bonded labourers because of the burden of loan.

In short, the main reason for children becoming bonded labourers is poverty. Even for the small loan that their parents had borrowed, children become bonded labourers. The parents are pushed to the level of sending their children to work because they are unable to receive even a small amount as loan. Even that loan is given on the basis of the ability of the child to work. There are boys

and girls who have become bonded labourers and sent to work even at the tender age of five.

Majority of the child labourers are dalits. One statistical survey says among the four crore bonded labourers, 75% of them are dalits. Not only dalits, but also those who are economically suppressed pushed down because of their children and those who live below poverty line become bonded labourers. Their Bosses do not care about their lives. To them they are cheap labourers. Not only that they do not care about Acts that protects the poor. They do not feel anything guilty about extracting work from children. That is because they do not have any social outlook. The 1843 Act of the British Government did not abolish bonded labour system. But, it only regularised the bonded labour system. It paved the way for increasing the number of bonded child labourer. The United Nations Proclamation regarding the rights of the children adopted on 20th November 1889 has been accepted and agreed by many of the member Nation. The drafts for this agreement they shaped 1942 and 1959. These agreement recommends all the rights for the children. But, many of the member nations are not interested in implementing the Articles of the Treaty. Not only poverty, but also the unreachd social welfare measures, inability to protect themselves from diseases, non-availability of standard education, unequal pay for the jobs that reach them, unbridled corruption, lethargy of the officials in implementing the Acts and Rules, no social outlook with reference to child labour are the reasons for the origin of child labourers. That apart, caste also is one of the reasons for child labourers. Child labourers are made bonded labourers. According to Skinner, in some

villages, there are bonded labourers for 200 years i.e. for eight generation.

Soosamma Varghese, the Co-ordinator for International Labour Organisations says, “throughout the World, there are 21.50 Crores. Among them, 11.5 Crore-child labourers work in hazardous Industries like Fire Works, Chemical and Dyes. Because of this, every year, 2200 children die. Lack of education and poverty are the important reasons. This method has to be abolished totally. We must ensure that not only in Factories but also in its related concerns also do not practise child labour. To ensure social development, all children below fourteen has to be provided compulsory education and Industry must co-operate with a Government in this regard.

MURUKKU IN OTHER STATES

The children to go to other States to work in 'Murukku Companies' are the first persons to become bonded labourers among the migrant labourers. The first method is that the parents are approached by the Brokers who give the parents a small amount as advance and then taking their boys with them. The other method is the boys who run away from their homes are caught by brokers and compelled to go with them. In both the methods, it is certain that the children are tortured. The information given to us by the escaped or rescued boys are that they are compelled to work for long hours without rest and without proper food and their hands being dipped in boiling oil, smearing with chilli powder and ice and being kicked in genital organs heart rending. The recent articles in News Papers about the functioning of these Murukku Companies prove that there are child labourers in that industry.

Kaliappan belong to Vedar Puliyankulam in Madurai District, his son's name Gurusamy (Age.13). This boy was taken away by one Muthu Manickam of T.Mettupatti near Usilampatti to work in his Murukku Company situated in Maharashtra. There, the boy was tortured by dipping his hand in boiling oil and his hands were burned. The uncle of Gurusamy by name Chinna Karuppan gave a complaint to Balakrishnan, the District Superintendent of Police to take action against the owner of the Murukku Company. After that Muthu Manickam was arrested by the Police. The affected boy is being treated at Government Hospital in Madurai.

Chairman of the Child Welfare Committee Manoramma enquired the three boys who were loitering in Egmore area. On

enquiry, it was found that two boys belonged to Thirupparankuntram near Madurai and another belonged to Melapalayam of Tirunelveli. On further enquiry, it was learnt that the three boys were trafficked to Amangal, a place in Andhra Pradesh and sold to one Kumar, owner of a Murukku Company. The boys were tortured in Murukku Company by stinching them with hot iron on their body by Kumar and his wife.

After that Manoramma handed over the three boys to Ms.Archana, the Additional DGP, CBCID. After a serious investigation by a Special Team of Police, an Auto Driver by name Ravi Kumar of Thirupparankuntram was arrested. He was the one who trafficked the boys. The Murukku Company owners of Andhra Pradesh were also arrested and now they are in Puzhal Jail.

One Ibrahim Shah of Periyar Nagar in Dindigul filed a petition before the High Court in which he stated my son Omar Farooq(18) is missing from 28th August, 2006. A boy by name Wasim who also went missing like my son was rescued in 2011. On enquiry, he told the Police that four boys including my son Omar Farooq are working as bonded labourers in the Murukku Company being run by Rajeswaran of Usilampatti. So, this Court must issue an order to find and bring the said boys including my son. The petition was heard by Justices M.Jeyachandran and S.Nagamuthu. The Superintendent of Police of Dindigul appeared before the Court. The Police produce before the Court Vijayakumar of Usilampatti, Murugan and Kalishwaran of Nilakottai, Kathirvel,Pandi,Boopathi of Alanganallur and Anantharaj of Dindigul who were rescued from a Murukku Company in Islampur of Kishankanj District of Bihar State near West Bengal border.

We heard an interaction with a few of the released bonded labourers. Davamani(Age.47) belonged to Vilampatti near Usilampatti in Madurai District. His only son Vairamani(Age.17) was sent to a Murukku Company in Gujarat with the consent of his parents. To-day, he is mentally affected and is undergoing treatment. We talked to his father Davamani.

“I am a tender coconut seller. Taking advantage of the poor circumstances of people like us, they continuously recruit boys for Murukku Companies in other States. One person from Vadakaattupatti village near Usilampatti who is owning a Murukku Company in Gujarat approached me last year, ‘send your son to Murukku Company in Gujarat. You will be given Rs.10,000/- per year after all the expenses’. I was hesitant at the beginning because he is my only son. Since I have few relatives in Gujarat, I sent my son Vairamani, who was only 16 years old at that time. I was given Rs.2,000/- as advance. Even though I had sent him, I was longing for him. Whenever, I contacted him over phone, the owner of the Murukku Company will always say, he has gone out.

On the day of Deepavali, I contacted my son. The owner gave the same reply. But added, ‘call me tomorrow’. I will definitely ask him to talk to you.” So, I contacted him the very next day at 10 O’ Clock. The owner casually replied ‘your son is missing from morning 6 O’ Clock. We will inform if he comes back’, and disconnected the phone. Immediately four persons including myself rushed to Gujarat.

I went to the Murukku Company where my son was employed and met three other boys. I enquired them about my son.

They reluctantly said, ‘The owner tortured Vairamani too much. He will be made to work from morning 6 A.M. to midnight. Mixing the flour, retrieving the Murukku from Hot Oil, packing them, cleaning the vessels were some of the jobs done by him. He will be given two meals per day. That too, old leftover food only. He will be made to sleep near Oven. Even he is not well, he was made to work. He suffered too much because he was not given any holiday. He must have run away because of that”.

I cried to the Murukku Company owner, ‘I sent him with you because you said you will shape him as a big man. Now you were tortured him too much and made him to run away. He gave me Rs.5,000/- and said in hushed tone, you go and search him. I will also search him. Staying with my uncle Ravikumar residing at Balampur in Gujarat, we searched for him in many places in Gujarat. Since we could not find him even after fifteen days, we gave a complaint to Keralur Police Station and returned home. I requested all my relatives to inform me if they come across any information regarding my missing son. Somebody said that my son is with a relative of mine in Maharashtra at Malaigaugh. So I rushed to Maharashtra. I could not locate my son. I moved from place to place with borrowed money searching my son.

One day, my uncle Ravikumar living in Gujarat asking me to come over there immediately. Again taking few relatives with me, I rushed to Gujarat. There, I found him unconscious in lying in bed with full of his own urine and excreta. I was terribly shocked. I woke him up and asked “How are you?”. He looked at me strangely and

asked who are you?. Then only, I realised he had suffered a mental break down and I was shattered.

I gave him treatment at Usilampatti Hospital for twenty three days. My son who was active and free was sent by me to that place and he has become a laughing stock. The Murukku Company owner came over here and threatened us 'if you say anything about what happened, we will kill and burry you. Davamani told, my life is a lesson to those who sent their children for employment.

We will narrate the similar incident like that. One Surulimuthu(Age 25),Seepalakottai in Theni District has given a complaint to Superintendent of Police, Theni. Because of his 'experience' in Murukku Companies, he has wounds throughout the body. We talked to him. "Our family consists of my mother, two younger sisters and one younger brother. My father died when I was very young. Since my family was very poor, I was sent to a Murukku Company in Uttar Pradesh when I was just eight. I was taken there by a few persons belonging to Sekkilarpatti near my village.

The persons who took me there extracted work from me as though I am a Bull. If I did not work to their satisfaction, they will singe me with hot iron. They gave me very poor quality food in meagre quantity. They tortured me like anything. I have wounds throughout the body. Because of my family circumstances, I suffered patiently. Once in five years, I used to be sent home for a week by my owner. Before leaving for home I will be threatened that I should keep my mouth shut and should not say anything to my people. The last seventeen years, I had received just Rs.39,000/- only. That too they gave to my mother in four instalments."

In recent times, the number of children being sent to other States to work is becoming less and less. The reason being that one can earn easily from Rs.100/- to Rs.200/- per day by going to work within the place. But few boys who does not like to study or work and want to spent lavishly run away from their homes and they fall into the net of the brokers. Their parents do not have any idea who trafficked them or their whereabouts. Previously the brokers in whose net the children had fallen used to draw blood from them and then sell them to people from different States.

Our Field Workers rescue the boys who run away from their homes to Madurai. On average we rescue 700 boys. We hand over 80% of the boys to their parents. The boys who are orphan we put them in rehabilitation centre and educate them. We hand over a few boys to the Children's Welfare Committee of the Government. When we ask them to tell us the reasons for running away, they tell us 'we want to spent lot of money. We have to earn that somehow."

We enquired a broker who has now retired. He said, "Previously we used to send the boys from villages with the consent of the parents only. The parents should be given a considerable amount for giving their concern. If the boys had any problem, we used to resolve that. There was lot of risk in this field. If we secure a boy then the owner of the Murukku Company used to give us Rs.2000/-."

Now the target for the brokers is the High School and Higher Secondary School boys who does not attend to the School regularly. The truant boys will not be tempted by the words, "Come and work in Murukku Company, you can become a owner soon". On the other

hand, “Come with me to other States, you can work atleast in a ‘bar’ or in a ‘company’, you can get it to contact with big shots. You can pick from there”. Tempted with these words, they will traffic the boys from the School itself. On the first day, they will be given liquor and parotta and they will be in a good mood.

Their(brokers) work will be completed, when they hand over the boys to a Senior Broker or Agent at Palani or Dindigul . For that they will be paid Rs.10,000/- as ‘broker commission’ . Here the risk is very minimum. When the Senior Agent collects 10 or 15 boys, they will be sold to rowdies or dadhas from other States.

At first, these boys will be asked to do small errands for dadhas. The dadhas after measuring their height and weight, they will send the boys to other ‘Organisations’ or ‘Quarries’ . Their salary will come to the dadhas. The small favours like liquor and free speech will keep them away from their native village. When they grow up, they will become hit men for the dadhas. They get accustomed to stealing and rowdism. The pity is that many of the boys like this kind of life. This has changed the face of bonded labour system.

Previously the boys who run away from the homes used to loiter near Railway Station, Bus Stand or Meenakshi Amman Temple. Brokers used to identify them easily and entice them to come with them to the places the suburbs or outskirts of the city. They will give the runaway boys food. They will ask the boys to inhale ‘Thinner’ and intoxicate them. The brokers used to draw blood from them at Blood Banks and collect money before handing them over to Senior Brokers. Since there are high level of security in public places, drawing blood from the boys has almost stopped.

On one side we have boys like this and another is no information is available for the boys who were sent as bonded labourers to the concerned. Nagaraj(Age 12), Maduraiveeran(Age 12), Murugan(Age 14), Kannan(Age 14) belonging to Velayuthapuram Village near Pallapatti in Dindigul District were sent to work in Murukku Companies located in Andhra Pradesh. Now nobody knows them where are those boys. The brokers are also missing. The parents of the four boys are deep in grief and they say that they have given complaint to Police. “Selva Gomathy, a lawyer and co-author of this book, who is working as Deputy Director in SOCO Trust, an Organisation for Human Rights says, “We received an information that there are many persons working as ‘bonded labourers’ in Brick Kilns at Ilayankudi near Sivagangi. I was part of the Rescue Team. We found that persons from 12 years to old age were working as bonded labourers. We rescued them with the help of the then District Collector Mr.Shanmugam. After that I began to work continuously in this Mission.”

“When we receive information, regarding boys working as bonded labourers in other States our Team goes there and rescues the boys after coming over many hurdles. So far, we have rescued 200 boys. Each boy will narrate a sad story. The parents will not be taking care of their children. In some houses the boys will be growing up in the grandmother’s house. The brokers approach these types of boys only. They will tempt the boys by promising good food and decent dress. Believing them, the boys go with them.”

“We have talked many of the boys working as bonded labourers in Murukku Companies in other States. We are able to understand that they are forced to work from 4.00 A.M.in the morning

to 12 in the midnight. Unable to suffer the torture, the boys when they try to escape, they will be captured. They will be brought back to the Murukku Companies. They will be punished severely. All contact to the outside world will be severed for the boys. So, they are mentally very much upset”.

‘The Government of Tamil Nadu has an Organisation called Missing Child Bureau. Boys and Girls constitute 35% of Tamil Nadu population. Every day, considerable numbers of them ‘go missing’. Many of them are never retrieved.’

The Organisation to create awareness regarding the evils of child labour say that there are 50000 child labourers from Tamil Nadu are working as bonded labourers in North India. Even to-day, boys are trafficked to Odissa, Andhra Pradesh and Gujarat. Only thing is the advance amount is hiked to Rupees Thirty Thousand.

Modern(Neo) Bonded Labourers

Indian Population to-day is One hundred and twenty Crores. The statistics say that India’s economic development has increased during the last ten years. As per the World Bank calculation, the poverty level which was at 37.2% in 2004-05 has reduced to 29.8% in 2009-10. The urban areas, it says the poverty level has decreased considerably.

The poverty level has decreased in the States of Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra, Odissa, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Uttarkhand. But poverty has increased in the North Eastern States of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Among the poor, maximum numbers are dalits and of them 47.4% are poor. Among the Scheduled Tribes, 41.3% are poor. Among the dalits in urban area 34.1% are poor.

In this background, ‘Bonded Labour System of the present times or Neo Bonded Labour System has come into existence. That is one can say that the borders of slavery has been extended.

That is controlling the functioning of person, stealing or kidnapping somebody else’s property or a person and in unavoidable circumstances, willingly accepting employment from a person. In this Neo Slavery System, women and children are worst affected.

Human Trafficking is the basic factor for modern or neo bonded labourers. When you traffic a person, he can control his function. In the entire Asian sub-continent, India is the centre part for

trafficking people for labour and prostitution. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), about 13 lakhs persons are trafficked in South Asia alone. In this trafficking 90% happen within India alone. In the grab of giving employment, many Organisations camp in Delhi and encouraging trafficking.

Under pretext of various reasons women are sent abroad. Young girls are auctioned. Some people have got disgusting belief that if one has sex with young girl, his venereal diseases will reduce.

The young girls who are sent to Cities to work by their parents are captured by Traffickers and kept in their illegal custody. They are continuously pushed towards sex trade. They are compelled to satisfy innumerable persons.

Particularly tribal girls from Odessa, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Assam are transported to Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, Chennai, Goa and Bangalore. The Police Department do not registered about the affected persons.

Women and girls who have earned sufficiently in prostitution are sent to work as agricultural coolies and brick kiln workers. Worst part is that their organs are removed by operations and sent to persons who give enormous money.

Every year about five thousand women are trafficked from Nepal to India. In the brothels of India, majority of girls are from Nepal and East Pakistan.

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BONED LABOURERS IN POWER LOOM, HAND LOOM AND OTHER INDUSTRIES

As per Tamil Nadu Commissioner's report for the year 1995, considerable bonded labourers are working in Thirty Lakhs looms in Tamil Nadu. Previously, 1/3rd of the weavers working in hand loom were under the control of Departmental Co-operative Societies. Majority of the hand looms weavers were under Master Weavers. Since, they could not repay the loans borrowed from them or for the loans received, they have become bonded labourers.

"In 1997, 450 weavers working as bonded labourers in hand loom industries were relieved. They were compelled to work upto 18 hours for very meagre wages", according to Business Lines News Paper.

As far as power loom is concerned, they found in large numbers in Salem, Erode, Kovai and Thiruppur Districts. The power loom owners give an amount as advance and kept the weavers as bonded labourers. Even children worked as slaves.

In the survey conducted among the Kumarapalayam power loom workers by De Nevi, it was found that "The power loom owners gave advance and sometimes more amount as advance than their needs to a particular caste people. They came in large numbers knowing that they will be given lot of money. Consequently, they were made as slaves and made to work. The advance and its interest began to increase. They were not given sufficient wages to pay the interest. They were physically prevented and troubled and kept them

there". (De Neve, Neo bondage or the interaction of bondage and resistance in the Tamil Nadu Power Loom Industry).

Balamurugan, an Office bearer of P.U.C.L, while discussing how the power loom weavers became bonded labourers, said, "Power Loom Industries were run by Chettiars. They will speak Kannada and Telugu. At that time, there were no bonded labourers in this Industry. Subsequently, the bosses of agricultural entered power loom industry and they created bonded labour system. In the same manner as how they had bonded labourers in the farming operation, they introduced and followed the bonded labour system in the power loom sector. Power Loom Sector got the agricultural farming model.

One can say bonded labour system crept into power loom section only after 1980. The Bonded Labour System in the power loom sector followed the bonded labour system of the land lords. These owners considered Left Oriented Thinkers as their enemies. Not even a single Red Flag in Pallipalayam areas. Just because, a person hoisted Communist Flags, his house was erased to the ground level. A person who has become a bonded labourer can never pay back the amount they are borrowed. They will always find fault in their work. Even when they cannot find a single mistake, they will say the yarn has moved in haphazard manner and it has spoiled the cloth and they will reduce the wages.

The houses of the bonded labourers are always the visibility of the bosses. They are under the surveillance of the bosses throughout twenty four hours. The bonded labourer and his wife

can never go out together. Even to visit the bereaved families, they can go only after leaving their children in their houses.

Police Stations are always in favour of the bosses. If a worker gives a complaint against his boss, it is the worker who will be tortured. "If he asks for the advance amount given to you, why can't return" is the usual question asked by the Police Department supporting the bosses and such Stations are in large number in that area.

According to Balamurugan, "The Police Department is not interested in abolishing bonded labourer system. Similarly, Judiciary is also not interested."

The Power Loom Owners form a syndicate and threatened the officials. A worker as soon as he hears, the sound of the Owners' 'Bullet Motor Cycle' he begins to sweat and shiver. The danger is further augmented if the Power Loom Owner happens to be a Politician or a person with Political Clout. One Govindarajan who opposed Bonded Labour System was slapped with fourteen cases registered against him in a single day. He was arrested under Goondas Act. One Prabakaran who opposed Power Loom Owners was killed very near the Police Station. A Communist Party Comrade who made public the practise of taking obscene photos was also killed between Namakkal and Erode Districts.

It is a continuous story attacking the officials who try to release the bonded labourers and murder of civil rights activists who struggle for the release of bonded labourers. In 2007, Prabakaran who was the Secretary of Congress Party's Oppressed Section for

Namakkal District was killed. Taking cognizance of these atrocities A.Mohaboob Baksha, Managing Trustee of SOCO Trust sent a complaint on 30.11.2007 to National Human Rights Commission. He requested that the thousand families working as bonded labourers should be released. Accepting his representation, National Human Rights Commission sent a High Level Committee headed by Issac and Kurilose to Erode and Namakkal Districts.

The High Level Committee camped at Erode and Namakkal Districts and inspected Power Loom Factories. It enquired the labourers. The workers deposed that they are working in Power Loom Factories for the advance amount they are received. Similarly, the Power Loom Owners also accepted that they gave advance amount to the workers.

It enquired the racket of kidney removal among the Power Loom Workers of Kumarapalayam and Pallipalayam in Erode Districts. The Power Loom Workers deposed that their Kidneys were removed for the advance amount they have received. Mohaboob Baksha of SOCO Trust also accompanied the Enquiry Committee. The Lawyer for P.U.C.L. Balamurugan, Trade Union Leaders Govindarajan and Kumaraswamy and Vijaya, the wife of Prabakaran who was killed by Power Loom Owners also deposed among others.

The National Human Rights' Commission enquired superficially and said in the present system prevailing in the Power Loom Sector is abolished, then the Industry will suffer. As a consequence many will lose their jobs. In short it revealed indirectly that the Bonded Labour System cannot be abolished.

MIGRANT LABOURERS

From time immemorial, mankind migrated from one place to another in groups. No species is exempted from this natural phenomenon. Birds and Beasts migrated naturally for food, water and sexual reproduction. By this method only, the mankind spread throughout the World.

Our Literature also has recorded migrations. General or Routine migration is noted as “Thinai Mayakkuruthal Kadinilai ilave” (உட்குடி உயர்ந்த நிலை மாற்றம்) which means when the land is loses its character and when living become stuff, people migrate and temporary migrations for education, wars, employment, going out as messenger are called as “othal pakaye, thoothivai pirive” (உதல் பாகையே, தூதலிவாய் பிழிவு), according to Tholkaappiyam (தொல்காப்பியம்) and who migrate permonantly from one place for ever is recorded as ‘pathiyezhu ariyaap pazhangudi kezhiya’ (பதியேழு அரியாப் பழங்குடி கேழியா), according to Silappathikaaram (சிலப்பதிகாரம்).

In the background of Globalisation, migration of labourers has become an International Problem. Throughout the world there are 21.4 crore migrant workers. In the next ten years this figures likely to be doubled. Advanced Nations are facing this problem. To America, Mexicans, to England, Asians, to France, Africans, to Germany, Greeks and Turks like that all advanced Nations are facing

the problem. Vigorous steps are taken to halt these migrations. But in India, it is an internal problem.

In India, about 60% of the people migrate for a living within their Districts. 20% migrate within their States. The rest 20% migrate to other States.

Every year, the number of migrants goes on increasing. As per 1971 Census, it was 167 Millions. As per 1981 Census, it was 213 Millions. As per 1991 Census, it was 232 Millions. As per 2001 Census, it is 315 Millions. Thus, every ten years, the number of migrant workers increases.

It has been calculated that 80 Million workers migrate from one State to another. 80 Million is approximately the population of Tamil Nadu. The Statistics goes on to say that among them 40 Millions are construction workers and 7 Millions are Sex Workers.

Tamilians and Biharies are also part of these migrant workers who are tortured. Almost no State in India can escape from this list.

Labourers migrate because of lack of permanent job opportunities in native places, poverty and debts. There are brokers who are ready to take them to another States to work for meagre wages. The job providers think it is advantageous for them to have these labourers in places where they do not know local language. They can extract more hours of work for meagre wages from migrant labourers than the local labourers can. They also think that there will not be any other problem from the migrant labourers. So, for tough and difficult jobs migrant workers from other States are preferred.

Even to-day, one can find workers from other States in construction works, quarries, brick kilns, salt panes, rice mills, hotels and others.

One can say this type of Bonded Labour System is for a limited time period only. One cannot say it will continue for the next generation also. This type of work does not lean towards social structure. It is completely based on economic aspects. Those who employed them does not employ for their personal work. At the same time, their aim is to exploit their labour and make money. Their relationship ends with payment of wages. They do not have any obligation towards the worker. Even minimum social security is not guaranteed to these workers.

To tell the truth, they do not know for whom they are working. At one point of time, they even forget the person who brought them to the work spot. The contractor may remember the person who brought them and the place from which they came. Till the work is over, they are bonded labourers. Then they will be released.

The poor women, who had lost their father or husband or a brother work as coolies to shoulder the family burden. When such persons cannot find a job in their own native place and even one time meal becomes a problem, they migrate to another place in search of job.

Recently, a survey was conducted about the unorganised sector workers who come to Chennai from other States for work. It was found that most of the workers are employed in construction industry. Workers from Srikakulam, Guntur, Vijayawada, Prakasam

Districts of Andhra Pradesh come and work as construction workers. Further, there are workers from Bihar, Jarkhand, West Bengal, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and other States also. Similarly, in the Kanchipuram District nearer to Chennai, two lakh workers from other States are employed. One can see them in considerable numbers in the old Mahabalipuram Road. They have come from Gujarat and Odissa States. Majority of them have come with their families.

Another horrible thing is that the payment of their wages differs from contractor to contractor. For us, a month consists of thirty days. But to them, it is fifty days. Some contractors have fixed the salary on that basis. They are paying once in fifty days from Rs.4,000/- to Rs.4,500/-.

They have to work from morning 8' O'Clock to evening 6' O'Clock. Five persons are sheltered in a shed measuring about 10 ft in length and 8 ft in breadth. Helpers in construction work are paid Rs.,85/- per day and masons are paid at the rate of Rs.150/- per day. This is 1/3rd of wages paid to construction workers of Tamil Nadu. Even if they work in the same place for four years, they will not be issued with Ration Cards. So they purchased rice at market rate only. Voters I.D. also are not issued to them.

They are not provided with drinking water or toilets in their places of accommodation. A children have no chance of getting any education. There are no street lights in the areas in which they live.

If they fall sick, then they have to pay from their own pocket to get medical treatment. They cannot escape from hips and blows. Moreover when the male workers go to work during the night, their

female folk have to stay alone in their accommodations. At that time they are sexually harassed by the local residents and dadhas from outside.

The female workers tolerate teasing, words with double meaning and even molestation. They do not tell their sufferings since they do not know the local language and also in the fear that if they tell, their job may be in jeopardy.

No official from Labour Welfare Department or Health or Education ever visit them in their places of residence or in their work spot.

Since many females deliver their children in their residences itself, they are not able to get any medical treatment. So many of the babies died soon after their birth. There is no chance of immunisation of the babies or registering their birth. Even the local health workers do not notice them.

Many mothers have to go to work just a few days after delivery. So, the children are not sufficiently breast fed. Majority of the children are lean with malnutrition having skin diseases with cough and few children are attacked with jaundice.

These children are enrolled in the nearby Anganwadies. Neither the brokers who had brought them nor the contractors do care about their children. These children do not have the benefit of the nutritious meal scheme of Government of Tamil Nadu.

As per the Contract Workers Act of 1970 and Construction Workers Act of 1996, when there are fifty workers then the

construction workers children should have a Creech. It is never followed.

The children of the female construction workers, who bring them to their work spot, are adversely affected by the extraordinary adverse surroundings. The children who spent their time in sand, stone, iron rods and cement meet with accidents sometime and many a time their health is impaired. In a survey conducted in the 17 areas where the construction work was in progress, it was found that 637 children below six years of age were found in such work spot. They were found without any protection or any care.

Even young girls have to encounter sexual harassment. In some cases, they are done to death after sexual harassment. Sometimes, they simply go missing. The Police Department do not give any importance to the complaints of the migrant labourers. Another complaint is even the complaints are received they are not properly investigated.

One cannot deny that the workers from other States are usually regarded as criminals. There is no security for their lives. One person (Vinay Prasad) who was killed in an encounter in connection with the bank robbery at Chennai, according to his wife, was a simple worker who worked in a Plastic Factory and he is in no way connected with any crime. The then Bihar Chief Minister announced that he will send his Chief Secretary and Director General of Police for enquiry. He took such a serious action because the Madras Murders shocked Bihar People.

Lakhs and lakhs of workers from Bihar are working in different States. The R.J.D. leader of Bihar opined that the workers from Bihar who go to different States for livelihood are described as 'robbers' and thereby the respect and image of Bihar is spoiled.

A news item in Times of India proves that this suspicion is correct. In Andhra Pradesh, a mentally disturbed person was suspected as a North Indian Robber and he was beaten black and blue by an angry mob. The Police Department went away without taking any notice. Thousands of persons simply 'enjoyed' the attack and supported the mob. They were happily shouting. The Police Department commented about the incident "After the encounter, people think that all Biharies are robbers. They thought that he was a North Indian and so he was beaten."

Migrant Labourers. Why?

"We come to Tamil Nadu from other States because of the violence that prevails in our places, lack of employment opportunities, problems due to debts and other reasons. Now, there is no lack of food and money. But, people look at us as though we are robbers and thieves." This is how with sadness the migrant workers share the reasons for coming out of their native place.

"Here we do not get workers with sufficient skills. Even we get it they work according to time. They waste their time by talking. So, the completion of work gets delayed. We cannot tell our customers that the delay is due to these people. For any problem, they wave the flag. When we employ migrant labours from other States, there are no problems. They work like bulls. Since they do not have families,

they do not look at the Clock. They do not complain." is the reply given by the Construction Companies. They do not bother about the consequences. The reason being the affected workers cannot raise their voices against them.

The problems faced by the migrant workers, who move from their native places to earn their livelihood, who do not know the local languages and sufferings they have to undergo are endless. Whether it is a Tamilian going to Arab Countries as a coolie worker or a Bihari who comes to Tamil Nadu to work in construction sites, the problems and sufferings are the same.

In the beginning, Tamilians did not consider the workers from other States as a problem. But, that outlook is now changing. "In future, this is going to be a very big social problem" according to social scientist. They site Kolkatta as an example.

What should we do?

Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Welfare Board does not register the particulars of workers from other States. It is said that there are problems to ascertain their age and residence. It should be made compulsory that qualified doctors should issue age certificates and Village Administrative Officers should issue certificate of residence. When there is an accident as per the Construction Workers Act, it should be informed to Labour Welfare Department. Since it is not done, it is very difficult for such workers to get compensation. The Migrant Labourers Act and Minimum Wages Act are not implemented at all.

There should be a State Level Survey and enumeration of the workers from Other States. They should be provided with proper health and basic amenities. When they are not given minimum wages, they should be declared as bonded labourers. Temporary Voters Identity Cards and Ration Cards can also be issued to them.

If all the States implement work for three hundreds in a year, then the problem of migrant labourers will be considerably reduced.

Those who go abroad.

To-day, a few women go abroad as bonded labourers who work as domestic helps or servant maids. Poverty and domestic compulsion prevent them from asking questions. The poverty of these women are used to their advantage by Foreign Recruiting Agents or Brokers. These women who do not know except to sign their names are sent abroad without being registered as 'servant maids'. Such women who are abandoned in Countries like Kuwait are reported in News Papers. Many of the women do not have money or passport or visa.

“A migrant worker, in the hope that they will get a job they sell their belongings and board illegal boats, loose all their travel documents and to settle their loan in a kitchen is also a modern slave.” is the recent remark made by President Obama. Many of our brothers who go abroad in search of job end up as bonded labourers.

Our Research regarding them.

Malaysia is a yet another Nation who make slaves out of Tamilians by giving them jobs. The tortures undergone by them are

of a separate class. A recent phenomenon is the death of the workers who are about to return to India on completion of their contract.

Muthuraj(Age 35) is the eldest son of one Lakshmi of Metilpattu Village in Vilathikulam Taluk of Thoothukudi District. He is married with two children. Three years back, he went to a place called Payanparukaal to work in a Hetel. Last December,15, news was received that he slipped in path room and died. Steps were taken to send the body to India. Even though there was mystery in his death, the High Commission for the first time bore the expenditure and sent the body to home. The Hotel owner gave Rs.2 lakhs as compensation to the family.

Abdul Salam belongs to Therkku Tharavai in Ramanad District. Mohamed Ameen (Age 31) is his son. He has wife and child. He went there as a cooly. He was murdered there. His father Abdul Salam gave a complaint to High Commissioner and others on 27.11.2012.

Rajamanickam Ramasamy(Age 51) belonged to Karanthal in Ramanad District. He was working at a place called Jalan Kalag in Selangore. On 04.11.2012, he died in an accident.

Vijayaragavan(Age 28) belonged to Thiruppoondi in Nagapatinam. He was working in Malaysia as an Ari-conditioning Mechanic. He was getting ready to return home after three years contract. He won a lottery prize of Rs.1 Crore. He was overjoyed. He not only informed his home about the windfall but also told them that he is going to collect the prize money with his Boss. That was his lost conversation. Later, his family was informed that he died in an

accident on 06.08.2012. What happened to the prize money and how he met with his death remains a mystery till to-day.

The common factor that these deaths that happened during the last three or four months is that they have completed their work contract or about to return home is the intriguing factor.

“The workers from Tamil Nadu who step into Malaysia will be given three types of job” are the satirical words uttered by locals. That is dirty jobs, risky jobs and accommodative jobs are the three types of jobs. Dirty job is the job in Hotels. Risky job is cleaning the high-rise buildings or cleaning the palm oil tanks. Accommodative job is to be at the beck and call of the bosses. They cannot say ‘no’ to any work ordered to them. About one-lakh workers from Tamil Nadu are working in Malaysian Hotels.

The bosses do not want the workers to return home after the three years of employment there. They are reluctant to use the experienced workers. Since the bosses are not ready to release them, the workers are compelled to stay beyond the time limit. This is a punishable crime as per the Law of that Country. But, the bosses who gave them employment take advantage of this fact.

“If you go out, you will land in Jail. So, you work here.” is the compulsion of the Bosses. Having no other alternative, these innocent Tamils work as bonded labourers in the same concern. If they quarrel with bosses and come out, their bosses will complaint to the Police and send them to the Jail. This is how the Tamilians are in prison and in camps.

In Malaysia without proper documentation, many from different countries about fifteen lakhs live there. The Prime Minister of Malaysia said that about Forty Thousand Tamilians without proper documents from Tamil Nadu are living there. If they are got by the Police, they will be imprisoned. After serving the sentence, majority of them will return home with the help of the High Commission there. Those who do not return will be compelled to stay in camps.

For that purpose, there are camps in eight Cities including Phenong, Farrack, Fagangsa Silangur, Sembilan, Jokur etc. These camps are more or less prisons only. The concerned High Commission will be informed about the inmates of the camps. Consulate Officials will come and declare that ‘so and so’ is from our Country and will issue a certificate to that effect and also a return ticket to the Homeland. They will be released immediately from the camps. This practise is followed by almost all the Countries. But Indian Embassy is the exception to that.

The Indian Embassy does not take cognizance of the tamilians there. Even if they come, they do not issue them with flight ticket. As a result, tamilians spent more time in these camps than they spent in the prison.

“Kamala Nathan, a human rights activist, and a social worker visited Ling Ging camp at Sembilan, an inmate by name Nallusamy Sekar, pleaded with him, kindly release me or poison me with death”. Shocked to Kamala Nathan, consoled him and enquired about him.

Sekar belonged to Udayarpalayam in Trichy District and father of four children. He went to Malaysia in 2002 to earn his

bread and since he did not have proper documents, in 2007, he was arrested by the Immigration Department and sent to prison. He was awarded four months imprisonment. Since the Indian Embassy did not issue a certificate of citizenship, he was shifted from one camp to another and he spent about thirty-six months in four camps totally.

Kamala Nathan contacted Immigration Department of Malaysia. He was informed that all the information about him was sent to Indian Embassy about many months ago. So far, there is no reply from Indian side. After this, Kamala Nathan contacted Indian Section of International Human Rights Organization and talked to them. After that Indian Embassy Officials went to the camps where Sekar was lodged. When they were enquiring with Sekar about eighty tamilians pleaded to the Officials “we are here for many years, please rescue us.”

The matter regarding Sekar were published in local News Papers. Immediately, he was issued with a certificate of citizenship and ticket to travel to India was arranged. For others, the Embassy told, “We will inform your families. If they sent the money for your ticket, we will send you home.” Now, those who can afford are trying to rescue their relatives from the camps. Those who cannot afford have to live and die in the camps.

If you cannot afford, the tragic fact is even your dead body cannot be brought to Tamil Nadu. Siva Kumar, an young man from Karaikudi, working in a Hotel in Malaysia and he was beaten to death. The Police registered a complaint and the case was registered. But when we tried to send his body, we could not gather enough documents. Moreover, his family could not afford to pay for the

expenses. So, in Poochoi Cremation ground, we performed the final rites. The pitiable condition is that a Tamilian has to die as an orphan in an alien soil.

“All these confusion and problems start with Agents. Indian Government has banned 240 Recruiting Agencies. But they commence another Agency in new name and recruit peoples and send them overseas. The workers are not given the job for which they were recruited. There the young tamilians are sold for 3000 Silvers is the truth. More pitiable is the condition of women who come to work there.

The Government order says that women younger than 35 years should not be sent for servant maid jobs. But, they are taken to Malaysia in Tourist Visas and they are employed as domestic helps. In that Visa, one can stay only for 28 days. But neither the Agent nor the Employer take notice of that. The saddest thing is they are not taken to Malaysia not to work as a domestic help but only as a sex worker.

Krishnammal (Age 45), a female from Kanyakumri District was taken on a tourist Visa. She was employed in a house. Since they did not pay her for eight months, she complaint to the Agent and the Agent taking her out of the house tried to push her in the sex trade. She sought refuge in an N.G.O. They gave her job and they wanted to send her home from her salary. But that women suspecting them went into the trap of an another Agent. When that Agent also tried to push her to wrong activities, we rescued her. She told, “Before my eyes, there women were sold.”

Like that they brought a women from Trichy and tried to push her in the sex trade. She informed us. We contacted her and assured her that after completing all the formalities for returning her home, we will again contact her. But that women contacted another Agent. That Agent pusher her into a sex trade. When we reach that place after three days, we were informed that lady was raped by about twenty persons and we do not know her present whereabouts.

A Muslim Lady from Dindigul District came over here for domestic employment. For that she had given Rs.35,000/- to the Agent. He was taken to a place at Siramban by the Agent at first. Then she was sent to a home in Jokur. He was again taken to house in Siramban. Like that she was taken from one place to another. In one place, she was insulted and so he complaint to Police. This angered her Agents.

Afterwards, a few friends of the Agent have taken her to a house and she was locked up there. She was made to kneel for many hours. They tried to sexually assault her. One day when they were all heavily drunk she escaped. When she ran for many hours, a Malaysian took pity on her and gave her free ride on his Motor Bike and left her in a next city. With the help of local tamils, she went to a tamil news paper. Afterwards, she was taken to a Government Protection Home. She informed us that like her six women were locked up in that place by the Agent. Our estimate is thousands of women are brought as domestic helps and they are sexually exploited. This is the prevailing pitiable condition of women workers in Malaysia.

Another shocking information is that many tamils go 'missing'. Ravi of Kanyakumari District came over her to work. He informed

his wife that he is going to another organization to work from the present organization. He did not contact his wife from the next day onwards. When his wife tries to contact him, she could not get the link. His wife informed us. So we went to his work spot and enquired about him. Even though we were threatened that if you come again you cannot return alive on more than two occasions our enquiries continue.

The new Office commenced by the State Government in Tamil Nadu at Chennai that atleast in future prevent Tamilians serving in servitude as a bonded labourers in foreign countries. That is all those who abroad to work must register in that Office. They must be educated through training sessions how to conduct themselves and how to serve in establishments. The minimum wages for their work abroad should be determined. Only after ascertaining that they are provided with proper accommodation, the officials should permit them to go to abroad. Similarly, Indian High Commission at Malaysia do not have sufficient space for people in distress to stay. They should take steps for that. Similarly, the Government should engage Lawyers for Tamilians in problem, according to Siva Somasundaram. Further, when we talked to few Tamilians in Malaysia, they told us that very well-built able bodied youngsters with a body shape of sportsman crying in Indian Embassy is a common site at Indian Embassy in Malaysia every day. The Malaysian Consulate has become refugee centre for many tamils with bleeding injuries as a result of brutal assault. But, the tamils who seek asylum with such conditions are driven out. So, many tamilians are loitering not knowing where to go. A few instances are narrated to substantiate our statement. Twenty two youngsters from Thanjavur, Kumbakonam and

Pattukottai areas have joined a blank making establishments at Kuluwan some three and half years ago. The owners did not revenue their permit even after two years and he cheated them by not paying salary also. So, we complained to the labour department. It was decided the talks in front of the Government Officials that all the salary arrears will be paid gradually in six months. After six months they gave only a part of an amount to five persons only. The other seventeen were not paid any thing. They were reduced almost to begging and they got some food from friends and hotels to keep their body and soul together. Since they complained to the Labour Department, others refused them work in different establishments. We struggled hard to send them to Tamil Nadu.

Like that, there is a Garment Manufacturing Unit in an Industrial Estate at Thaippees Dugbai. There sixty workers from Tamil Nadu, Bangala Desh, Nepal and other Countries were almost starving since they were not paid for nine months. The Establismments also did not remit the levy that the foreign workers have to pay to the Government even though that amount has been deducted from their salary and the Government considered the workers as violators of the Rules. We brought this to the attention of the local Government and then we sent them back to Tamil Nadu. There are many incidents like this.

When the workers realising that they do not work there and if they get work, they will not be paid and so let us return home instead of starving there, they could not, because their passports are with their establishment owners. So many are struggling unable to

return home. If the officials pass an order favourable to the tamilians, the owners simply ignored them.

Further, it is common for the Tamils to die under mysterious circumstances. It is usual for the owners to threaten the workers by saying “we will put you in black bag.” In short, it means that we will kill you and put you in the garbage cane.

We enquired the members of the family of the missing persons who died in Malaysia. We contacted at Karaikudi, the family of Sivakumar who was killed in Malaysia. His mother Manimozhi talked to us . “He was my only son. Thirty-two years old. He alone protected our family. He married off his younger sister. Even that loan is not cleared yet. I am working as a domestic help. He visited us three years back. We received the phone call on 7th of July that he is no more. We were shattered. We trying to bring back his body. We failed. One month after, the local tamils performed funeral rites. We do not know why they killed him. We could not even see the body of the son who went three years ago.” We contacted the wife of Ravi by name Anitha Kumari at Samplavilai near Marthandam in Kanyakumari District. Her husband Ravi went missing in Malaysia. “My husband Ravi has studied B.Com and Computers. We have two children. Only for office work, he went to Malaysia in 2006. He worked an organisation at Kabaar. For one and three quarters years he sent us money. Then he suffered a lot without a job for six months. He lived on the support of his friends. On 27.09.2007, he rang me up and said that he got a job. He informed me very happily. That was the last time he spoke to me.

From the next day onwards, we did not receive any information. I enquired with his friends over there. They also search for him. No news was gathered about him. We contacted the Agent who went with him there. He also told that my husband was missing. So, I requested Nagercoil Member of the Parliament, Department of Overseas Employment, Malaysian High Commission to trace my husband. Till date, my husband could not be found and she wept.

Then we contacted Suresh Kumar (Age 25) who escaped from there at his home in Keezhasevalpatti Village in Sivagangai District and the news he shared with us are shocking.

“Father is a Carpenter in a Village. I have two brothers. One sister. Both the brothers are working in Singapore. Since they did not have any problem there, my father arranged through an Agent for a job for me. The Agent told us the job is to write the bills in a Hotel and the work is for eight hours only. Accommodation and food are free. Moreover the salary is Rs.1 lakh per year. The initial cost for sending me abroad was according to him Rs.75,000/- and he paid Rs.35,000/- as first instalment”.

“Only after going there, I realised that I was cheated. The Hotel was run by a Tamilian who has acquired Malaysian Citizenship. He also owns another six Hotels like that in Malaysia. Hundreds of Tamils worked in his Hotels”.

“I was given the job of supplying the foods and cleaning the vessels. Moreover, the work is for twelve hours a day. In that, only five minutes are allotted for eating food. All the time one has to stand and work. The Forty employees of the Hotel have to stay in only

one Room. One has to sleep in a crowded way. There was also the problem of Bed Bug. For all the forty, there was only one bath room and one toilet. I did not like the surroundings. So, I met the Hotel Owner and told ‘I want to go Home’. From that minute, I was tortured”.

“The Hotel Owner, on hearing my words, shouted at me. He asked me to meet him in his Chamber. I went there. A few persons were standing there. He asked “why do you want to go home?” Before, I could complete “My health is not all right. So, it is difficult for me to work.”, I was attacked. I repeated again and again “Please send me home.”. Two of them took hold of me and administered Electric Shock on the big toes of my legs. Then, they unzipped my trousers and administered Electric Shock on my Genital Organ. I lost my consciousness. I woke up after nearly two hours in the same place. I came out. I was further exhausted. My tongue got twisted and I could not talk.”

“On seeing the torture meted out to me, the another forty three employees working in the same Hotel also began to say that they too wanted to go home. The Police intervened and the matter became public. Even then, it acted in a supportive manner to the Hotel Owner.”

“One day, the Hotel Owner told us that he had paid for them to the Agent. So, he said that we have to pay the amount and then leave. Otherwise, work here and leave after paying back the amount paid to the Agent. A few among us protested even for that and they approached the Embassy. Step by step, he sent home a few of us.

After working for one year and paying back Rs.79,000/- from my salary, I returned home with a same bag with which I went there.”

Subramaniam from Tenkasi came to Malaysia as a barber. He was not paid any salary. He was beaten up when he asked for salary. They have snatched away his passport also. He returned home after working there for three years.

Like him, Saraboji of Thanjavur went there to work as a barber. He was not paid any salary. So he left that job and went to work in gardens. He could not work there. Broken hearted, he explained to his family and requested them to rescue him from there. But, they told him that they do not have any money. He went to the Murugan Temple at Ten Caves and tonsured his head and self immolated him with petrol. Those who were nearby saved him.

There are one lakh persons like me working in the hotels there. They are purchased by the Hotel Owners. So, they cannot escape from there. The Hotel Owners always seized the passport. Even they escape, the hotel owners will inform the Police that they are illegal immigrants. The Police will capture all those who have escaped and put them in camps. Camp is a place where illegal immigrants are locked up. As soon as they enter the camps, their heads will be clean shaven. If one is well off then he can pay the fine to the Government and return home. Persons like me have to suffer there and our mind also will be shattered. Those who are mentally deranged will be left to loiter in the Streets. In each camp there are about thousand persons. According to Suresh Kumar, there are seven camps.

The condition of tamils who go to Malaysia for work for ordinary job has been always problematic. The truth is those who go out from one State to another State or from one Country to another always shoulder only misery. The tamil society which took pity on the tamils who go abroad and become bonded labourers now are stony hearted without any emotion.

Books and Articles that helped me to write the essay.

1. Modern Bonded Labourers – Servant Maids – Thillai (Feminism Web Site).
2. Bonded Labourers – Profit is the only Aim
3. Migrant Labour in Greater Chennai – Building Boom with new Bondage – Asha for Education.
4. Workers from other States considered as Criminal Descendants-C.Mathivanan.

Seasoning the fish

Last Year (2012), a public enquiry was conducted about the children particularly girls belonging to Kadalady area of Ramanathapuram District who stop their studies midway and opting to go for work. In it many female children deposed that they discontinue their studies due to various reasons. When it was asked what do they do after discontinuing their studies, they informed us they go to Kerala and work under very difficult circumstances in factories seasoning 'lobsters'. But, SOCO Trust rescued many female bonded labourers working in Lobster Seasoning Industries way back in 1994.

In a Fish Seasoning Factory in Goa, thirty-two young females of Kanyakumari District were working as bonded labourers. Many of them were below 16 years of age. They were cheated by three Agents of Rokul foods who tempted them and recruited them by saying that they will be paid Rs.1,500/- for an easy job with free food and accommodation.

They realised that they were cheated only after going there. One Indira of Petchiparai in Kanyakumari District who was lured by them escaped from their clutches and came to Nagercoil. She contacted SOCO Trust at Nagercoil and explained how they were cheated.

"Paul Raj and other Agents of Rakul Foods told us that female workers will be paid Rs.1,500/- per month and believing that to be true, 26 women from areas like Vazhaivilai, Kulasekaram and Petchiparai went to Goa."

"We were given "only Rs.100/- as an advance. First we were taken to Alapuzha Town in Kerala. There we stayed for two days in a house of Rakul Food Agent. Already there were 87 women waiting to Goa along with us. We were taken by Bus to Goa. We were taken to a place like an Island as it was surrounded on all side by Sea. To go to the work spot we have to cross through a place, which is almost a Forest. There we were put into a Small Room. Each one of us have to clean lobsters to the weight 50 Kgs. We were paid at the rate of Rs.2/- for cleaning 10 lobsters."

"We from Tamil Nadu were not used to such a type of work and so our hands were injured on buss began to come out. Many became sick and the reason for that is poor food and working without rest. We did not have fixed hours of work. Whenever a fishing trawler arrives, we will be summoned from our rooms and we will be asked to work. The male workers employed there try to misbehave with female workers." And thus read the complaint of Indira. After that a three member team from SOCO Trust left for Panaji, the Capital of Goa. There they enquired about Rakul Foods. "Rakul Foods owner David is a very influential person. He is also very rich. So it is very difficult to oppose him. One has to handle very carefully the issues in hand." Thus we were threatened. The Rescue Team from SOCO Trust went to the Factory for seasoning the fish and there they found that the lobsters were getting ready for export. The surroundings were very bad. In shivering cold, young girls were employed in cleaning the fish.

SOCO Trust Group contacted the Labour Welfare Department. They immediately swung into action. The SOCO Trust

already arranged Indira, the female worker, who escaped from them to identify the bonded labourers. The District Authorities were met and their signatures were for rescuing the bonded labourers. All the female workers whose names were submitted by the SOCO Trust were identified and released from the bondage.

Sumangali Scheme

Independent India is moving on the Road towards development. Individual Per Capita income has increased. Our Country is Rank 3 in the use of internet. More than 70 Crores Indians are using Cell Phone. A person from Chandigarh bought a fancy number for his mobile phone by paying Rs.1,50,000/-. Thus we gloat on our glory. At this juncture, in Tamil Nadu, the bonded labourers system has developed its roots needs new avathar by name 'Sumangali Scheme'.

Textile Industry occupies an important place in Indian Economy. Garment making Industry are supposed to contribute 14% of industrial production, 5% of total national production and earning foreign exchange for production at 20%.

There are many textile mills in Tamil Nadu, India. As per statistics, Tamil Nadu has 43% of big textile mills and 80% of small textile mills.

During the last twenty years, readymade garment factories have acquired a phenomenal growth. For that, thousands of organisations came into existence. All of them are export-oriented industries. Garments were made mainly for the consumption of European, American and other markets. The garments and the clothes necessary for making them have to cross many stages. Cotton after many steps becomes a yarn after bleaching then it become fit to use in the looms. The to-day's problem is employing young girls for the preliminary works.

As per the report of the Labour Welfare Department, there are 38,000 young girls under the Sumangali Scheme! Whereas as per the estimate of Trade Union Representatives and Service Organisations, there are four lakh girls.

The female workers who are contracted under Sumangali Scheme have to work for -poor wages for enormous work, no overtime wages, compulsion to do extra hours of work, denial of trade union rights, less hours of sleep and consequent tiredness and sexual harassment. They can be found in Coimbatore, Dindigul, Erode, Karur and other Districts. They introduced first the Sumangali Scheme in their textile mills.

The saddest fact is that the peculiar circumstances of our country is responsible for the creation of the social aberrations called 'Sumangali Scheme Method'. Due to wrong economic planning, many of our farm lands and water bodies are destroyed and they are replaced by concrete jungles comprising offices and houses. Urbanisation is growing at a rapid rate. Rise in prices of essential commodities, growing unemployment problem, granting legal status to privatisation, taking over lands from the farmers under the guides of 'development park' and handing over them to private parties or permitting private organisations to buy them and limitless concessions for them leads to pushing more number of people to poverty and their consequent migration towards cities.

There are lakhs of tamil families living below poverty line and thus becoming eligible for free rations rice. Those families have lakhs of children and adolescent girls. So, they are compelled to 'dedicate' themselves or their children for any available job. As a

result, children and adolescent girls go to work in newly sprung private organisations. Particularly, the sorry state of affairs of recruiting young girls under 'Sumangali Scheme' to work in textile and spinning mills run by private sector in urban suburbs and in developed villages.

What is this Sumangali Scheme? Fifty years have passed since the Enactment of Abolition of Dowry Act. But even to-day we are not able to put an end to the practise of dowry. Our social custom of giving 'at least a flower in the place of gold' has not come to an end. Taking advantage of the cultural scenario, private cotton and yarn producing factories recruit by focusing on young girls and unmarried women introducing 'Thirumagal Thirumana Thittam' and 'Sumangali Thittam (Marriage Scheme for eligible girls).

It did not come all of a sudden. At the same time, it did not come without reason. The first reason is from 1986 onwards, permanent workers in textile mills were sent out by one method or another. For example, in Thiruppur population of nine lakhs more than 50% were working in readymade garment industries. Among them, permanent workers were in large numbers. These thousands of permanent workers were sent out gradually under Voluntary Retirement Scheme by compulsion. As per the estimate of South Indian Mill Owners Association (SIMA), now there are 2400 textile mills in Tamil Nadu. In them, there are 3 ½ lakh workers. In that only 20% are permanent workers. The second reason is that there is no need to bother about Labour Welfare Act when the workers are not trained. The third reason is that the Textile Mills which were located in the Cities or in the Suburbs of the Cities began to move towards Villages from 1990 onwards. The same owners who closed down

big units started small units at different places and they began to recruit young girls under Sumangali Scheme.

The fourth reason is the young girls can be made to work more for less wages. Fifthly, for their parents in Villages, the amount Rs.1000/- sent by their 'bonded daughter' is a big amount. These are the reasons for the introduction of 'Sumangali Scheme'. The Advertisement war conducted by Private Mills also gave a helping hand.

"You can earn handful of money in three years and get married and lively happy ever after. For that, 'Sumangali Scheme' shows the way. Come and join." are the attractive words in the posters and these posters were pasted in countryside. This laid the foundation for 'Bonded Labour System' under 'Sumangali Scheme'. Next, the Mill Owners appointed numerous Agents to recruit young girls in a rapid manner. An Agent was paid a commissioner of Rs.500/- for every girl he recruited. Following that considerable number of Agents came with existence.

If one can say specifically, there are lot of people who migrated from Southern Districts to Thiruppur and Coimbatore and they were chosen as Agents. Reason being the local girls will come by seeing posters. To recruit girls in large numbers from Southern Districts, these Agents with Southern District base were appointed.

They went to their own Villages and said work throughout the year, free accommodation with mattress and pillows. Nutritious food three times a day. Egg twice a week. Non-vegetarian meals once in a month. Bonus for Festival. Seven days of Annual Holiday

per year. You can return to your home once in six months at Company's expense. Company will bear the transport expenses. Accommodation is watched by Trained Watchman. Watch T.V. during leisure hours. Not only that games material, Yoga, Telephone Facilities, New Clothes twice a year. At the end of three years contract period you will get cash from Rs.30,000/- to Rs.40,000/-. With that money, you can conduct your daughter's marriage." are the attractive words with which the young girls and their parents were lured. "These people are worried about our daughters' marriage and the parents considered them as Gods and agreed to send their daughters to Yarn Mills and Cotton Mills to work.

Why women workers?

Even though advertisement says only women above 18 will be recruited, in practise, young girls from 14 onwards upto 20 are recruited even to-day. The Trade Unionists lament in despair that even girls as youngest 12 years are made to wear half-sary and recruited.

The reasons for recruiting young girls are "the soft fingers of young girls can work deftly. Moreover, they are more obedient. They will not create any problem. Since the Scheme is for unmarried women, they will work only for three years. There is no need for us to give confirmation for work after three years." are words of a Mill Magnet, according to Lawyer Selva Gomathy in her Research Report Title "Sumangali Scheme Female Workers in Textile Mills". Even though Indian Constitution says that all below fourteen are children whether they are girls or boys, the United Nations Declaration for Rights of Children to which India is also a signatory says clearly "All

below 18 years of Age are Children”. But, in Private Spinning and Textile Mills, women from 12 to 20 years of age only are appointed. They are considered during the entire contractual period of three years only as ‘apprentices’. Moreover, apprentices, temporary and permanent workers are not appointed in the ratio specified in Labour Welfare Acts.” says so Robert Chandrakumar in his essay ‘Sumangali Scheme – Modern Method of Bonded Labours’.

United Nations Declaration for Rights of Children says that all below 18 are children. India has signed it in 1999. Even then, Child Labour Prohibition Act of India says that only when a child below 14 is employed, it is a crime. So, adolescent aged between 14 to 18 are not taken care off.

In a Survey conducted by Thiruppur Peoples Organisation regarding child labour, has exposed that in 30 private textile mills which were studied in 22 textile mills young girls and young women are employed. Among the Child Labourers, 60% of them are from Southern Districts and other 40% are from West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and other States recruited through ‘National Skill Development Corporation’.

Britto, the founder of Service Organisation, by name ‘Vaan Mukil’ which is fighting for the ‘Bonded Labour System’ for long time says, ‘Even though for the past ten years people like us are fighting against this scheme, there is no proper action from the Government. ‘How many young women last their lives during the course of employment? How many accidents have taken place? How much compensation has been paid?’. The statistics regarding this is not with the Department. Parents sent the girls as these are

respectable occupation compared to the work in Farmyards. Tempted by the commission that that is paid to an Agent, even girls below 18 are sent to work by getting false certificate of age!’.

Allocious, the organiser for Thiruppur Peoples Organisation gives shocking news, ‘In the placement camp conducted by District Employment Organisation in Pudukottai District, the Mill Owners infiltrated and recruited hundreds of girls. A few Officers in the Government Mahila Scheme joined hands with the Mill Owners and recruited young girls.’

Even though European Establishments have declared formerly that they will not buy garments made by child workers, it is not implemented in practise. Young girls are not given even minimum protection by the Local Labour Acts, an International Labour Act from being exploited by the Capitalist Demons.

P.M.Kumar, a Senior Leader of CITU says, in 1985, lot of women worked in these textile mills. Now, young girls are employed. In the Sumangali Scheme maximum number of Dalit girls are recruited. The South Indian Mill Owners Association in a Research Report has enumerated the Advantage of employing women. There will not be any dispute, quarrel or court cases. They will not form Union. So, there is no question of claiming rights. They will not take leave (Now they are given 8 days leave for Deepavali and if they do not return they will not be paid is the condition). The hours of work can be extended. There is no contract for that. They have said that the rate of production will increase from 5 to 7%/. So we are employing women. They said so in their Report.”.

When dreams die?

Sinthu Menon has written an Article based on Research recording Sumangali Scheme in Labour File Journal says “Unhygienic Small Room. In a dark room measuring 10 X 10, 12 persons are living with their boxes”

The women when they join, they were told that the work is for only eight hours is only mere word. The Cotton Mills usually have three shifts. Morning 7.30 to 2.30, 4.00 to 11.00, 11.00 to 7.00. There is no tea break even. Tea will be supplied at the work spot. But they have to be ready work even for 24 hours. Many a time, they work hard from 12 to 16 hours a day. SUED, a Service Organisation, working in Thiruppur says after the enquiry, “Most of the time, they work continuously for two shifts. It has been found that they work even for three shifts sometime”

Not only that these women are under severe surveillance by the Management, even their parents are not permitted to meet them immediately. Some of the parents have to wait for even three days after filing a request petition to see their daughters. The Parents who had come to see their daughters in great eagerness have their heart shattered when they see a lean and thin person with an anaemic face.

“When we entered many women were waiting to see their parents. They were looking tired, exhausted and faces without any hope. Their mental disturbance and tiredness and their hatred towards the Organisation are palpably visible. All of them were lean and anaemic. Long hours of hard work and unhygienic surroundings are

the reason.” Thus records Sindhu Menon, a Researcher for Labour File, in his confidential meeting with them.

Not only that. It is not their practise to take them to Hospital, whenever they fall sick. The Travel Expenses for taking them to the Hospital and Medical Expenses will be deducted from their salary. Every month they will be given Rs.200/- only. Only with that, they have to buy soap, oil, paste, sanitary napkin and all other things. Most of the Hostels supply them with poor quality food only, according to the Researchers who did the field work. At the same time when they will find when they discard the food that they do not like.

Not only that many complaints have been received that many of the Agents exploit them sexually also. This has been brought to light by a survey conducted by a Service Organisation by name SAVE.

An organisation that conducted a survey on about 1000 women who are employed under ‘Sumangali Scheme’ throughout Tamil Nadu points out that many of the women have developed problems in their spinal cards because they are standing and working for more than 12 hours in a day. But their health was never taken into consideration. Another report says that about 60% of the women are unfit for marriage after completion of three years contract.

The young girls who are inducted into the Scheme before attaining puberty, the factories do not provide them with any facility when they attain womanhood. These women have not given nutritious food to prepare their body fit for marriage. Further, there is a

complaint that in order that their production will not suffer, the organisation, postponed their monthly periods and tries to reduce the number of periods by mixing secretly hormone tablets along with their food.

At least 10% of the women who are engaged in the Sumangali Scheme suffer sexual harassment. Many of them worried about their future refused to share it with others. It is to be noted that a worker by name Kalpana was tortured sexually and killed and in that incident the factory owner and his son were arrested. This cannot be dismissed as a mere wrong information. The promise that women will not be asked to work in night shifts is never kept and they are also asked to work in night shift.

Further, a few of them contract HIV diseases as a result of the sexual exploitation. A few years ago two females working under 'Sumangali Scheme' in Karur area were taken to Hospital by the Management when they become seriously ill. Since, the sick women required blood transfusion; the blood samples were taken from her colleagues who volunteered to donate blood. When their blood sample was examined, the Doctors were shocked to know that few of the female workers were afflicted with HIV. So, they seriously investigated all the women workers in that Factory and they discovered that about 30% of them are afflicted with HIV.

When the matter was enquired, many males including the Supervisors had misbehaved with these innocent girls resulting in consequential infection. This incident was flashed in weekly magazines. The Spinning Mill was closed and sealed. But no action was taken against the wrong doers and the Management. A few Women's

Organisation sent a report to the Government narrating the atrocities perpetrated on the women. Government assured them suitable action will be taken against them.

But a few weeks later, local people got hold off three girls about 14 years of the age who were loitering in that area and the girls informed them that they were brought to work under Sumangali Scheme, but they were severely tortured during the work and they were not given proper food and so they climbed over the compound walls during the mid-night and escaped from the Mill. On being informed, the Police handed them over to their parents. But a mere enquiry alone was conducted with the Management.

It is not easy to get out by saying 'I don't like'. When the women who express their decision to discontinue from the work, the brokers who recruited them go to their houses and threaten them that the management will give you false complaint against them to the Police and put them behind the bars and thus coerce the women to continue in their miserable jobs, according to Centre for Protection of Human Rights.

There is an important difference between other Bonded Labour System and this. "In the work for loan method or in the old bonded labour system, the worker cannot quit his job. But the Sumangali Scheme, there are no visible and open bar for quitting the jobs. But, they cannot get any pie out of Rs.30,000/- for which they have been working hard for the last three years. This is a diabolic plan.

The Government ensures that even the prisoners work for specified hours only and they are given sufficient quality food. They are provided with proper medical facilities and they can go out on parole. But those who come here under 'Sumangali Scheme' for the only reason being poor have to bear all types of atrocities. The saddest of sad stories they are the persons who are denied basic needs and basic rights.

Change in Methodology:

As a result of the Trade Unions, there are two changes in the 'Sumangali Scheme'. First is transporting the female workers within the 20 Kmts. radius of the work spot by Vans. Even to-day, we can see many Vans being parked near the Textile Mills.

Next is sheltering them in Hostels. Ten persons have to stay in a room measuring 10 X 10. In an accommodation for three hundred persons, there are only six toilets and six bathrooms. In some Hostels, women are made to lie down on Jute Sacks.

Even if they stay in Hostel, they cannot move out freely. They cannot even think of going out on their own. Even for buying very ordinary things, they will be taken out on a particular day by the Warden in the Vans. The Van will be started in a particular place and they will be given an hour to buy all the things they want in the company of their Warden and return to the Van and then to the Hostel.

Only 40% of the workers have said that the food given to them is sufficient. The truth is they are not given quality food. Now the Mill Owners are planning to build Compound Walls as highly as 10 Ft. Their aim is the inmates of the Hostel should not even see the

Road. The young girls working there usually get headache, body ache, stomach ache, sleeplessness, tiredness, etc. Many accidents happened. It is because they were not trained to operated machines. They were not given training also. Cotton dusts will always be circulating near them. It will create lung diseases. When a young girl was operated for her stomach ailment, many cotton balls were extracted from her stomach. Moreover, loss of weight, irregular period and its related problems leading to her infertility.

Moreover, the life style of the women who work for three years are irreversibly changed. That is a women who was free in her home when he becomes a worker in a Textile Factory, she comes under a severe discipline. Her food habits are changed. She goes back to her Village after three years, she could not get accustomed to her old ways. Some frustrated women even dare to commit suicide. Nowadays, bonded labourers under Sumangali Scheme are brought from Aandipatti and Kadamalaikundu area of Theni District, Usilampatti and Thirumangalam areas of Madurai District, Thiruvaadanai and other dry areas without irrigation facilities in Ramanad District, Sattur and Sivakasi areas of Virudhunagar, and dry areas of Tirunelveli District. Their caste or religion is not taken into account while selecting them.

The saddest thing is the Labour Department, Police and Judiciary join hand in hand against these workers. Even the case that was filed against the Bonded Labour System in Textile Mills was dismissed. P.M.Kumar is of the view that period of apprenticeship should be determined. How many permanent workers should be there in a Textile Mill has to be decided. A Bill recording this was

passed unanimously in the year 2008. The Law Department sent that Bill to the Governor for his approval and then to the President for his assent. In the meanwhile, All India Textile Mills Association met the President and he recommended that suitable action may be taken on this matter. So, the entire file came back to Government of Tamil Nadu. P.M.Kumar concludes that all legal steps could have been taken by the Government of Tamil Nadu.

Madras High Court Judge Justice D.Hari Paranthaman spoke in the Conference held against the Sumangali Scheme and for the women affected by it. We gave hopeful words “But the Act provides that they can be given salary every month. His words should be taken serious note of. Action taken: The Government said there should be Post Boxes to every Mill to know the grievances and sorrows of these workers. But so far, 99% of the Organisations did not implement it. The Government also did not bother about it.

In a public enquiry in which women and children who were affected mentally and physically, their parents, owners of Private Mills, their Representatives, Non-governmental Organisations, Human Rights Groups, Service Organisations participated and through that the violation of Human Rights and Tortures became known to the outside World.

Based on these findings, the Trade Union CITU filed a case in February, 2006 in the Madurai Bench of Madras High Court. The case was closed with the observation, send your representation to the concerned Labour Welfare Officer.

Following this, the Government of Tamil Nadu issued various Government Orders including one on ‘Which is a Spinning Mill?’ In continuation of that, the Chief Inspector of Factories on 14.02.2007 sent a detailed report regarding ‘Sumangali Scheme’ to Government of Tamil Nadu. He has said under the disguise of ‘Young Girls Married Scheme’ (Thirumagal Thirumana Thittam), ‘Camp Coolie System’ is practised in Spinning Mills. Young women just above 15 are employed as ‘apprentices’ or ‘trainees’ for a period of three years and they constitute 60 to 80% of the total workers in that Organisation. They are paid at the end of the contract period, a consolidated amount ranging from Rs.30,000/- to Rs.50,000/-. Not stopping with that, he has observed that the amount is used for the wedding expenses of those ladies.

He has recommended that ‘in the three districts of Erode, Coimbatore and Dindigul, there are 1371 Spinning Mills totally of that in 406 Mills, 38461 young girls are employed under ‘Sumangali Scheme’. So, the ‘Sumangali Scheme’ cannot be abolished overnight. Instead, in every District a Supervisory Committee can be constituted. Based on that recommendation, Government of Tamil Nadu on 30.03.2007 constituted a Committee of five persons for each District under the headship of respective District Collectors.

In the meanwhile, Mr.Mohaboob Baksha, the Managing Trustee of SOCO Trust, sent a detailed report regarding ‘Violation of Human Rights’ under the ‘Sumangali Scheme’ to National Human Rights Commission in March, 2007. Alerted by that Report, the National Commission ordered Government of Tamil Nadu to send a detailed report regarding ‘Sumangali Scheme’ within four weeks. Following that in the 17 Districts of Tamil Nadu where ‘Sumangali

Scheme' was practised, District Level Committees were formed in June, 2007.

Declared Objective of the Supervisory Committee is to find out the Spinning Mills which employed young women as apprentices and their work environment and to recommend an action plan to prevent exploitation of such women in future. District Level Supervisory Committee also conducted enquiry in the Mills of their Districts and submitted their report.

After that 2008 Act of 'Industrial Employment(Standing Order) was amended that to prevent the prevailing practise for many years of engaging thousands of apprentices or industrial trainees that no one should be kept as an apprentice or industrial trainee for more than six months. On the basis of the urging of different parties of State, Trade Unions and Human Rights Organisations continuously, the Government announced that young women working as Industrial Trainees in Textile Mills should be given Rs.110/- as daily wage and it was confirmed by the Government order, dated,07.11.2008.

The Textile Mill Owners were not able to tolerate this step. "The Report of the Government of Tamil Nadu is in violation of Indian Constitution and Labour Welfare Act. Further, through this Scheme, the life of many unmarried poor simple village women were uplifted, therefore, the report should be annulled." and more than five Associations of Textile Mills filed a case before the Madras High Court.

"This Report is legally valid. Therefore, the Textile Mills should pay Rs.110/- every day to the Industrial Trainees, the Madras High Court gave its verdict in that case. Contesting that the Textile Mills went on appeal before the Division Bench. The Division Bench confirmed the order of the Single Judge and further said if the Spinning Mills do not pay the minimum wage for the Industrial Trainees when they have no justification for employing them and they do not have any right.

But, 'Sumangali Scheme' is practised even to-day in Tamil Nadu. In the year 2010 alone, ten women working under this scheme in Dindigul District committed suicide. It is necessary that these cases should be investigated with extra care and caution. The Affidavits filed by the women affected because of 'Sumangali Scheme' is in contradiction to the report of the District Supervisory Committee. Robert Chandrakumar in his article titled 'Sumangali Scheme" Modern Version of Bonded Labour System says therefore the activities of the Supervisory Committees are suspicious.

At the same time, Selva Gomathy, a Lady Lawyer, who found a place in the Supervisory Committee constituted by the Government says in her report "On the enquiry conducted in the three Mills in the Madurai District one can find that more than 80% of the total produced is made by 'apprentices' or 'trainees' only. Even when a women has committed suicide by hanging herself, there is no record to show that the matter was reported to the Police or whether any case has been registered or whether the Labour Welfare Department has been informed. She had gave vent to her anger

against the Government by saying the Children's Rights as guaranteed by the International Agreements are totally violated.

Direct Enquiry: We met many women affected by the 'Sumangali Scheme'. Even though, they spoke with a smile on their face, their hearts were full of sadness.

We report below the sad stories of a few women we met.

Muthu is a young girl belonging to Ukkirankottai Village in Tirunelveli District. "Father is a coolie. We were four girls. Family was steeped in poverty. I was sent to a Mill in Palladam Area near Coimbatore on the assurance that I will be paid Rs.42,000/- if I work for three years. I was paid only Rs.300/- for every month when I joined. Our accommodation looked like a godown or warehouse. For 100 women, there were only three toilets. They will take us to ESI Hospital, if we fall sick. But we have to return to work immediately on our return from Hospital."

"My friend who was working with me suddenly died. I was terribly shocked. When my father came to visit I cried and told him 'I don't want this job. My father took me home. But again brought me back after twenty five days. I was scolded for taking such a long leave. I was not given any monthly pay. I came out after working for 2 ½ years. I was informed that I will not be paid any amount because I did not complete three years. They gave me only Rs.6,000/- which was my Provident Fund Amount. Because of my poverty, I am going to work for Rolling Beedies."

Mookkammal of Sethunarayanapuram in Virudhunagar District said "My husband is no more. Because of the poverty in my

family, I sent my daughter Panchavarnam to a Mill at Kannanpalayam. They said they will pay Rs30,000/- on the completion of three years. When she had completed 2 ½ years, I was informed through Phone that my daughter was not well. I went there in great hurry. My daughter had died. I was threatened and made to sign in Police Station and they gave me Rs.50,000/-. They said they will help me afterwards. Since they did not pay anything I petitioned Women's Commission. It ordered that I should be compensated by another Rs.1.5 lakhs. But my daughter is gone for ever."

The story of Kavitha of Kambliayampatti area in Dindigul District is more heart rending. "When I was sixteen years, my sister and I joined a Mill at Kalayampuththur. We were promised that at the end of three years we will be paid Rs.25,000/-. Further, we were paid Rs.25/- per day. In that, they will deduct Rs.10/- per day for our meals. So at the rate of Rs.15/- per day we were paid Rs.450/- per month. Even that was not paid after two years. When we had completed 2 ½ years, I had an attack of Chicken Box. It was combined with headache and so I took leave. For that, we worked additional three months. So far, my sister and I were not paid Scheme Amount. Depending on that amount, my father conducted marriages for my sister and myself. Since we did not get the money, problems erupted in our matrimonial homes. I stood in front of the Mill with the baby in hand for two days. They gave me only Rs.7,000/- as my salary."

Thulasimani of Vadapalani Village in Sathyamangalm said "My father is no more. My mother became mentally disturbed. My relatives got me a job in the Mill in Indiyampalayam about five years ago. I

was told that I will be paid Rs.30,000/- at the end of three years. Because of hard work, I became sick. I was not able to sit down. I could not work beyond 1 ½ years. I stopped from work. I was not paid any amount for the months I have worked. For many days, I stood in front of the gate of the Mill with tears. They drove me out”.

Mahalakshmi of Thuvarkurichi.. “I joined three years ago a Mill at Vedasanthur. Last January, persons working for a Machine did not come to work. I was compelled to do that work. I told them I do not know that work. I was compelled. When I was working in that Machine, four of my fingers were cut off. I am not compensated till date. I could not do any work because of the loss of fingers. I am a burden to my family.” She cried.

Seenivasan, belongs to Santhampadi area in Dindigul District. He said in sorrow I put two of my daughters in a Mill in Kanchipuram District. On hearing that my daughter Lakhmi is not well, I went there to see her. My daughter whose lungs were affected died in a few days. They did not give any compensation. So I brought home my other daughter who was working there.

Nagajothi belongs to Pottalkulam in Theni District. I was sent to work in a Mill at Thiruppur as they said that they will give Rs.70,000/- if I work for three years. I worked for 2 ½ years. Suddenly, I became very sick and so I left that job. I spent more than Rs.30,000/- for medical expenses. They did not give me any job afterwards. I was not given money for 2 ½ years that I have worked. I am running from pillar to post.

Apart from these, if we took a serious look at the information given by these affected women to the different media is truly shocking.

The women who were affected under the ‘Sumangali Scheme’ are young women aged between 15 to 18. A twenty year old women from Alangulam Village has said, “My father will be drinking always. Rolling Beedies is the occupation for the entire Village. Because my family situation I could study only upto 5th Standard. At that time, the people from the Mill called me. They took me saying that they will pay me Rs.50,000/- if I work for three years. They also said I will be taught tailoring, computer and some other handicrafts. But so far they have not taught me anything. There was no problem during the first six months. Slowly, they increased the hours of work upto sixteen hours a day. Whenever I felt very tired they gave me beer to drink. They will not give leave even for a day. Whatever be the health issue, one has to go to work. They did not provide any proper accommodation. We were fifty six persons. There were only four rooms. For fifteen of us, there is only one bathroom. Unless we get up at early morning 3 O’ clock, we cannot have our bath and go to work.”

“If one works continuously in Cotton Mill, then small pieces of cotton will go inside our body through nose and mouth. Among the women who are working here, then the condition was so bad and about ten of them had surgery done on the nose. Among all these problems, I worked here for 4 ½ years, even though my contract was for three years only. Even then they gave only Rs.38,000/-.”, She said amidst sobs.

The women standing next to her said, “Elder brother, I delivered a pre-matured baby. When the child was taken out, there were pieces of cotton sticking on its body.”, and her statement made us very agitated. “The place where we stayed cannot be called as a room. It looked like a godown or warehouse. We have to clean the room and also do the gardening. We have to fetch the water from the well situated far away. When we are tired after working for three shifts and taking rest for a while, they will ask us to do the job. If we go to bed after doing all these things they will wake us up just three hours.”

“With us, there was a woman who worked in day shifts. Her father is a very nasty drunkard. She and her younger sister came to the Mill together to work. They thought if they are in the same place they will gossip about their family only. So they were made to work in different places. In the place where her elder sister worked, there were only young men. A colleague by name Murugan in the company of four or five friends teased her. Whenever she crossed, he will rub her body as though it is by chance. She went to her home and cried. But her father did not take any step. So, she consumed poison. We admitted her in a Hospital and saved her life. ‘We have inquired enormous medical expenses. So, it can be adjusted with her wages for all these days.’ Thus saying they cheated her of her money. If anyone questions, they will change the tablet when we are sick or they will pour the bathroom cleaning acids in the drinking water jug. Afterwards who will dare to talk?” Her words shocked us.

A story of a 26 years old women from a Village near Kayathaar sent shivers. “Cotton went through mouth became an obstruction in my throat. Every day, I began to vomit blood. I used to cry everyday and beg them to take me to Hospital. Our Warden will daily apply Iodex externally and sent me to work. Since it was

not care, the tumour increased in size and I could not even talk. They say it will cost lot of money to do a surgery. Since I do not have money, I just taking bills.”

“Whatever be the health condition, one has to go to work. They will give a tablet which they have in hand. Whatever they give we have to swallow it. Only we became very ill and soon down they will take us to a Hospital.”

“Sometimes during the periods I had to work all the three shifts while standing. Before one beats or attacks the Company people, one has to thrash these brokers. They made us believe their honey coated words and sent us to work in these places. They will not come even this side.”

Suppose we ask question, “They will say your daughter’s conduct is not good. She is roaming with all sorts of boys. They will say like this some story to our families. If we stop coming to work, then we have to return the money that we had received as advance. So, we grind our teeth and work.” She said with tears.

Another sad thing is even if they work tolerating all these, many of them will be terminated just before the completion of three years by the Management. Even after completing three years, many of the women are not given the full amount immediately.

Research done by Foreign Countries regarding “Sumangali Scheme”.

A News Paper by name “De Volkskrant” published a serious of articles in which they said that ‘Sumangali Scheme’ in India is the

worst form of 'Bonded Labour System'. It also charged that many children are made to work under this Scheme. Further, "Fair Wear Foundation" sent a seven member team to Tamil Nadu to study nine Factories.

European Coalition for Corporate Justice (ECCJ), Anti Slavery Intervention and other Organisations in which European Press Reports were part of the Team studied 'Sumangali Scheme' in Tamil Nadu. They found out what are the brand names for the clothes manufacture by young girls and sent to European Countries. It also recommended the European Nations can protest against these practises.

An Organisation by name SOMO-Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations, ICN-Indian Committee of the Netherlands from Netherlands conducted a survey under the Project Title "Exploited Dalit Girls produced garments in India for European and US Markets and in its recommendations stressed that 'Sumangali Scheme' should be abolished.

Is Marriage is the only Goal or Aim for Women?

Prema Revathi in her Essay under the title "Children are the profit for Sumangalis" says, "I will not accept that the marriage is the goal for women. But, in Villages where they are suppressed by poverty and caste and since they do not have any chance, marriage is the great expectation for crores of women in Villages is the practical reality. Taking that it is better to get married without burdening their parents, many young girls join this type of work."

Even after these, stiff opposition, the Mill Owners have a very big net work from Thiruppur to Dindigul to recruit young women in this Scheme. For that purpose, the Agents go to backward villages and show the classic photographs of the Textile Mills to the parents of the young girls and brain wash them.

This Scheme is the result of hard brain work of the Textile Owners targeting young women and children suffering in poverty and penury. 'Sumangali' is the child of Modern Exploitation Method bothered by the Globalisation. In Tamil Nadu, 'Sumangali' is a magic word and tamil women consider it as a sacred. The women who enter the 'Sumangali Scheme' with the dreams of marriage are sent back by the Scheme as persons unsuited for marriage.

Recommendations:

SOCO Trust which has been continuously concerned with the abolition of 'Sumangali Scheme' has conducted many Seminars and Symposia by inviting experts and their views are elicited. The sad voice that is heard in these meetings is "Only a crying child will get milk has been changed to the child's cry can be stopped by strangulating it is the trend of the 'Sumangali Scheme'.

The atrocities that happened under 'Sumangali Scheme' cannot be measured. This is naked violation of Human Rights. When parents come to meet young girls working in the Mills are watched by the spies is not only indecent but also violation of Human Rights.

The Management Stand that they will not allow Trade Unions in Cotton Mills where the young girls are working is denial of basic rights. The Trade Unions have right to enter Cotton Mills as custodians

of Human Rights. So, the Government should support Trade Unions in this matter.

The complaints sent to National Human Rights Commission regarding the tortures perpetrated under 'Sumangali Scheme' should be seriously monitored. How the Labour Welfare Department is partial towards Textile Mills' Administration can be brought to light by the information obtained under Right to Information Act and by that method these officials should be made to act honestly.

The Trade Unions must jointly plan to conduct a campaign throughout the State against 'Sumangali Scheme'. The campaign should identify the workers who were seriously affected by the 'Sumangali Scheme' and focussing on their plight, the campaign should conduct a awareness programmes. The Trade Unions must jointly struggle against bringing 'Sumangali Scheme' in any manner.

The Tamil Nadu Government should urge Delhi to give assent to the Bill that has been passed by Tamil Nadu Lagislature that says that every Factory should have 90% permanent workers. The women affected by the 'Sumangali Scheme' should seek justice in Courts of Law. The Cotton Mills should be compelled to adhere to Labour Welfare Legislations.

The women who work in the 'Sumangali Scheme' should be confirmed when they reach the minimum eligible age. The exploitation of the young women for three years under 'apprenticeship scheme' should be put to an end. They should be brought under Labour Laws. The Establishments that do not follow Labour Laws should forfeit their licences.

International attention should be brought to the fraudulent nature of 'Sumangali Scheme'. For that the problems should be taken to United Nations(UN) and International Labour Organisation(ILO).

There cannot be any difference of opinion regarding the abolition of 'Sumangali Scheme'. At the same time, the young teenage girls with poor, humble rural background working under this Scheme should be given proper industrial training by the State and Central Governments, so that they can stand on their own legs.

From the time of her birth, a female child goes through many facets like daughter, young maid, sumangali(married woman whose husband is alive), mother, barren women, widow and mother-in-law and all of them are inseparably linked to a male. The title of the Scheme which has such a connotation should be considered as a clever and crafty action. 'Sumangali Scheme' is a Scheme to enslave a woman mentally and physically. It is direct result of Globalisation. When we consider all these things, we are made to believe the words of R. Went who says in his book "Globalisation that 'Globalisation is a man'.

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SUPREME COURT ON ABOLITION OF BONDED LABOUR SYSTEM

In India, in 1843, an act was enacted called as Indian Slavery System Abolition Act to abolish the then prevailing Slavery System in our Country. In England, an agitation erupted against Slavery System in that Country and so, the then British Parliament enacted an Act abolishing Slavery in Britain and its Colonies. But, East India Company said that in India it is not slavery but it is a recognized social set up and they argue that they cannot intervene that. As a result, India was exempted from implementing that Act. In 1833, when the Charter to East India Company was renewed the British Parliament ordered the then Governor General at India to take effective steps to abolish as early as possible and in the meanwhile to take steps to ameliorate the sufferings of the slaves.

The Government Officials hesitated to take steps to abolish slavery. These types of hesitation, partisan attitude, and wavering stand in abolition of slavery helped the Slavery System to continue in this soil. Indian Slavery Abolition Act

1. It prohibited the sale of slaves for arrears of tax.
2. It prevented anyone from approaching the Court of Justice to permit him to possess slaves.
3. No man can usurp the property of a person who is thought as a slave.

4. It announced that an Act considered as a crime against a free man, then if the same matter is perpetrated against the slave, then it also a crime.

The agreement against the System of Slavery was passed in the League of Nations in 1926. This agreement was signed at Geneva on September 25, 1926. As per the agreement, it was requested that Signatories should prevent Slave Trade and it also requested Signatories to prevent compulsory labour. In 1930, the International Labour Organisation enacted the agreement regarding compulsory and enforced labour. India accepted the same on November, 30, 1954. Both these agreements prohibit compulsory labour, system of slavery and bonded labour system. The International Labour Organisation's agreement (No. 105) proclaims compulsory labour and it was agreed by many Countries. But India only on May, 18, 2000 accepted it. The International Declaration of Human Rights (Article.4) created by United Nations in 1945 declares no one has got a right to enslave any other person, slavery system and trading in slaves in any form or manner should be prohibited and also in Article.23, it guarantees the "Right to Employment" and the "Right to choose an employment of once choice".

Even though the 1930 Compulsory Labour Agreement of International Labour Organisation did not say about Slavery System due to Debts, the Expert Committee of International Labour Organisation has been consistently explaining that Slavery due to Debts is a part of Compulsory Labour System. The 1999 International Labour Organisation's Agreement on the Child Labour System

included Compulsory Labour, Slavery due to Debts and Child Slavery.

In 1956, the United Nations enacted a Supplementary Agreement regarding Slavery, Slave Trade and Institutions, which follow Methods similar to Slavery System. Further the above Agreement explained in detail the debt bondage, compulsory labour and labour of slaves even if they have been in practise from olden times, their common characteristic is compulsion. As far as a 'Bonded Labour' is concerned, the relationship between the Capitalist who advanced the loan and the labourer who received the loan plays an important part. The relation between the two does not exclude the family of the person who received the loan. Those who are got in the magic net of loan are not able to come out of its imbroglio.

India is the first Country among the South Asian Countries to bring about an enactment abolishing 'Bonded Labour System'. The 1977 Act of Abolition of Bonded Labour System is a historically important document pulsating with life. On October, 24, 1975, an Ordinance was promulgated abolishing 'Bonded Labour System'. On February, 9, 1976, both Houses of Parliament passed the Act abolishing Bonded Labour System and it was announced that it will be considered as coming into effect from the date of ordinance itself i.e. October, 24, 1975. As per this Act, any Bonded Labourer is released automatically from bondage on 25.10.1975 itself. It was announced that Bonded Labourer is released as a free man and further he is released from the debt, which was the reason for his bondage.

From 1976 onwards, Government of India has taken many steps against 'Bonded Labour System' and 'Compulsory Labour

System'. The Supreme Court also on its part has pronounced many historical judgements on this problem. Justice P.N.Bhagawati who was the Chief Justice of India, during his tenure has contributed enormously for the liberation and rehabilitation of bonded labourers and also for the oppressed and for the persons whose rights were denied.

Justice P.N.Bhagawati in *Bandhuva Mukti Morcha* case, discusses the disgusting aspects of 'Bonded Labour System':

"The system of bonded labour has been prevalent in various parts of the country since long prior to the attainment of political freedom and it constitutes an ugly and shameful feature of our national life. This system based on exploitation by a few socially and economically powerful persons trading on the misery and suffering of large numbers of men and holding them in bondage is a relic of a feudal hierarchical society which hypocritically proclaims the divinity of men but treats large masses of people belonging to the lower rungs of the social ladder or economically impoverished segments of society as dirt and chattel. This system under which one person can be bonded to provide labour to another for years and years until an alleged debt is supposed to be wiped out which never seems to happen during the life time of the bonded labourer, is totally incompatible with the new egalitarian socioeconomic order which we have promised to build and it is not only an affront to basic human dignity but also constitutes gross and revolting violation of constitutional values".

The Bonded Labour does not mean that a man should be chained on his hands, legs and neck and throughout his body and compelled to do work legally. As per Article.23 of Constitution, the compelled labour in it's any manifestation whether that labour has been paid wages or not is not different. Justice Bhagawati has pronounced recording compulsory labour in the case *Peoples Union for Democratic Rights Vs. Government of India* known as 'Asiad Case'.

"Ordinarily no one would willingly supply labour or service to another for less than the minimum wage, when he knows that under the law he is entitled to get minimum wage for the labour or service provided by him. Therefore when a person provides labour or service to another against receipt of remuneration which is less than the minimum wage, he is acting under the force of some compulsion which drives him to work though he is paid less than what he is entitled under law to receive. What Article 23 prohibits is 'forced labour' that is labour or service which a person is forced to provide."

" 'Force' which would make such labour or service 'forced labour' may arise in several ways. It may be physical force which may compel a person to provide labourer service to another or it may be force exerted through a legal provision such as a provision for imprisonment or fine in case the employee fails to provide labour or service or it may even be compulsion arising from hunger and poverty, want and destitution. Any factor which deprives a person of a choice of alternative and compels him to adopt one particular course

of action may properly be regarded as 'force' and if labour or service is compelled as a result of such 'force', it would be 'forced labour'. Where a person is suffering from hunger or starvation, when he has no resources at all to fight disease or to feed his wife and children or even to hide their nakedness, where utter grinding poverty has broken his back and reduced him to a state of helplessness and despair and where no other employment is available to alleviate the rigour of his poverty, he would have no choice but to accept any work that comes his way, even if the remuneration offered to him is less than the minimum wage. He would be in no position to bargain with the employer; he would have to accept what is offered to him. And in doing so he would be acting not as a free agent with a choice between alternatives but under the compulsion of economic circumstances and the labour of service provided by him would be clearly 'forced labour'. The word 'forced' should not be read in a narrow and restricted manner so as to be confined only to physical or legal 'force' particularly when the national character, its fundamental document has promised to build a new socialist republic where there will be socio-economic justice for all and every one shall have the right to work, to education and to adequate means of livelihood. The constitution makers have given us one of the most remarkable documents in history for ushering in a new socio-economic order and the Constitution which they have forged for us has a social purpose and an economic mission and, therefore, every word or phrase in the Constitution must be interpreted in a manner which would advance the socio-economic objective of the Constitution. It is a fact that in a

capitalist society economic circumstances exert much greater pressure on an individual in digging him to a particular course of action than physical compulsion or force of legislative provision. The word 'force' must therefore be construed to include not only physical or legal force but force arising from the compulsion of economic circumstances which leaves no choice of alternatives to a person in want and compels him to provide labour or service even though the remuneration received for it is less than the minimum wage. Of course, if a person provides labour or service to another against receipt of the minimum wage, it would not be possible to say that the labour or service provided by him is 'forced labour' because he gets what he is entitled under law to receive. No inference can reasonably be drawn in such a case that he is forced to provide labour or service for the simple reason that would be providing labour or service against receipt of what is lawfully payable to him just like any other person who is not under the force of any compulsion."

"Wherever any fundamental right which is enforceable against private individuals such as, for example, a fundamental right enacted in Article 17 or 23 or 24 is being violated, it is the constitutional obligation of the State to take necessary steps for the purpose of interdicting such violation and ensuring observance of the fundamental right by the private individual who is transgressing the same. The fact that the person whose fundamental right is violated can always approach the court for the purpose of enforcement of his fundamental right, cannot absolve the State from its

constitutional obligation to see that there is no violation of the fundamental right of such person, particularly when he belongs to the weaker section of humanity and is unable to wage a legal battle against a strong and powerful opponent who is exploiting him.”

In another important case – Sanjit Roy Vs. Government of Rajasthan, Justice P.N. Bhagawathi while remarking about the Government itself extracting compulsory work without payment of even minimum wages and thus exploiting poor and humble workers says, “there is no justification for not paying minimum wages by the Government to the affected people. Taking advantage of the helpless conditions of the workers and paying them less than the minimum wages and extracting their labour and service by the Government cannot be allowed. The people who had been pushed to helpless conditions by drought and unfavourable situations and building upon the blood and sweat cannot be allowed. Helping these people is not by denying them the minimum wages under a screen and extracting useful and valuable labour by the Government cannot be allowed. The Government even if a person affected by drought and unfavourable situation or not, his labour and services are obtained he should be paid at least minimum wages. Otherwise they are punishable for violating Article.23”, thus he warns. Merely releasing them on paper and saying they need not pay the loans without rehabilitating them and alternative steps for economic upliftment will not yield any result. Other arrangements for releasing the Bonded Labourers will not yield any relief by merely releasing them on paper and saying they need not pay the loans. This, Justice P.N. Bhagawathi emphasis in Neeraj Chaudhary Vs. Government of Madhya Pradesh:-

“This is yet another case which illustrates forcibly what we have said on many an occasion that it is not enough merely to identify and release bonded labourers but it is equally, perhaps more, important that after identification and release, they must be rehabilitated, because without rehabilitation, they would be driven by poverty, helplessness and despair into serfdom once again. Poverty and destitution are almost perennial features of Indian rural life for large numbers of unfortunate ill-starred humans in this country and it would be nothing short of cruelty and heartlessness to identify and release bonded labourers merely to throw them at the mercy of the existing social and economic system which denies to them even the basic necessities of life such as food, shelter and clothing. It is obvious that poverty is a curse inflicted on large masses of people by our malfunctioning socio-economic structure and it has the disastrous effect of corroding the soul arid sapping the moral fibre of a human being by robbing him of all basic human dignity and destroying in him the higher values and finer susceptibilities which go to make up this wonderful creation of God upon earth, namely, man. It does not mean mere inability to buy the basic necessities of life but it goes much deeper; it deprives a man of all opportunities of education and advancement and increases a thousand fold his vulnerability to misfortunes which come to him all too often and which he is not able to withstand on account of lack of social and material resources We, who have not experienced poverty and hunger, want and destitution, talk platitudinous of freedom and liberty but these words have no meaning for a person who has not even a square meal per day, hardly a roof over his head and scarcely one piece of cloth to cover his shame.

What use are 'identification' and 'release' to bonded labourers if after attaining their so-called freedom from bondage to a master they are consigned to a life of another bondage, namely, bondage to hunger and starvation where they have 'nothing to hope for-not even anything to die for-and they do not know whether they will be able to secure even a morsel of food to fill the hungry stomachs of their starving children. What would they prize more: freedom and liberty with hunger and destitution staring them in the face or some food to satisfy their hunger and the hunger of their near and dear ones, even at the cost of freedom and liberty? The answer is obvious. It is therefore imperative that neither the Government nor the Court should be content with merely securing identification and release of bonded labourers but every effort must be made by them to see that the freed bonded labourers are properly and suitably rehabilitated after identification and release.'

He castigates the Government, which does not care about proper rehabilitation of the released 'Bonded Labourers' in the following manner:

"Where the man below the poverty line is a citizen entitled to all the benefits and protections so eloquently put into the Constitution, are 38 years not sufficient to generate the appropriate consciousness? Before we part with the case we must again indicate that there has been no satisfactory compliance in regard to rehabilitation by the State of Karnataka."

Justice P.N.Bhagawati says that Government officials who discharge their duties courageously with dedication and without

wavering from the job even when there was a political interference or opposition from powerful sections should be identified and encouraged.

In his words, *"We have fortunately in our country quite a large number of socially committed officers who, inspired by idealism with their enthusiasm undiminished minds untrammelled and hearts unpolluted by all kinds of pressures, are prepared to brave opposition and sometimes even danger, in order to help the deprived and vulnerable sections of the community. Such officers must be encouraged and their efforts appreciated so that they may become exemplary models for other officers to follow."*

There is no dearth of legislations in India. In the whole world, India has enacted maximum number of laws. But when it comes to enforcement due to various reasons, the effect of Acts are not experienced. The laws are mere decorative jewels only and they are not powerful functioning documents in truth. The confidence in laws and trust in administration of justice is revealed by the actions of the Judges. Throughout India, the business men who committed mistake and persons who violate laws can escape by small fine is the prevailing mind set in India. Small fines encourage the persons commit the same crime again and again. Justice P.N.Bhagwati in his judgement in Bandhuva Mukti Morcha case advises the Courts on *this problem*,

"The magistrates and judicial officers take a very lenient view of violations of labour laws enacted for the benefits of the workmen and let off the defaulting employers with small fines. There have also been occasions where the magistrate and

judicial officers have scotched prosecutions and acquitted or discharged the defaulting employers on hyper technicalities. This happens largely because the magistrates and judicial officers are not sufficiently sensitised to the importance of the observance of labour laws with the result that the labour laws are allowed to be ignored and breached with utter callousness and indifference and the workmen begin to feel that the defaulting employers can, by paying a fine which hardly touches their pocket, escape from the arm of law and the labour laws supposedly enacted for their benefit are not meant to be observed but are merely decorative appendages intended to assuage the conscience of the workmen. The Magistrates and Judicial Officers should take a strict view of violation of labour laws and to impose adequate punishment on the erring employers so that they may realise that it does not pay to commit a breach of such laws and to deny the benefit of such laws to the workmen.”

Justice P.N.Bhagawati in Neeraj Choudhary case being aware that when the Government Machinery join hands with exploiting class, then the poor without any social consciousness, marginalised people depend on the Government, then the abolition of bonded labour system will be a day dream.

“At many places, the patwaris and tahsildars being either in sympathy with the exploiting class or lacking in social commitment or indifferent to the misery and suffering of the poor and the down-trodden, the task of identification, release

and rehabilitation of bonded labour through the official machinery would be very difficult of achievement”.

“There are fortunately in our country a large number of such dedicated social action groups- young men and women inspired by idealism and moved by a passionate and burning zeal to help their fellow beings-whose services can be utilised for identification, release and rehabilitation of bonded labourers.”

Justice Renganath Misra says about the help for rehabilitation in P.Sivaswamy Vs.Government of Andhra Pradesh as follows:

“We would also suggest to the States of Tamilnadu, Karnataka and Orissa that in constituting the vigilance committees which are also to be associated in the work of rehabilitation of the freed bonded labourers, they should involve the representatives of social action groups and voluntary agencies operating in these areas and whatever rehabilitation is provided to the freed bonded labourers, must be provided in the presence of a representative of such social action groups or voluntary agencies so as to ensure that rehabilitation provisions actually reach the hands of such labourers.”

In the year 2012, the Supreme Court gave following directions in the case of People Union for Civil Liberties Vs.Government of Tamil Nadu:-

- (1) *Fresh surveys be conducted periodically once in three years in all the States/UTs in accordance with the provisions of the Act and the revised report, the*

findings of the survey should be made a part of a computerized data base available on the websites of all concerned.

- (2) *The responsibility of conducting the surveys is on the District Level Vigilance Committees and Sub Divisional Vigilance Committees of the States/UTs and such committees should submit their reports to the NHRC. This should be done in every three years and Committees also should be reconstituted in every three years.*
- (3) *Bonded labour, it may be noticed, is rampant in brick kilns, stone quarries, crushing mines, beedi manufacturing, carpet weaving, construction industries, agriculture, in rural and urban unorganized and informal sector, power looms and cotton handlooms, fish processing etc. The Vigilance Committees are directed to give more attention to these areas and take prompt action in case violation is noticed.*
- (4) *Large numbers of children are working as domestic help in the urban, town and rural areas with no chance to go to schools even though the education from standard I to VIII 19 is compulsory under the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. Local Panchayats and local bodies should identify such children and ensure that they get proper education. We are not unmindful of the fact that in*

some households, they treat the domestic help just like their children and give food, clothing and education but they are exception.

- (5) *Many of the States/UTs reporting NIL status with respect to existence of Bonded labourers. This might be due to the faulty methodology adopted by them for conducting such surveys. Guidelines on the methodology of identification of bonded labourers formulated by Shri SR Shankaran, Chairman of the Expert Group constituted by the NHRC be followed and implemented by all the States/UTs with suitable modifications to suit local conditions.*
- (6) *All the States/UTs should calculate firm requirements of fund for rehabilitation of freed bonded labourers and steps be taken to enhance the rehabilitation package from the present limit of Rs.20,000.*
- (7) *The District Magistrates are directed to effectively implement Sections 10, 11 and 12 of the Act and we expect them to discharge their functions with due diligence, with empathy and sensitivity, taking note of the fact that the Act is a welfare legislation.*
- (8) *The District Magistrate and the State Government / UTs would see that the Minimum Wages Act, the Workmen Compensation Act, the Inter- State Migrant Workmen Act, 20 Child Labour (Prohibition*

and Regulation) Act are also properly and effectively implemented.

- (9) *Directions are issued to all Gram Panchayats, local bodies to report, in case they come across any case of bonded labour, to the District Magistrate who will take appropriate follow up action under the Act.*
- (10) *The States of Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar and the NCT of Delhi are directed to ensure compliance with orders passed by the NHRC as highlighted in its revised report.”*
- (11) *The States and the Union Territories should continue to submit 6 monthly reports to NHRC.*
- (12) *All the States / UTs to constitute Vigilance Committee, if not already constituted within six months.”*

These judgement will be a great support to Trade Union Functionaries, Human Right Activists, Social Activists and Lawyers who want to protect human rights to encourage the growth of culture of human rights and who strongly believed that ‘Bonded Labour System’ should be eradicated totally and completely from this soil.

HOW TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES? ALTERNATIVE PLANS

Alternative Plans for abolition of Bonded Labour System – Recommendations:

The Slavery System which was prevailing from Sangam Age has been called by different names like Aminchi, Adimai, Aal, Adiyaal, Moopadiyal, Padiyal, Pannaial, and Kudiparayan has now transformed into as ‘Bonded Labour System’ to-day. It is not only in Tamil Nadu but also throughout India, the same situation prevails. The Bonded Labourers are called by different names in different languages as ‘Adiyamar, Paramaasiya, Pasaahiya, Paethupasela, Selumar, Haali, Haari, Raarvay, Holya, Jaana, Jeetha, Samiya, Jandid, Munded, Kuthiya, Lakhari, Munji, Mut, Munish, Nitmajeer, Paledu, Padiyal, Pannaamilal, Sari Sanji, Sanjaavat, Saevan, Saevanaaya, Sho, Vetti. Their name alone changes but their conditions remain the same.

Progresses made in abolition of Slavery.

The Supreme Court has directed to all the State Governments and Union Territories that detailed studies in depth should be conducted regarding bonded labourers and steps should be taken for their rehabilitation. The bonded labour system prevails even today in many parts of the Country. The General Group for Human Rights has filed a case in the Supreme Court praying for that tough laws should be implemented to abolish this.

Bonded Labour System prevails even now in Stone Quarries, Beedi Making, Construction Industry, Agriculture and Unorganised Factories in Villages and Suburbs. This injustice has not been abolished completely. That Group in its Petition has said that District Level Committees should conduct inspection often to find out whether there are any bonded labourers and should take suitable steps for releasing and rehabilitating them.

The case came for enquiry before the Bench of Justices K.S.Radhakrishnan and Deepak Misra; Justices in their order:-

“It is a sad fact that Bonded Labourers are still in existence. All States and Union Territories must submit their status report in the form prescribed by National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) every six months. The National Human Rights Commission (for short the ‘NHRC’) has been entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring and overseeing the implementation of its directions as well as provisions of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act in all the States and Union Territories. Fresh surveys be conducted periodically once in three years in all the States/UTs in accordance with the provisions of the Act and the revised report, the findings of the survey should be made a part of a computerized data base available on the websites of all concerned. The responsibility of conducting the surveys is on the District Level Vigilance Committees and Sub Divisional Vigilance Committees of the States/UTs and such committees should submit their reports to the NHRC. This should be done in every three years and Committees should be

reconstituted in every three years.” The Justices has said so in their pronouncement.

We present a few recommendations to change the present situation. Before that we point out that International Human Rights Declaration stresses human dignity. It says men should not be discriminated at any stage on the basis of race, colour, language, sex, political belief, nationality and birth. Bonded Labour System is against all these.

The explanation regarding abolition of Slavery was given in the Geneva Conference held in 1926. After the Second World War in 1948, abolition of slavery was given importance. Then Human Rights Declaration was pronounced. In the 1956 meeting, it was stressed slavery should be abolished in any of its form.

Social inequalities, Corruption, Lack of Education and Opportunities are the stumbling blocks for abolition of ‘Bonded Labour System’. Kevin Pauls says these should be removed.(Disposable People – New Slavery in Global Economy).

In spite of many laws and actions for abolition of ‘Bonded Labour System’, the Bonded Labour System has not come to an end. It comes in many-many new shapes. During the course of time, only the shape alone changes but not the system. The Supreme Court and National Human Rights Commission has pointed out that the State Governments are lethargic in implementing the laws for abolition of Bonded Labour System. The Supreme Court has given powerful judgements regarding abolition of slavery. Based on the directions of the Supreme Court, the National Human Rights Commission has

also directly intervened. The Supreme Court emphasises in the 1997 case – PUCL Vs. Government of Tamil Nadu that it is the responsibility of the National Human Rights Commission to monitor effective implementation of Supreme Court Judgements regarding abolition of Bonded Labour System.

Following that, the National Human Rights Commission concentrated in the 13 States including Tamil Nadu where Bonded Labour System was entrenched. It appointed Saman Lal and K.R. Venugopal as observers. These two observers went from State to State. They enquired about the Bonded Labourers employed in different occupations. They brought to light the existence of Bonded Labourers in Silk Looms and Power Looms in Tamil Nadu.

The State and Central Government says, “*Whatever the actions we take the Slavery System enters in some form or other. It is not easy to understand them, fine them and remove them.*” The Social, Economic, Cultural and Religious practises that prevail in the Country secretly want that this Slavery System should continue. Enforcement of Labour Laws are very weak. Therefore, even in hazardous industries, child labourers are appointed and human rights are continuously violated. The present different type of slavery is a global problem. It affets every Country and every Continent. So even, it comes in any form it should be abolished, according to Human Rights Council of United Nations.

In a recent research conducted regarding ‘Bonded Labour System in India’ by the Researcher Sara Night belonging to ‘Global Study’ Department of Frontis University in United States says the important reason for prevailing of Bonded Labourers in the following

words, “The Slavery continuous India because there is no social equality. The Castes and Religions may be a reason for that. Not only that few Organisations work for abolition of castes. But there are no major movements for total abolition of Slavery in India. Majority of the Bonded Labourers are Dalits. Only when they are released and attain equality, the many social problems will be solved. Even to-day, there is a tendency on the part of the upper caste people that success and benefits belong only to them. It is no less than the social hatreds that they created apartheid against the blacks in South Africa. It is accepted by Lindsey Thalmath, a Peace Activists of South Africa.”

Eradication of Bonded Labour System – Recommendations

- A civilized society has an equal role in abolishing Bonded Labour System as that of the State and Central Governments. Only Society can find the deep roots of ‘Bonded Labour System’ and destroy it. Intense awareness campaign should be conducted through events and dimensions, principles should be taken to the people, and thereby creating consciousness is the responsibility of the Civil Society. If the affected bonded labourers are used to spread awareness, then the campaign will be more strengthened.
- The Social Activists and the general public who participate in the campaign should know about Bonded Labour System and types of Bonded Labourers and the occupations in which the bonded labourers are used. They must also know the Laws regarding the same. They should take to the people the necessity of liberating the bonded labourers and the laws

regarding the rehabilitation and concessions available to them. They should also inform the public about the National and International happenings regarding abolition of bonded labour system and with the people they should evolve an action plan for eradicating bonded labour system permanently. For that Powerful Committees should be formed.

- It is important to create awareness among political leaders that the Bonded Labour System is violative of human rights. It is the responsibility of the Society to compel them to take steps to eradicate Bonded Labour System.
- The Political Leaders also should prepare effective draft bills to abolish it and they should take steps to take into the State and Central levels. They should discuss to find the ways and means of abolishing this system by legal methods.
- In our Country, it is not very easy to abolish Bonded Labour System by laws alone. Only by social change, it is possible. Participation of Social Movements, economic development plans and Government interventions jointly and continuously act alone, it is possible.
- The Bonded Labour System can be brought to an end only when Labour Welfare Department, Police Department and Department of Law jointly work together with dedication. The Government also should enact suitable legislation. Only when the people know their rights, they can work with the Government plans jointly. When land reforms are implemented effectively and when all the farmers get jobs

then we can abolish Bonded Labour System in agricultural sector. Indian Peoples' Government's philosophy is that the persons in lowest strata of the Society should also get equal opportunities. So, reforms of the Government should be for all the people. Every Revenue Divisional Officer who is the Special Officer for abolition of Bonded Labour System as per the Act should constantly watch whether there is anyone working as a bonded labour or is there any person trafficked from his area to other Districts or to other States as bonded labourers.

- About 40% of the Bonded Labourers are children. So, it should be found out whether children are trafficked to other Districts or to any other States at the Panchayat level itself and suitable action should be taken immediately.
- Children who are rescued from bondage should be given education, counselling and economic upliftment of their parents which should be monitored by the Special Advisory Committees and Action Committees constituted at the District level by the Government.
- While constituting District Level Committees to monitor the rehabilitation of bonded labourers, the Government should include Non-Government Organisations who have involved themselves with dedication in abolishing Bonded Labour System, Human Rights Activists, People from the Press, Lawyers and Industrial Experts.

- All the Departments of the Government should work against poverty, caste discrimination, violation of the human rights, corruption, dishonest elections and miscarriage of justice. This joint action will help to great extent in abolishing Bonded Labour System.
- The Government Budget should not encourage inequalities.
 1. Rural Development
 2. Labour Welfare Department.
 3. Law, Justice, Police.
 4. Social Justice.
 5. Welfare of Minorities.
 6. Panchayat Raj.
 7. Basic Infrastructure.
 8. Water, Health and Education

should be provided with enough funds and they should be guaranteed for budgeted expenditure.

- Suitable actions should be taken against all sorts of corruption. Winking at low level corruptions helps corruptions at higher level. So Peoples Movement should be strengthened against corruptions at both level.

- The partisan attitude of the Police Department has helped Bonded Labour System to rise its ugly head keeping caste based discrimination at its centre. The reasons for human rights violations are the Police Department is not continuously trained and they do not have basic facilities. So, the Police Department should be modernised to meet the day-to-day challenges.
- The corruption and the discrimination that prevails in Police Department are important reasons for not implementing the legislations recording Bonded Labour System even though the Government has enacted laws regarding untouchability. So, they should be trained regarding human rights and the rights of the people. Many Policemen have complained in the interview conducted by the Human Rights Watch that “We did not receive enough training”.
- Land Reforms are very important. The Land Reforms in Asian Countries has increased production. But the growth is not related to agriculture according to an Article in Journal of Development Studies. Even to-day many are working as Bonded Labourers in agricultural related sectors particularly 90% of the agricultural workers are dalits. Among the 75% of the Dalits do not have any land. They do not know any other occupation. Lands are owned by Rich and Powerful People. Even though there are legislations regarding land reforms, they are not implemented. If a change is happened here and if the change goes towards agricultural workers,

then there will be a change in Bonded Labour System. It is the responsibility of the State Government to do this.

- Banks and Financial Institution should arrange that the poor and ordinary people are given small loans. Many become bonded labourers according to statistics because they receive loans at exorbitant interest. Even the International Labour Organisation has advised the small loan will control Bonded Labour System. According to International Labour Organisation (ILO), these small loans will help them to do business and small trades and small pieces of land.
- When they receive education and when they are made to study we can put an end to Bonded Labour System. Indian Constitution says that education is free and compulsory for all. Not only that the 86th Amendment to the Constitution stresses importance of Education under Right to Education Act. Even then when we compare the number of villages, there are not enough schools. So, enough amount should be allocated and more number of schools should be opened [If the schools are opened, then the habit of parents sending their children through brokers to work will be prevented. According to Benjamin Skinner, a Researcher, it will reduce the number of parents who want to earn through their children(A crime so Monsrous": Face-to-

Face with Modern Day Slavery)].

- Released bonded labourers should be given preference in employment. They should be given a place in Free Schemes, Land for Dwelling and issued with Ration Cards and Voter I.D.Cards. The District Administration should monitor whether the land given to the released bonded labourers is still in their possession. The Village Administrative Officers should be made responsible for that job.
- For the workers who are released from Quarries and Brick Kilns should be given loans to have their own brick kilns. Similarly, Quarry Workers can be given lease for the Quarries.
- The Officials should establish Mutual Goodwill between the workers and job providers. If the laws are strictly enforced after that, then it will be easy to abolish Bonded Labour System.
- Because of the poor enforcement of law, a situation prevails where a person rescued from Bonded Labour System goes once again as a bonded labourer. So changes should be brought in the Employment of Bonded Labour Act and it should be made more stringent and punishments more severe. A Special Officer should be appointed in every District by the District Judge to implement the law in full force.

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