

# The People of Villupuram District - An Overview

V. Vijayarangam

Assistant Professor, Post Graduate and Research Department of History, Arignar Anna Government Arts College,  
Villupuram - 605 602, Tamilnadu, India

**Abstract:** *This paper focuses its attention on the people of Villupuram district. It is concentrates mainly on the study of various races of mankind. No district can be understood fully without knowing the people who inhabit it. In spite of what has been done after independence, caste plays an important role in the village life. Occupation is to a large extent decided on the basis of caste. The more important communities in Villupuram district are agricultural communities such as the Vanniars, Karkatha Vellalas, Idayars, Malaimans and Nathamans (Udayars), Kapus (Reddis) and Malayalees. Likewise the Paraiyars are the only Agricultural Labouring Community in the district. Similarly Balijas and Arya Vysyas formed the trading communities. Likewise the Kaikolas and Devangar are grouped under the weaving communities. Besides, there are Artisan and village servicing communities such as Ambattan, Asaris, Kusavan, Oddars, Sembadavan, Vaniyars and Vannans and others include Brahmins, Muslims and Christians who settled in almost all parts of Villupuram district. Villupuram district is naturally a well-flourished and fertile agricultural tract offering settlement to different communities. The various communities and religious sects residing in this area, lead a peaceful life without any commercial rift, and follow cultural unity among themselves.*

**Keywords:** Christians, Community, Hindus, Muslims and People

## 1. Introduction

At the time of independence, Tamilnadu had Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Kannada, Gujati, Marathi, Urdu, English and dialects of Dravidian speaking peoples among its population. After 1953, considerable proportion of Telugus had a separate State. With the segregation of Malabar in 1956, considerable portion of Malayalam speaking people merged to Kerala. After 1956 Tamilnadu had a predominantly Tamil speaking population. They had the sense of a long linguistic and cultural heritage. Among the population there were the Hindus, Christians, Muslims, Jains, Parsees and the Atheists. In view of this, among the 32 districts in Tamilnadu, the present paper is an attempt to study the people of Villupuram district only.

## 2. Methodology

This study makes an attempt to examine the people of Villupuram district. It is primarily a fact finding venture on the basis of exploratory method. The classification of the people can be analysed with the help of appropriate statistical data collected from the various statistical reports. This study also evaluates classification of the people from the perspective of various angles. Thus, this study is partly exploratory and partly analytical based on thematic and historical approaches.

## 3. Objectives

This study aims to fulfill the following objectives:

- 1) To understand the classification of the people.
- 2) To analyses their religious wise population out of total district population.
- 3) To find out the condition of the people both economically and educationally.

## 4. Sources of Information

This study is mainly based on primary and secondary sources. Most of the primary sources kept preserved in Tamilnadu Archives and Department of Economics and Statistics, Chennai besides most of the prominent libraries, are referred to for the present study. Among the primary sources, Census Reports of Villupuram District (2011) are very useful for this study. The secondary sources were also consulted to make a detailed study. They were mainly from the English and Tamil Books, Gazetteers, and Manuals which largely helped to collect details on the people of Villupuram district.

## 5. Background of the District

As far as the geographical location of the Villupuram district is concerned, it is situated in the northern part of Tamilnadu, and it is the largest district in the state with an area of 7194 sq. km. Villupuram district lies between 11 35' 25" and 12 20' 44" of the northern latitude and 78 15' 00" and 79 42' 55" of the eastern longitude. It was earlier part of South Arcot district, then bifurcated from South Arcot district on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1993 and was rechristened as Villupuram district. The residual part of the erstwhile South Arcot district was named as Cuddalore district. It is surrounded on East by Bay of Bengal and Union Territory of Pondicherry, South by Cuddalore district, the West by Salem and Dharmapuri districts, and on the North by Thiruvannamalai and Kanchipuram districts. At present Villupuram district comprises of 1,490 revenue villages, 4 revenue divisions, 13 administrative taluks, 22 blocks, 15 town panchayat unions, 1,099 village panchayats and 3 municipalities. According to 2011 Census Report, the district had a population of 34,58,873 people of which males account for 17,40,819 and females account for 17,18,054. The density of population of the district per sq. km. is 481 and sex-ratio of 987 females for every 1000 males. This district offered settlement to people of diverse communities like the Hindus, Muslims and Christians.

The district offered settlement to people of diverse communities like the Hindus, Muslims and Christians. As per census 2011 out of total population, 27,26,949 are Hindus, 1,10,120 are Muslims, 1,15,745 are Christians, 343 are Sikhs, 193 are Buddhists, 5,092 are Jains, 142 are other religions and 1,789 are religions not stated. It is pertinent to mention that a majority of the people in the district speak Tamil as their mother tongue. Next to Tamil which is the regional language of the district, Telugu ranks second, followed by Urdu, Kannada and Malayalam.

## 6. The People

No district can be understood fully without knowing the people who inhabit it. In spite of what has been done after independence, caste plays an important role in the village life. Occupation is to a large extent decided on the basis of caste. The more important communities in Villupuram district are agricultural communities such as the Vanniars, Karkatha Vellalas, Idayars, Malaimans and Nathamans (Udayars), Kapus (Reddis) and Malayalees. Likewise the Paraiyars are the only Agricultural Labouring Community in the district. Similarly Balijas and Arya Vysyas formed the trading communities. Likewise the Kaikolas and Devangar are grouped under the weaving communities. Besides, there are Artisan and village servicing communities such as Ambattan, Asaris, Kusavan, Oddars, Sembadavan, Vaniyars and Vannans and others include Brahmins, Muslims and Christians who settled in almost all parts of Villupuram district.

### a) Vanniarys

The Vanniarys form the single and largest community in the district. They are found settled in large numbers in all the taluks of the district, including the adjoining districts of Cuddalore, Thiruvannamalai and Kanchipuram. They are variously known in different titles in different places as Reddis in Tiruttani, Goundars and Nayakars in Chingleput and part of Thiruvannamalai and Kanchipuram and Padayatchis in some other places. In most of the areas, they are very backward both economically and educationally.

### b) Karkatha Vellalas

Likewise, the Karkatha Vellalas also known as Pillais are found in large numbers in Villupuram district. They occupy a high place in the caste hierarchy. Though agriculture appears to be their main occupation, some of them are engaged in legal profession, and serve in industries. In education, they are very forward and one of the leading communities.

### c) Idayars

The Idayars styled themselves as Konars. Though their traditional occupation is tending cattle, most of them have become agriculturists, possessing vast landed estates. In education, they seem to be very backward because many of them engage themselves in rearing animals at a young age to earn their bread.

### d) Udayars

The Udayars belong to three endogamous sects called Nathamans, Sundarmans and Malaimans. Of the three, the Malaimans and the Nathamans are found only in Villupuram

district. They found predominantly in Tirukoilur, Kallakurichi, Sankarapuram and Uludurpet taluks. In economic status, they are a little better than the Vanniars; but in education, they are equally backward.

### e) Kapus

The Kapus are more popularly known as Reddis, though all Reddis are not Kapus. The Reddis found in Villupuram district mostly belong to Panta Kapu Sect. Their mother-tongue is Telugu. They are good cultivators owning extensive lands. Some of the rich land owners in the district belong to this community. In education, they are not as advanced as Karkatha Vellalas, but after 1960, they have shown great appreciation of the value of education.

### f) Malaiyalis

The Malaiyalis, literally hill-men are mostly found on the Chinna Kalrayan Hills and in some of the adjoining villages on the foot of the hills in Kallakurichi taluk. They are grouped into three broad sects namely Peria Malaiyalis, the Kolli Malaiyalis and the Pacha Malaiyalis. The people living in Villupuram district belong to the Peria Malaiyalis sect migrated from Salem. They are good agriculturists, but educationally and economically backward.

### g) Paraiyars

The Pariyars are the backbone of the agricultural economy, for most of them serve as agricultural labourers in the district. A few of them own lands but most of them do agricultural labour. They are very backward both economically and educationally.

### h) Balijas

The Balijas who style themselves as Naidus are a scattered community found throughout the district. Some of them in the district are engaged in agriculture but many of them do petty trades. Their mother tongue is Telugu.

### i) Arya Vysyas

The Arya Vysyas otherwise known as Komutti Chettiars are found mostly in towns and big villages, speaking Telugu which is their mother tongue. Their range of business is from household provisions to bullion, cloth and consumer goods. The community is broadly classified into two sects called Gowras and the Kalingas. The Arya Vysyas in this district mostly belong to the Gowra sect. Though the percentage of literacy in this community is very high, very few have taken to higher education and entered government services. However, in most of the places, they are prosperous.

### j) Kaikolas

The Kaikolas otherwise known as Sengunthars are the indigenous weavers of Tamilnadu. Their caste title is Mudaliar and Pillai. Weaving by using handloom is their traditional occupation. In education, the community is backward.

### k) Devangas

The Devangas are less numerous in the district than the Kaikolas. Classified into two sects namely Telugu and Kannada, they usually style themselves as Chettiars. They are good weavers and educationally backward. However, in

recent years they have become affluent because of their prosperous trade.

#### l) Ambattans

The Ambattans are the traditional barbers found scattered throughout the district. They are backward both educationally and economically.

#### m) Asaris

The Asaris, belonging to the Kammalar group. Most of them belong to a Tamil speaking sect. Only a few belong to the Telugu speaking sect. They are engaged in their traditional occupations of goldsmithy, blacksmithy or carpentry. The persons who pursue these occupations go under the names of Tattan, Karuman and Thatchan respectively. The Tamil speaking Asaris are divided into three endogamous sects called the Pandia Kammalars, Solia Kammalars and Kongu Kammalars. Those in Villupuram mostly belong to the Solia Kammalars sect. They are educationally and economically not backward.

#### n) Kusavans

The Kusavans are the traditional mud pot makers. They belong to several sects, and style themselves as Odayans, Velars and Chettis. Economically and educationally, this community has yet to improve much.

#### o) Oddars

The Oddars are Telugu speaking people serving as well sinkers, road workers, stone breakers and masons. They style themselves as Oddars and Boyars. Educationally and economically they are very backward.

#### p) Sembadavans

The Sembadavans are the traditional fishermen fishing in inland waters rivers, tanks and channels. They are skilled in plying boats. They are backward both educationally and economically.

#### q) Vanians

The Vanians are also known as Chekkars. They extract oil with the help of the country *Chekkus*, oil press, and sell the oil. They are generally backward in all areas.

#### r) Vannans

Practically, no village exists without one or two families of Vannans who are the traditional washermen. They are generally backward in all respects. The Harijans have their own washermen who go by the name of Puthirai Vannan.

#### s) Brahmins

The Brahmins are the most dynamic communities who enjoyed great respect from all communities still recently in the district. They are mostly in settled towns of the district. Though a few in the community are still engaged in their traditional occupation as priests and purohiths, the bulk of them have taken to other occupations. They are now found in all occupations including business. The Brahmins living in the district mostly belong to the Tamil speaking sect of Smarthas. A few of them are known as Ayyangars. The Telugu Brahmins and the Kannada speaking Madhwars are also found in appreciable numbers in the district.

#### t) Muslims

The Muslims in the district mostly belong to the Tamil speaking sect of Labbais. Engaged in different occupations from agriculture to business, they live mostly in towns who constitute about 3.72 percentage of the total population of the district.

#### u) Christians

The Christians, forming about 3.91 percentage out of the total population of the district, are mostly converts from the lower castes. In the economic sphere, they have still to advance considerably.

## 7. Conclusion

From the study, the Villupuram district is naturally a well-flourished and fertile agricultural tract offering settlement to different communities. The various communities and religious sects residing in this area, lead a peaceful life without any commercial rift, and follow cultural unity among themselves. Though most of the populations are economically poor, they contribute much to the development of the economy of the district. Thus it is heartening to point out that the Villupuram district stands as an agriculturally advanced district among the districts of Tamilnadu.

## References

- [1] Baliga, B.S. (1962). Gazetteer of India, Madras, South Arcot District, Government of Madras, Madras.
- [2] Carstin, J.H. (1878). Manual of the South Arcot District, Government of Madras, Madras.
- [3] Chellam, V.T. (1985). A History of Tamil Nadu, Thirumalai Book House, Madras.
- [4] Census of India 2011, Tamilnadu, Series - 34, Part XII - B, District Census Handbook, Villupuram, Village and Town Primary Census Abstract (PCA), Directorate of Census Operations, Tamilnadu.
- [5] Dhamodaran, K. (1994). Villupuram Ramaswamy Padaiyatchiyar Mavatta Varalaaru (Tamil), Chennai.
- [6] Edgar Thurston, Caste and Tribes of Southern India, 7 Vols., Government Press, Madras.
- [7] Francis, W. (1906). Madras District Gazetteer, South Arcot District, Vol. I, Government of Madras, Madras.
- [8] Nambiar, P.K. (1965). Census of India 1961, Vol. IX, Madras, Part X-III, District Census Handbook, South Arcot, Vol. I, The Director of Stationery and Printing, Madras.
- [9] Narayanasamy Iyyer, K. (1933). Thennarkadu Jilla Sarithira Kadaikal (Tamil), Hanuman Publication, Villupuram.
- [10] Perumal, D.P.(ed.), (1967). Tamilnadu Mavatta Kurippugal (Tamil), Kavikuyil Publications, Madras.
- [11] Pillai, K. K. (1975). A Social History of the Tamils, University of Madras, Madras.
- [12] Ravikarthikeyan, A. Idhayavendhan, Vizhi. Pa. and Anbathavan, (eds.). Villupuram Mavatta Aavana Kalanchiyam (Tamil), Villupuram Marudham, Villupuram.
- [13] Senkuttuvan, Ko. (2011). Villupuram Varalattu Suvadukal (Tamil), P.S. Publications, Villupuram.

- [14] Somalay, (1963). Thennarkadu Mavattam (Tamil), Pari Nilayam, Madras.
- [15] Sundara Shanmuganar, (2001). Kedilakarai Nagarikam (Tamil), Meyyappan Tamizhaivagam, Chidambaram.
- [16] Tamilvanan, Lena. (1986). Tamilga Mavatta Nool Varisai: Thennarkadu Mavattam (Tamil), Manimekalai Publications, Madras.

### Author Profile



**Dr. V. Vijayarangam**, is an Assistant Professor of History at Arignar Anna Government Arts College, Villupuram. He obtained M.A., M.Phil and Ph.D. in History from Annamalai University. He is also the author of 4 books in tamil (*Freedom Fighters of Villupuram Taluk, Mailam Murugan Temple, Panayapuram Thirukkannamarntha Nayanar Temple and Tourist Places in Villupuram District*) and 12 National and International Conference papers.