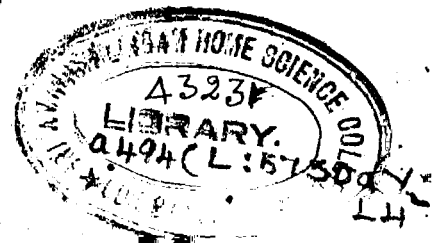


**INFLUENCE OF CASTE ON FOOD HABITS**

By  
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## INTRODUCTION

Every society makes its own choices in "foods". Every food has its significance; some are for feasts, others for everyday meals, some are for the rich, others for the poor, some are forbidden to certain groups of people and some are for women and children or the sick or aged, (Bornstein, 1972).

Food habits are the outcomes of the influences resulting from numerous activities, thoughts, sentiments and beliefs, on the food practices of a group, or community, (Devadas, 1958). Food habits do not spring full blown, (Martin, 1963). The food habits of an individual are formed gradually from early infancy. When a child is fed lovingly, the foods thus served develop an image of great pleasure and delight, (Manocha, 1972).

According to Manocha (1972), 'a food habit is not a passing whim or fancy, but is a feature of the society completely integrated into its structure and social values'. Hence they cannot be influenced in isolation. Food habits are the sum of the food choice of an individual constituting his total diet, (Yudkin and McKenzie, 1964). They are as significant as language or reading habits, (Furgess and Dean, 1962).

The economic conditions, the educational levels and the cultural and social values of a community are reflected in the food practices and habits of its people, (Sai, 1955). Food habits generally correlate with the trends in local production of cereals, grains and vegetables.

Among the numerous social factors which influence food habits, caste plays a dominant role. Dube (1959) is of opinion that caste is one of the major determinants that shape the social structure of the village communities. Caste has been defined and interpreted in many ways. Loomis and Beegle (1957) regard caste as a hereditary class. Hutton (1961) defines the caste system as one where by a society is divided into a number of self contained and completely segregated units, viz, the castes, the mutual relations between which are ritually determined in a graded scale. Risley (1961) holds that caste is a collection of families or groups or families bearing a common name; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor; human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and forming a single homogeneous community. According to Mitchell (1970) the caste

system is reinforced by religious sanctions. It does not exclude economic differentiation as are all other forms of social stratification. Desai (1959) explains that caste determines the function, status, opportunities and handicaps of an individual. The village is a vertical unity of many castes whereas caste is a horizontal unity, its alliances going beyond the village, (Srinivas, 1960).

The aim of this study was to find out how food habits are related to the caste system. The food habits of selected castes were studied in order to have a basis for planning nutrition education programmes. Changes in food habits of people could be affected only through understanding of the interplay of the caste system. In order to teach better food habits, the nutrition educator must first study the existing food habits and understand their significance and value for the people. Without such background knowledge, any effort to improve the food habits and nutritional status of community will not succeed.

The study had the following specific objectives:

1. to find out the dietary practices of the selected castes, types of utensils and methods of cooking used, the practices followed while serving and eating and the dietary practices on special days of the month, special days for the family, festivals and special conditions
- and 2. to bring out all the factors which contribute towards the food habits of different castes.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The available literature concerning this study has been reviewed under the following headings:

- A. Importance of food habits in dietary practices.
- B. Food habits in different castes.
- C. Influence of caste on food habits.
- and D. Other factors affecting the food habits of the people.

### A. Importance of food habits in dietary practices

Bornstein (1972) exhorts that food habits are learnt from early childhood. They form a part of the culture and everyday life of people in close relationship with important economic, social and religious activities. Like every aspect of culture which has been firmly established from childhood, food habits also resist change. Pascual (1972) says that as the time changes, so does man's eating pattern.

"Habits are like flies that come back no matter how often or how persistently they are driven away". Mead (1962) explains that early feeding experience is important.

Rigidity or relative inflexibility of food habits arise in a number of ways, (Wilson, 1952). In particular, it may arise either from a benevolent, satisfying and prolonged early food experience, or it may arise from a very high level of uncertainty or anxiety, with respect to food. Where food is scarce or unattractive, where the people are forced by their employers or by economic necessity, to eat something they do not like will also result in rigid food habits. Food habits are intimately woven into the fabric of life in the society. Food practices have been responsible for the complex pattern of relationships, attitudes, beliefs and practices which form the culture of the society. (Ritchie, 1957).

Each society has surrounded food with prescriptions, restrictions, likes and dislikes, significances, beliefs, emotional associations and rituals which influence the attitudes and practices in all other aspects of life. These, in turn, limit the choice of food. Therefore, man does not eat the full range of nutritious foods available to him anywhere in the world (Jelliffe, 1972). Robson et al (1972) say that the food habits of an individual reflect a life time of experience with food.

They represent the result of receiving, classifying, and collecting information and its application to an eating pattern that is feasible and preferable under prevailing living conditions and economic means. Any food that is eaten is a symbol of a decision made in response to a physiological or psychological need.

Thirty one athletes who were quartered in training at Rizal Memorial Stadium were studied by Villenas and Velendria, (1972), for a period of one month in 1970, prior to the Sixth Asian Games in Bangkok, Thailand. The questionnaire, interview and food weighing methods were employed to obtain data and information about their background, diet history, food habits, dietary patterns, acceptability of many items, snack habits, food preferences, food beliefs and food service. The study revealed that the meals provided by the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation gave 3300 calories per day. The dietary pattern was three meals with one snack.

The results of the study are as follows:

Preferences were measured in terms of a Hedonic scale which used 7, for liked very much; 6, liked moderately; 5, liked slightly; 4, neither liked nor disliked; 3, disliked

slightly; 2, disliked moderately and 1, disliked very much. Foods were liked because of their taste and smell, or because they liked the manner of preparation. Foods were disliked because of the taste, smell, health reasons or religious beliefs. Generally, liked foods were the familiar ones which had pleasant inherent attributes and disliked foods were those which had disagreeable sensory characteristics. Immediately prior to a competition, some of the athletes changed their food habits drastically. Quite a number of athletes did not know important facts about foods.

Rodriguez and Haldan (1972) conducted a study on food preparation and common cooking practices as a part of the dietary phase of the nutrition survey in Bicol region on May - June, 1969. Data on food preparation, common cooking practices, and sources of nutrition information were obtained from 246 respondents in Bicol region by using questionnaire method. The relationship of such data to age, education, serum ascorbic acid and occupation was studied.

Of the total 246 respondents, a large number of subjects were 20 - 49 years old, majority were females, 71% had atleast reached elementary schooling and 73%

were house keepers by occupation. At higher educational levels, respondents had better food preparation and cooking practices following recommended standards.

B. Food habits in different castes:

Be'teille (1959) exherts that the higher the status of a caste, the more rigid it is in the matter of accopting food from others. Brahmins do not accept cooked food from non-Brahmins although, the latter accept such food from the Brahmins. Again non-Brahmins do not accept cooked food from Adi-Dravidas, although the latter accept it from them.

Risley (1951) defines caste as a collection of families or groups or families bearing a common name; claiming a common descent from a mythical ancestor; human or divine; professing to follow the same hereditary calling; and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming, a single homogeneous community. Mitchell (1970) enunciates that the caste system is reinforced by religious sanctions and it does not exclude the fact that it is also evidently connected with economic differentiation as are all other forms of social stratification.

Hsu (1963) states that Brahmins give garbage to the lowest castes and accept no food in return. They give cooked food to high castes, while receiving in return raw foodstuffs. Ghuryu (1957) interprets that because the Brahmins put restrictions on the acceptance of food and drink from the Sudras during the second stage of the development of their culture, such an attitude and practice is considered a great sacrilege in Tamil Nadu.

Commensal restrictions go hand in hand with a certain specialisation of food habits carried to a high degree by the Brahmins. In the kind of food eaten also there is a good deal of variation. All Tamil Brahmins are strict vegetarians. They consider eating meat, fish or eggs is polluting. The Adi-Dravidas eat meat of any kind and also fish and eggs. The non-Brahmins show a wide range of variation. Generally the Saivites and Vellalas do not eat meat at all, while some avoid eating them only on particular days. The 'lower' castes follow the 'higher' castes, giving more honourific foods to the castes above them, in return for less honourific food, although they are not in a position to give the 'lower, pollution - bearing' foods to as many castes below themselves, (Be'teille, 1969).

According to Harriett, quoted by Hsu (1963), the rural communities base their opinions of ranking caste primarily and explicitly on ritual interactions of two principal kinds: (1) the ritualized giving and receiving of food and (2) the giving and receiving of ritual services. As between these two kinds of interaction, food transfers are the most decisive for establishing rank.

McHenry (1957) tells that religious ordinances have a pronounced effect on use of food. Thus use of meat may be forbidden on certain days or it may not be permitted at all. Meat from particular animal species may not be allowed. In the case of one religion atleast, the rules for food use originated at a time and in a place where the reasons of sanitation and prevention of disease determined what to eat. Adi - Dravidas, the 'paraiyas' eat beef. The avoidance of meat by Brahmins or pork by Vellalas has ritual sanctions. Vegetarian food among non-Brahmins has a different taste from that of the Brahmins, being generally more heavily spiced and hotter. Davidson and Passmore (1969) bring out the point that Jews and Muslims are forbidden to eat the flesh of pig, but more important is the Hindu prohibition of the consumption of beef and slaughter of cattle. Thus

dietary restrictions imposed by religion, according to Ritchie (1963), also play an important part in the food habits of many people. Religious societies prevent the consumption of nutritionally superior non-vegetarian foods in many groups.

C. Influence of caste on food habits:

Dutt (1961) describes caste as a system in which its members cannot marry outside it. There are similar but less rigid restrictions on eating and drinking with members of another caste. There are fixed occupations for many castes and there is some hierarchical gradation of castes. Ghuryu (1957) holds that there are minute rules as to what sort of food or drink can be accepted by a person and from what castes.

Devadas (1968) explains that the caste system puts several restrictions on feeding and social intercourse. It prescribes many taboos for its members.

"It has laid down:

- the kinds of food a man may eat or abstain from,
- the persons who may cook the food,
- the rituals to be followed at meals,
- the persons with whom one may take food,
- the persons with whom one may smoke,  
chew pan or share pipe,

and the nature of the utensils,

(earthen, iron, copper, brass or silverware) that one may use for eating, drinking or cooking".

The dietary restrictions imposed by religion also influence the food habits of the people. Various religious codes have also prescribed certain food practices. In many cultures, religious beliefs dictate methods of preparation of food. Feeding habits are so intertwined with the culture and value systems that changes in one area are bound to be influenced or occasioned by changes in the other, Devadas (1958).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) of the United Nations, (1969) says that the most obvious of the socio-economic and cultural influences are the prevailing food habits, traditions, customs and beliefs. Dietary patterns are greatly affected by food customs and traditions. FAO (1962) explains that while income, food availability, home food production and marketing facilities direct the preferences of the consumers, customs dictate the manner in which food will be procured, stored, cooked, served and eaten. The socio-cultural and religious factors underlying food habits in traditional societies result in certain food prohibitions and food taboos, (Notes and Reviews, Foods & Nutrition, 1972).

The food practices of the people are deeply imbedded in their culture, which controls the choice of food. In all cultures, however, simple or small, the staple food is prepared, cooked and eaten according to strict rules within a definite group and with the observance of manners, customs and traditions, rights and taboos which are called, 'Derived Cultural Imperatives', Devadas (1968).

In most societies food plays a part in every important social and religious occasion in life, (Bornstein, 1972). Food habits could be influenced by religion, (Intengan, 1972). For the illiterate people of those with little education, ideas about good and bad foods are not based on scientific knowledge. They are based on long-standing experiences in their own environment, on traditional customs, beliefs, likes and dislikes for certain tastes, textures, smells and colours, (Bornstein, 1972).

According to McHenry (1957), religious ordinances have a pronounced effect on food use. In some societies religion has played an important role in determining the food habits of the people and has to some extent influenced the general health of its followers for the better or worse, (Manocha, 1972). Various religious codes prescribe

certain food practices. Some codes are helpful in promoting better nutrition but others lead to malnutrition, (Devadas, 1970).

Early in history of almost any group, specific foods were prescribed or forbidden by religious leaders. Burgess and Dean (1962) hold that religious and sentimental restrictions on eating are not very significant, as people objecting one item in a group of food such as flesh foods will take an alternative of equal nutritive value. Only 15 per cent of the people object flesh foods on religious grounds. FAO (1962) views that religious feasts make an important contribution to diets which are normally poor. Thus caste and religious percepts have a strong influence on the use of food.

Food has significance in religious occasions from birth to the funeral, Lowenburg (1970). Women, on occasion of religious festivals, exhibit their dexterity cooking and talents for originality and innovations. The poor are fed by the 'Better offs'. The rural homemakers prepare Vadai, Pachaimavu, Kachayam, Payasam, Idli, Pongal and Biriyani on the festive occasions for following reasons:

"to offer to God in thanks giving,  
to pray to God for happiness in the future,  
to have our secret desires fulfilled,  
to eat well atleast on one day  
and to follow our customs and traditions".

There are ceremonies, fasts and feasts with appropriate seasonal food preparations connotation.

According to DeGariné (1970), foods allow individuals and groups to communicate. It is not by chance that most social feasts and occasions are marked by prestigious food consumption. Most festivals associated with the life cycle of individuals are marked by food gifts and imply ritual meals closely/organized by custom. The exchange of gifts of foods between individuals and social groups have, on these occasions, an important social function.

D. Factors affecting the food habits of people:

There are several factors, such as income, availability of foods, prices, season, education, geographical location, technological changes and religion, which influence the food habits of people, (Intengan, 1972).

According to Manocha and Karnad (1972), food habits are determined by circumstances and available food supply. In addition, factors such/ as economics, social structure, cultural patterns, religious sanctions, and above all,

the level of education are responsible for formation of food habits.

#### Availability and seasons

Vyas (1972) and McHenry (1957) stress that one of the principal factors affecting food choice is its availability. The climate and soil conditions determine the availability and hence choice of food. The availability of foods influences their consumption. Season also affects the intake of certain foods like vegetables and fruits. Existence of foods in a locality affects the kind and quantity of food chosen by the consumers. Unless a product is available, consumers would not get acquainted with it.

#### Income:

Allied closely to availability is the economic factor. By and large, the economic status of the population, strongly influences the quantity and quality of food consumed. The level of food consumption tends to shift from cheaper to more expensive foods and the proportion of food expenditures declines.

#### Education:

An understanding of the role of food in promoting growth and development or lack of it influences food consumption. Good health is one of the strongest incentives for promoting correct food habits. Valdecenas (1977)

stresses the fact that age and education are the two factors which may account for the level of nutrition information held by an individual.

Physiological needs:

Physiological requirements also influence food habits. There are differences in food requirements for different ages, sex, occupation and activities of family members.

Psychological factors:

Food beliefs and taboos are related to the attitudes on food and the values attached to various attributes of food.

Race is cited frequently as a factor which affects food choice.

Social customs:

Social customs and prestige have a distinct bearing on food choice. Social customs determine meal times and menus. Food fads and prejudices in a society are also definite factors in food choice.

Robson et al (1972) point out that availability, price, familiarity, time for preparation and other factors play a part in the decision - making process. It should be kept in mind, however, that these factors do not necessarily operate alone, or one by one, but represent relative weightings in the mind of the individual. It is obvious that cost may be outweighed by convenience and it is possible that knowledge of the nutrient value may be overridden by cultural preference or prejudice. The economic advantage of a food appears to be one of the strong factors that influence food choices. There are factors which influence food habits, but it is not known which factors carry the strongest weight in any specific situation, nor how these factors operate in conjunction to each other.

### III. EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE

The procedures adopted in conducting this study consisted of the following steps:

- A. Selection of the village,
- B. Selection of the sample,
- C. Selection of the method,
- D. Designing the interview schedule,
- E. Collection of the data
- and F. Analysis and interpretation of the data.

#### A. Selection of the villages:

The villages for this study were selected in Perianaickenpalayam Community Development Block of Coimbatore District for easy accessibility of the investigator. The villages selected were, Thudialur, Asekapuram, Poochiyur, Narasimmanaickenpalayam, Govanur, Pannimadai and Perianaickenpalayam. (Fig. 1).

#### B. Selection of the sample:

The dominant castes in each of the three major divisions, namely, Brahmin and Vellala Gounder from Forward; Kurumber and Kavara Naidu from Backward; and Chakkiliar and Parayar from the Scheduled castes were selected to draw the sample for this study.

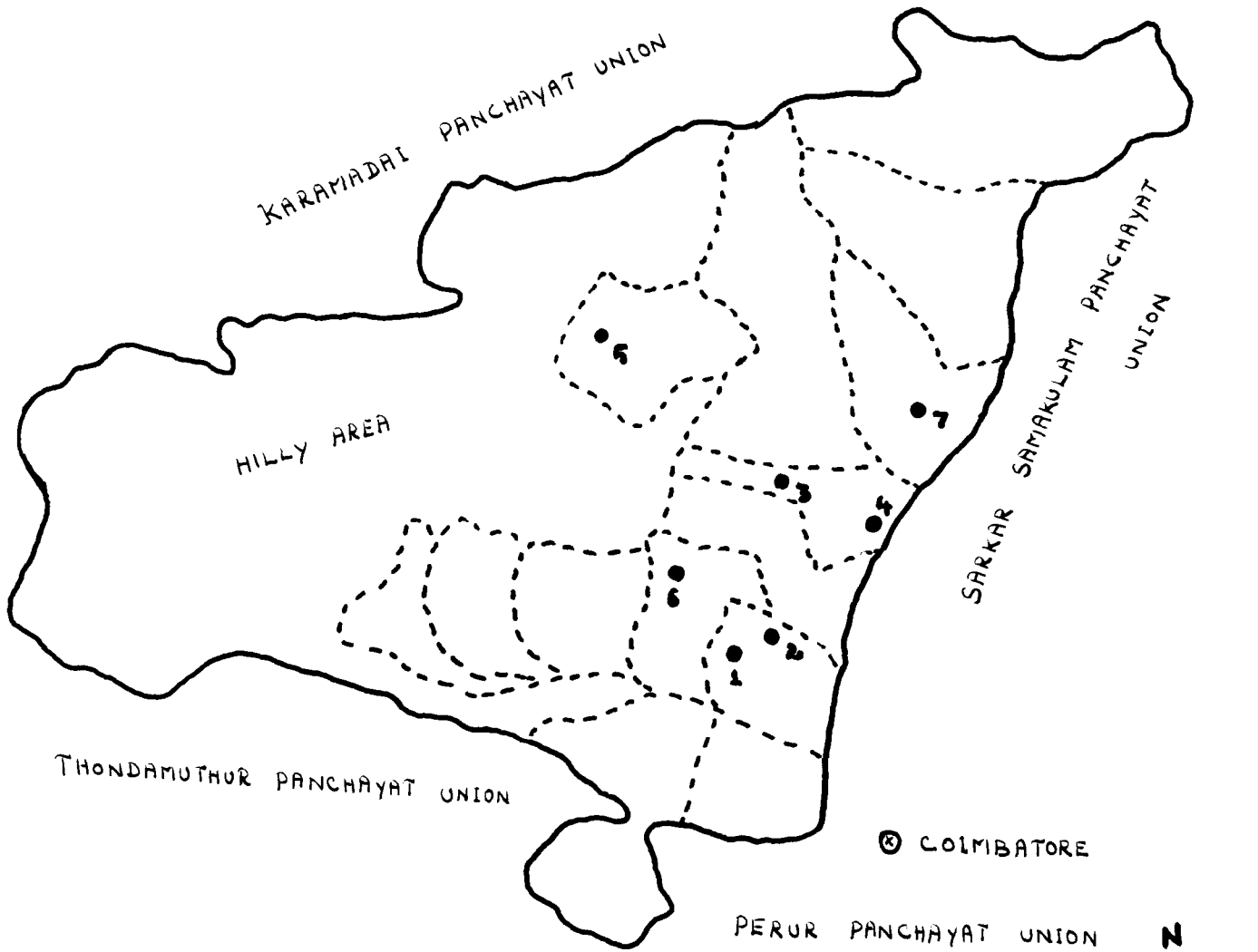
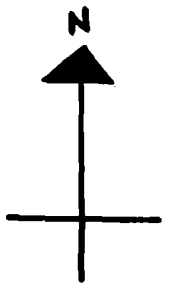


FIGURE -1

MAP OF THE PERIANAICKENPALAYAM PANCHAYAT UNION SHOWING THE VILLAGES SELECTED FOR THE STUDY

KEY:

- 1. THUDIALUR.
- 2. ASOKAPURAM.
- 3. POOCHIYUR.
- 4. NARASIMMANAICKENPALAYAM.
- 5. GOVANUR.
- 6. PANNIMADAI.
- 7. PERIANAICKENPALAYAM.



From each caste 25 households, that is 50 from each division, and 150 in all were selected. The samples were selected from the different villages, according to their dominance. Thus Brahmins were selected from Asokapuram, Vellala Grounders from Thudialur, Kurumbers from Poochiyur, Kavara Naidus from Narasimmanaickenpalayam, Chakkiliars from Govanur and Parayars from Pannimadal and Perianaickenpalayam. It was assumed that the divisions Forward, Backward and Scheduled may show differences in the food habits of the people. The homemaker or the eldest female member in the family was interviewed since she would have knowledge of the food habits of the caste.

C. Selection of the method:

Ritchie (1953) says that the ways of studying food habits include detailed surveys of food intake and of the meal patterns of groups and individuals; observations on group or individual behaviour; questionnaires; interviews; either general or planned step by step. He also stresses the need for using several methods at once, in order to obtain better results. A more detailed and accurate knowledge of food habits and dietaries in a population can be obtained through the home interview procedure, which was used by Roberts and Stefani in their study of living conditions among Puerto Rican families.

Hence the method chosen for conducting the survey is interview. Yang (1956) defines the interview as a technique of field work which is used to watch the behaviour of an individual or individuals; to record statements, to observe the concrete results of social or group interaction. Devadas (1959) tells that a schedule refers to a set of statements and/or questions to be answered by the respondent in a face to face interview, and filled in by the interviewer. Rangaswamy (1959) exhorts that interview is one of the chief means of collecting data in social research.

D. Designing the interview schedule:

In order to elicit the food habits of the selected families by the interview method, an interview schedule was framed and pretested with ten rural families who were not included in the study. After the pre-test, the schedule was modified as given in Appendix - I.

E. Collection of data:

The investigator established rapport with the homemaker or the elder lady member in the family as the case may be and interviewed her. Thus data were collected from six different castes, namely, Vellala Gounder and

Brahmins from the Forward, Kurumber and Kavara Naidu from the Backward and Chakkiliar and Parayar from the Scheduled castes.

F. Analysis and interpretation of the data:

The collected data were analysed and interpreted as shown in the following chapter.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study are discussed under the following heads pertaining to the families surveyed:

- A. Family background,
- B. Dietary practices,
- C. Methods of cooking used,
- D. Types of utensils used for cooking,
- E. Serving and dining practices,
- F. Special food practices, based on caste
- and G. Food habits on special days, festivals and special conditions.

##### A. Family background:

The following aspects of the family background are presented and discussed:

- 1. Types of families
- 2. Age and sex distribution of the members
- 3. Educational status of the members
- 4. Occupational patterns
- and 5. Monthly income pattern

1. Types of families:

Table I gives the distribution of the types of families represented in the sample.

TABLE I

TYPES OF FAMILIES EXISTING AMONG THE SELECTED FAMILIES

S.No.	Types of family	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
1.	Nuclear	72	60	66	80	54	72	96	96	96
2.	Joint	12	20	15	12	15	14	4	--	2
3.	Extended nuclear	15	20	18	8	20	14	--	4	2

G - Gounder

Ku - Kurumber

C - Chakkiliar

B - Brahmin

Ka - Kavara Naidu

P - Parayar

The majority of the families surveyed in three major castes, were nuclear in type. The number of joint and extended nuclear families were least in the Scheduled castes.

2. Age and sex distribution of the members:

The age and sex distribution of the members in the families surveyed is presented in Table II.

TABLE II  
AGE AND SEX DISTRIBUTION OF THE SURVEYED FAMILIES

S. No.	Age range year	Sex	Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
			G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Number of Members											
1.	Upto 30	M	39	36	75	45	46	91	42	41	83
		F	52	36	88	48	43	91	53	40	93
2.	31 - 50	M	15	19	34	12	23	35	14	14	28
		F	11	16	27	11	21	32	7	13	20
3.	51 - 70	M	6	6	12	3	9	12	1	3	4
		F	6	5	11	3	7	10	1	2	3
4.	Above 70	M	--	2	2	--	5	5	--	--	--
		F	--	--	--	--	4	4	1	--	1

The Backward castes had the largest number of males, that is, 91 in the age range 0-30 years, and the scheduled castes had largest number of females, that is, 93 in the same age range. The Forward caste consisted of 75 males and 88 females.

### 3. Educational status of the members:

The educational status of the members in the surveyed families is presented in Table III.

TABLE III  
EDUCATIONAL STATUS OF THE MEMBERS IN THE SURVEYED FAMILIES

S. No.	Educational level	Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ke	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Percentage of members										
1.	I - V std.	30	18	24	24	28	27	2	29	16
2.	VI - VIII std.	15	16	16	14	20	18	--	20	10
3.	IX - XI std.	15	27	21	14	13	13	--	12	6
4.	College level	6	31	18	--	6	4	--	1	1
5.	Illiterate	33	8	21	48	33	38	98	38	67

As expected a higher percentage (79 per cent) are educated in the Forward castes, followed by the Backward (62 per cent) and Scheduled Castes (33 per cent). The percentage of illiterates is highest (67 per cent) in the Scheduled castes. Among the Forward castes, the literacy is higher (92 per cent) in Brahmins. None had college

education in the Kurumber and Chakkiliar castes. The parayar caste had better literacy rate than even the Gounder of the Forward Castes.

#### 4. Occupational patterns:

The occupational patterns in the families surveyed are given in Table IV.

TABLE IV  
OCCUPATIONAL PATTERNS IN THE FAMILIES SURVEYED

S. No.	Occupation	Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Number of members in										
1.	Skilled work	18	12	30	17	27	44	1	14	15
2.	Clerical	3	22	25	3	7	10	--	1	1
3.	Land-lord	12	--	12	10	4	14	--	--	--
4.	Coolies	4	--	4	12	--	12	72	31	103
5.	Business	3	6	9	--	4	4	--	--	--

Skilled work was the most common type of occupation in all three major castes. While the number of landlords was few (12 and 14) limited to the respective Forward and Backward castes, the maximum number of coolies, that is,

103, came from the Scheduled caste. The highest number of clerical workers, is among the Brahmins (22). It was also interesting to note that there were neither landlords nor coolies in Brahmin caste.

### 5. Monthly income pattern:

Table V shows the income pattern of the selected families.

TABLE V  
MONTHLY INCOME PATTERN OF THE SELECTED FAMILIES

S. No.	Monthly income Rs.	Forward			Backward			Scheduled		Total
		G	B	Tot- al (Percentage of families)	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	
1.	0 - 200	35	20	28	32	20	26	40	75	58
2.	201 - 400	35	24	30	44	52	48	55	16	36
3.	401 - 600	20	24	22	20	20	20	4	4	4
4.	601 & above	8	32	2	4	8	5	--	4	2

Most of the Forward and Backward caste families belonged to the income range Rs. 201 - 400 per month and above. In contrast to that Scheduled castes had income Rs. 0 - 200 per month. The highest percentage (32) of Brahmin families

belonged to the income range Rs. 501 and above. A majority of the Yurumber families also earned Rs. 0 - 200 per month.

### B. Dietary practices:

Details regarding the dietary practices of the selected families are discussed under the headings given below:

1. Vegetarian and non-vegetarian practices adopted
2. Food purchasing habits
3. Meal patterns
4. Menu patterns in the daily meal
- and 5. Foods eaten as raw.

#### 1. Vegetarian and non-vegetarian practices adopted:

All the families surveyed in the Backward and Scheduled Castes were non-vegetarians. All the Brahmins and eight per cent of the Gounder families were vegetarians. Only 54 per cent of the Forward castes were non-vegetarians.

#### 2. Food purchasing habits:

##### a. Place of purchasing habits:

The places where food items were purchased by the sample are given in table VI.

**TABLE VI**  
**PLACE OF PURCHASE OF FOOD ITEMS BY THE SURVEYED FAMILIES**

S. No.	Place of Purchase	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
1.	Village shandy	88	68	78	96	92	94	100	100	100
2.	Petty shops	54	96	80	96	76	86	100	100	100
3.	Super market	48	72	60	24	52	38	--	12	6
4.	Other co-oper- ative stores	--	--	--	4	--	2	--	--	--

All the families in the Scheduled Castes, and most of the Forward and Backward caste families patronised the Shandis and Petty shops for their food purchase. Foods were purchased also from the Coimbatore Supermarket by 60 per cent from the Forward castes. Only four per cent of the Kurumber families purchased foods from co-operative stores.

**b. Frequency of food purchasing:**

The frequency of food purchasing is presented in Table VII.

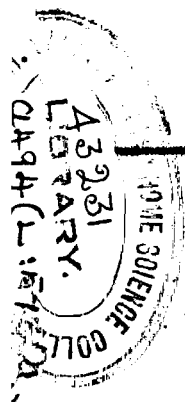
TABLE VII  
FREQUENCY OF FOOD PURCHASING

Caste	Frequency	Percentage of families purchasing various food items												
		Rice	Mill-ets	Wheat	Pulses	Leafy vegetables	Roots and Tubers	Other vegetables	Nuts and Oil	Condiments and spices	Fruits	Fle-shy foods	Milk and Milk products	Others
Gounder	Y	20	--	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	M	60	20	28	64	--	--	--	30	39	--	3	2	35
	W	20	8	4	28	64	100	97	48	53	33	28	--	64
	D	--	--	--	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	--
	O	--	--	--	--	--	--	3	1	7	50	--	--	--
Brahmin	Y	--	4	--	20	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	M	64	8	28	60	--	--	--	65	25	--	--	19	68
	W	4	--	8	8	39	70	55	20	12	16	--	15	32
	D	--	--	--	--	33	20	13	--	2	6	--	15	--
	O	--	4	4	--	6	9	25	8	8	50	--	4	--
Total (forward)	Y	10	2	--	12	--	--	--	8	--	--	--	--	--
	M	57	14	28	52	--	--	--	47	37	--	2	11	57
	W	12	4	6	18	55	85	77	34	32	25	19	8	48
	D	--	--	--	--	18	10	7	--	1	3	--	10	--
	O	--	2	2	--	3	5	15	5	--	50	--	--	--
Kurumber	Y	4	4	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	M	57	15	--	55	--	--	--	12	14	4	2	--	28
	W	44	35	4	37	28	67	54	44	19	5	26	--	77
	D	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	--
	O	--	--	--	--	--	--	25	2	27	15	--	--	--

Y - Yearly  
M - Monthly

W - Weekly  
D - Daily

O - Occasionally



Percentage of families purchasing various food items

Caste	Fre- que- ncy	Rice	Mill- ets	Whe- at	Pul- ses	Leafy vege- tables	Roots and Tubers	Other vege- tables	Nuts and Oil	Condi- ments and Spices	Fru- its	Fle- shy foods	Milk and Milk products	Others
Kavara	Y	20	--	--	10	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Naidu	M	60	12	4	62	--	--	--	40	27	--	11	--	48
	W	8	24	4	28	42	70	40	26	14	10	33	--	52
	D	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	--
Total	Y	12	2	--	7	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(Back- ward)	M	55	14	2	59	--	--	--	26	20	2	6	--	38
	W	25	30	4	33	35	58	47	35	16	8	30	--	62
	D	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	4	--
	O	6	--	--	--	--	7	41	8	35	34	--	--	--
Chakki- liar	W	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	M	4	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	W	40	44	8	100	23	31	20	35	11	--	44	--	100
	D	--	48	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	O	52	--	--	--	--	3	79	4	62	34	13	--	--
Prayer	Y	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
	M	--	4	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--	10	--	--
	W	68	72	--	53	14	47	64	40	18	--	4	--	100
	D	--	24	--	28	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--	--
	O	32	--	--	--	--	2	31	7	1	27	27	--	--
Total	Y	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
(Sche- duled)	M	2	4	--	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	5	--	--
	W	54	58	--	82	18	39	42	37	15	--	24	--	100
	D	--	36	--	14	--	--	--	--	1	--	--	--	--
	O	42	--	--	--	--	3	35	6	32	30	20	--	--

Y - Yearly  
M - Monthly

W - Weekly  
D - Daily

O - Occasionally

The Forward and Backward families purchased rice and pulses once in a year since they can afford to purchase food in bulk and store in. There was no such annual purchase among the Scheduled castes, due to poor economic conditions. Monthly and weekly purchases of cereals and pulses were almost in the same order among the Forward and Backward castes, whereas it was minimum in the case of the Scheduled castes. The Scheduled caste families buy the cereals and pulses weekly, because of the wage pattern.

Vegetables (leafy, roots and tubers and others) had to be purchased weekly or daily even by the Forward and Backward caste families for freshness. Fruits and fleshy foods were purchased only occasionally. Milk was purchased daily by the Brahmin families, while only four per cent of the Kavara Naidu families purchased milk daily. Sugar and jaggery (others) were purchased monthly or weekly by the Forward and Backward caste families, while Scheduled caste purchased them weekly.

None of the Scheduled caste families were in the habit of buying milk and milk products any time.

### 3. Meal patterns:

The meal patterns of the families are given in Table VIII.

TABLE VIII  
MEAL PATTERNS OF THE FAMILIES

S. No.	Meal pattern	Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	K <sub>m</sub>	K <sub>a</sub>	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Percentage of families										
1.	Breakfast + Lunch + Tea + Dinner	100	48	74	100	100	100	12	12	12
2.	Midmorning lunch + Tea + Dinner	--	52	26	--	--	--	--	--	--
3.	Breakfast + Lunch + Dinner	--	--	--	--	--	--	8	--	4
4.	Morning - Lunch + Dinner	--	--	--	--	--	--	80	88	84

All the Gounders from the Forward and all the Backward caste families followed the daily meal pattern as Breakfast + Lunch + Tea and Dinner. Breakfast + Lunch + Dinner, was the pattern followed by a majority of the Scheduled caste families (84 per cent).

Fifty two per cent of Brahmin families had the meal pattern ~~Midmorning~~ + Lunch + Tea and Dinner. Only four per cent of the Scheduled castes had two meals.

#### 4. Menu patterns in the daily meal:

Among the Forward castes, a majority of 48 per cent from the Backward caste families had Iddli\* or Dosa with Chutney or Sambar for Breakfast; while only four per cent in the Scheduled castes had a similar type of Breakfast. Uppuma with plantain and sugar, or Puri with Kuruma were the Breakfast items for Forward and Backward caste families. As for the Scheduled caste families, the main food for Breakfast was either Kali or Cold rice with buttermilk.

For Lunch and Dinner, a variety of items in the menu such as Rice, Sambar, Rasam, Porial and Curds were possible for the Forward and Backward castes. Coffee or any other beverage with Tiffin were not included in a majority of families in the Scheduled caste, while most of the Forward and Backward caste families had Coffee besides the main meals.

#### 5. Foods eaten as raw:

Table IX presents the foods eaten raw by the families.

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\* Glossary of all the terms used in this study are given in Appendix VI.

TABLE IX  
FOODS EATEN AS RAW BY THE FAMILIES SURVEYED

S. No.	Foods eaten raw	Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Percentage of families										
1.	Carrot	40	48	44	56	48	52	--	4	2
2.	Beetroot	8	48	28	8	28	18	--	--	--
3.	Tomato	36	72	54	64	48	56	52	52	52
4.	Cucumber	16	44	30	4	40	22	16	20	18
5.	Sweet Potato	24	--	12	4	28	16	20	--	10
6.	Sprouted pulses	20	--	10	4	--	2	4	--	2
7.	Tapioca	8	--	4	--	--	--	15	12	14
8.	Onion	--	40	20	--	15	8	4	--	2

Tomato was consumed in the raw stage by most of the Forward (54 per cent), Backward (56 per cent) and Scheduled caste (52 per cent). A considerable percentage families in the Forward and Backward castes took carrot & also in the raw form. Raw sprouted pulses, sweet potato and onion were used by few members. Cucumber, sweet potato and tapioca were taken by a comparatively less number of families from the Scheduled caste.

Percentage of families in different castes including raw foods in their diets is presented in Fig. 2. The habit of including raw foods in the diet is significantly influenced (at one per cent level) by the caste system and income levels of the families and educational status of the homemakers, (Appendix III).

### C. Methods of cooking used

The methods of cooking used by the families are presented in Table X.

TABLE X  
METHODS OF COOKING USED BY THE SURVEYED FAMILIES

S. No.	Foods	Method	Percentage of families in								
			Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
			G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
1.	Cereals	Boiling	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
		Steaming	15	8	12	4	15	10	8	15	12
		Roasting	8	--	4	8	--	4	8	--	4
		Frying	--	--	--	4	--	2	--	--	--
		Stewing	8	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--
2.	Pulses	Boiling	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
		Steaming	--	8	4	9	8	8	--	--	--
		Roasting	--	--	--	8	17	10	--	--	--
		Frying	8	--	4	4	--	2	4	--	2
		Stewing	92	100	96	92	100	96	100	100	100

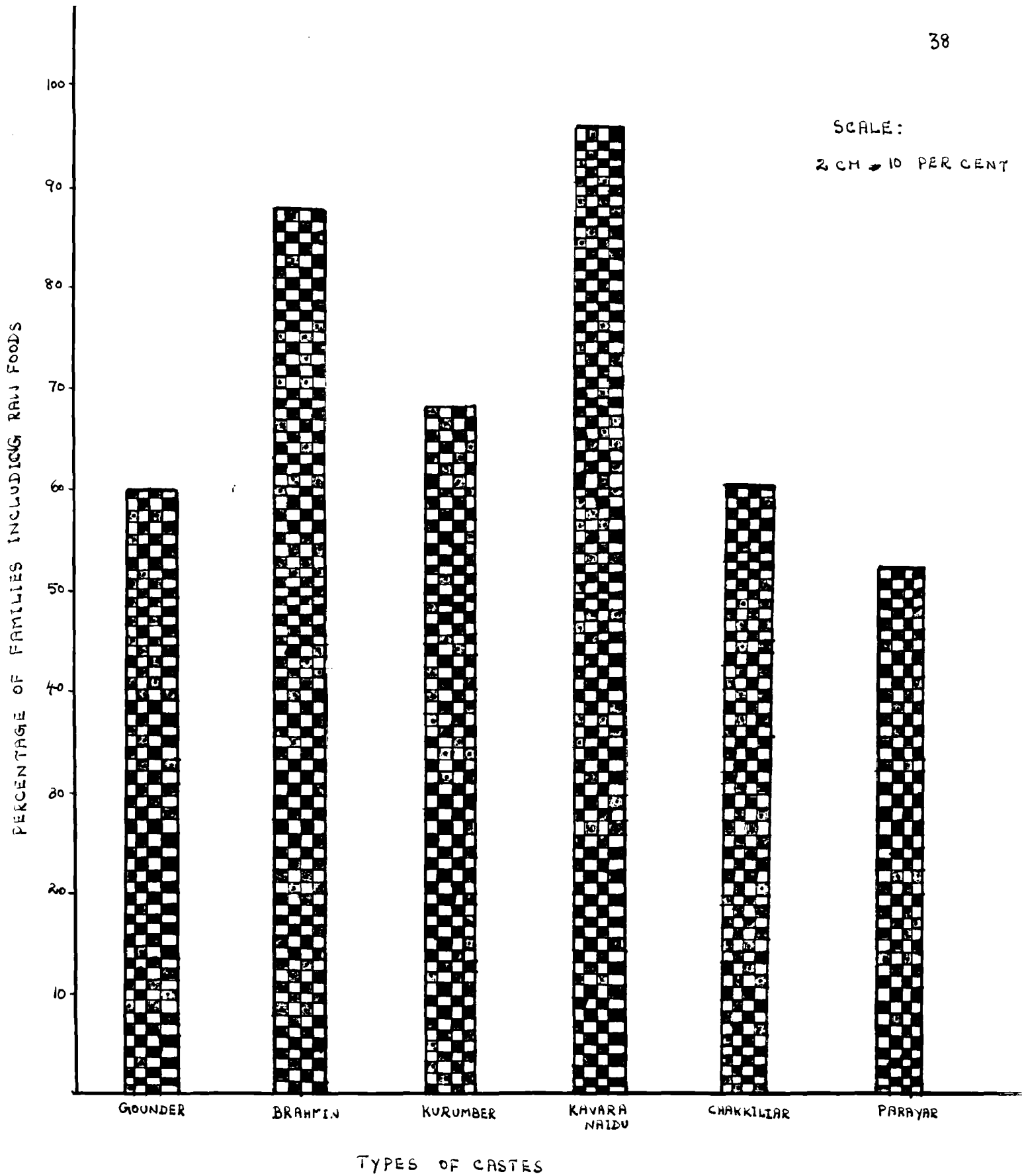


FIGURE-2

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT CASTES INCLUDING RAW FOODS IN THEIR DIETS.

S. No.	Foods	Method	Percentage of families in								
			Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
			G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
3.	Leafy vegetables	Boiling	80	12	46	32	--	15	--	--	--
		Steaming	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
		Roasting	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
		Frying	100	100	100	92	100	96	100	100	100
		Stewing	48	100	74	88	100	94	100	100	100
4.	Other vegetables	Boiling	44	8	25	12	16	14	--	--	--
		Steaming	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
		Roasting	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
		Frying	100	100	100	95	100	98	100	100	100
		Stewing	92	100	95	96	100	98	100	100	100
5.	Fleshy foods	Boiling	68	--	34	8	28	18	--	--	--
		Steaming	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
		Roasting	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
		Frying	92	--	45	95	100	98	100	100	100
		Stewing	92	--	45	95	100	98	100	100	100

All the families in the Forward, Backward and Scheduled castes used boiling as the main method to cook cereals and pulses while leafy vegetables and other vegetables were fried. Frying and stewing were used to cook fleshy foods by all the Scheduled caste and by 92 per cent of the Gounder families. They used stewing also for cooking pulses. Roasting method was used to cook cereals by four per cent of all the three major castes.

D. Types of utensils used for cooking

Table XI shows the types of utensils used for cooking by the families.

TABLE XI  
TYPES OF UTENSILS USED FOR COOKING BY THE FAMILIES

Type	Foods	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Earthen- ware (Stonewa- re by Br- ahmins)	All foods	52	--	26	92	52	72	100	100	100
	Kolambu	20	58	44	8	28	18	--	--	--
	Rasam	12	--	5	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Sambar	8	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Rice	36	--	18	4	36	20	--	--	--
Brass	All foods	16	28	22	--	16	8	--	--	--
	Kolambu	8	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Rice	15	52	34	4	16	10	--	--	--
Stainless Steel	All foods	--	52	26	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Kolambu	4	--	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
Aluminium	All foods	40	58	54	56	48	52	--	4	2
	Rice	16	--	8	12	24	19	24	4	14
Copper	Rice	4	--	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
Iron	Frying									
	All foods	100	76	88	84	100	92	--	--	--
Bronze	Rice	4	44	24	--	--	--	--	--	--

All the families (100 per cent) in the Scheduled caste used only Earthenware utensils for cooking all types of foods. In contrast more percentage of the Forward caste families used Stainless Steel, Copper, Aluminium and Bronze Utensils for cooking foods. Use of Aluminium Utensils was highest among the Backward castes. Only 16 per cent of the Scheduled caste community used Aluminium utensils.

All the foods are cooked in Earthenware utensils in 52 per cent of the Gounder families, while Stoneware was used to prepare kolambu in 58 per cent of the Brahmin families. Earthenware utensils are also used to cook kolambu and rice by a few Backward families.

Among the Brahmin families, 52 per cent used Brass utensils food cooking Rice and Stainless Steel utensils were used for cooking all foods.

None of the Scheduled caste families used Brass, Stainless Steel, Copper, Iron or Bronze utensils for cooking foods. The reasons expressed by the homemakers for using the particular type of utensils were mostly 'easy to cook and wash'.

E. Serving and dining practices:

Details regarding the serving and dining practices are presented and discussed under the following headings.

1. Priority among the members
2. Who sit together while dining
3. Rituals followed while eating
4. Occasions for the use of plantain or other leaves for serving food
5. Order of serving the different items of the menu in a meal
- and 6. Changes in menu during particular seasons or times.

1. Priority among the members:

Table XII indicates the most important persons in the family for feeding as considered by the homemakers.

TABLE XII  
PRIORITY AMONG MEMBERS IN FEEDING

S. No.	Priority	Percentage of surveyed families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
1.	Husband	58	38	52	54	44	54	44	75	60
2.	Children	44	16	30	8	15	12	35	12	24
3.	Elders in the family	12	--	6	15	16	16	12	12	12
4.	All the family members	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
5.	Males in the family	--	15	8	4	24	14	4	--	2

Most of the families in all the three castes (52, 54 and 50 per cent respectively) considered the husband as the most important person to receive priority while feeding, children coming next. Only in the case of the Brahmin families, 28 per cent considered "all the family members" as important in feeding and 15 per cent gave priority to the male members. Elders in the family received less priority with 15 and 12 per cent of Backward and Poudner castes giving the importance.

The reasons for giving such priority were: respect, custom and consideration. The 'earning' member in the family needed the highest priority.

2. Who sit together while dining:

Details regarding those who sit together while dining are given in Table XIII.

TABLE XIII  
WHO SIT TOGETHER WHILE DINING

S. No.	Those who sit together	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
1.	All the family members	48	40	44	24	48	36	55	75	66
2.	Husband and Children	24	12	18	44	28	36	32	4	18
3.	Males in the family	--	36	18	8	20	14	--	--	--
4.	Males and Children	4	8	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
5.	Husband alone	--	--	--	12	--	6	--	--	--
6.	Husband and wife	--	--	--	--	15	8	--	12	6
7.	Elders in the family	8	--	4	--	--	--	--	--	--

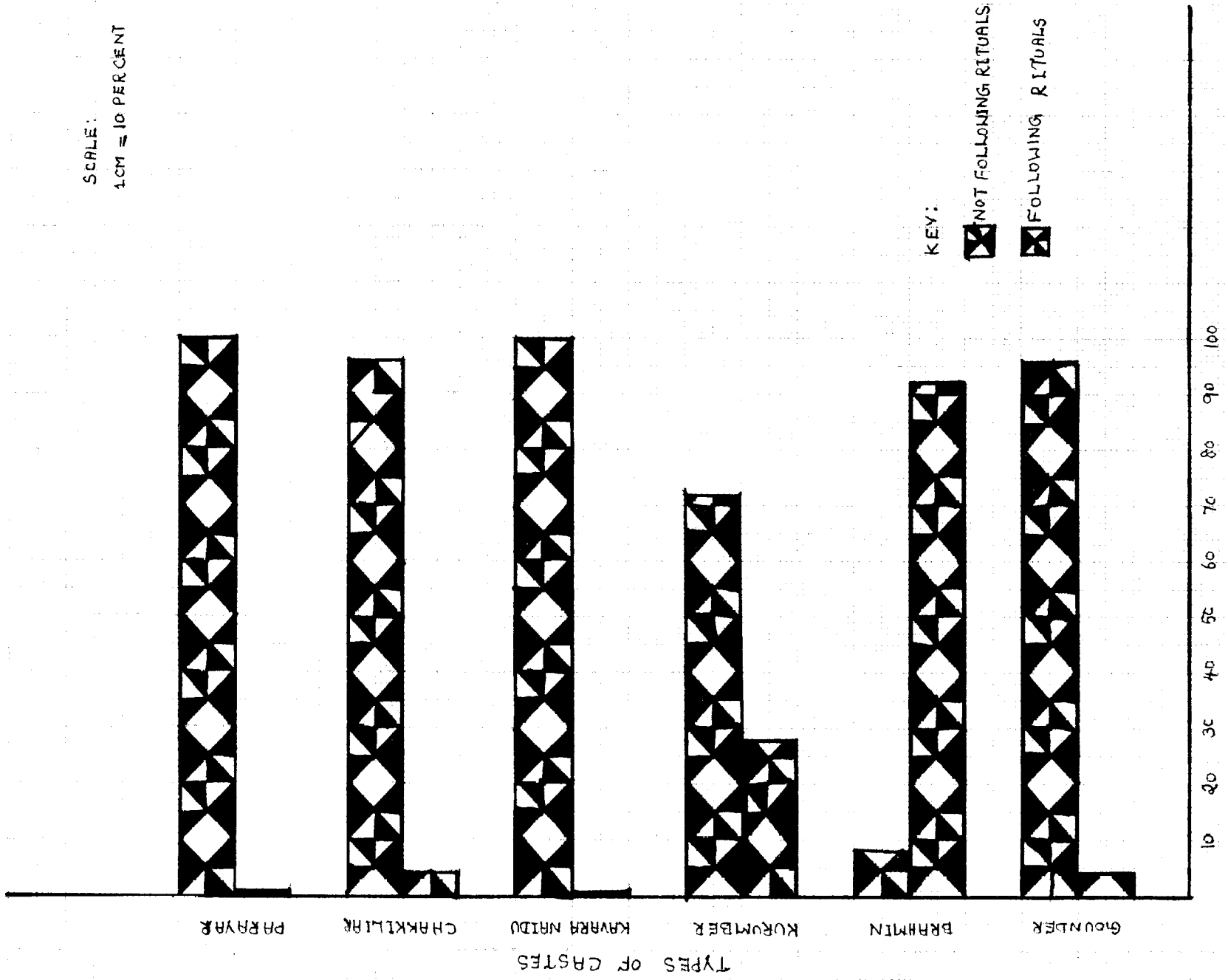
In contrast to the conventional belief, in this study all the family members sit together while dining in a majority of the families in all the three major castes. In only a few families, the husband and children sit together first. Males alone eating is practised mostly in the Brahmin families (35 per cent) and in a few Backward castes (8 per cent in Kurumber and 20 per cent in Kavara Naidu castes).

The husband eats alone first in 12 per cent of the Kurumber families. In 16 per cent of Kavara Naidu families and in 12 per cent of Parayar families the husband and wife sit together while dining. In eight per cent of the Gounder families, all the elders in the family sit together while eating.

### 3. Rituals followed while eating:

None of the Scheduled caste families and only few families in the Forward (44 per cent) and Backward (12 per cent) follow rituals while eating. Eighty four per cent of the Brahmin families follow some rituals before starting to eat or while eating, while only 24 per cent in the Kurumber caste fall in this category. No ritual is followed by 96 per cent of the Gounder families in

SCALE:  
1CM = 10 PERCENT



PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES  
FIGURE-3

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT CASTES FOLLOWING RITUALS

the Forward castes. In general, rituals are practised by most of the Brahmin families (84 per cent) only.

The rituals followed are that they sit on a wooden plank, do 'Naivethyam' before starting to eat, utter 'Manthras' before dining and set aside a little part of the food before start to eat for the crows.

The habit of following rituals is given in Figure 3. The habit of following certain rituals before or while taking meals is significantly influenced (at one per cent level) by the caste system and income levels of the families and educational status of the homemakers, (Appendix III).

4. Occasions for the use of plantain or other leaves for serving food:

Table XIV gives the use of plantain or other leaves for serving food.

TABLE XIV  
USE OF LEAF FOR SERVING MEALS

S. No.	Occasion	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
1.	Festivals	28	40	34	52	32	42	44	--	22
2.	Special days	40	40	40	--	40	20	--	--	--
3.	Monday	24	--	12	52	24	38	28	8	18
4.	Friday	20	--	10	32	28	30	20	--	10
5.	Saturday	--	--	--	4	15	10	15	--	8
6.	Tuesday	--	--	--	8	--	4	--	--	--
7.	Daily	4	36	20	--	--	--	--	--	--

The plantain leaf is used during festivals, and special days by 34-40 per cent of the families in the Forward castes and by 29-42 per cent in the Backward castes and 22 per cent in the Scheduled castes. On Mondays and Fridays, leaf is used by 24 and 20 per cent of the Gounder families. Thirty six per cent of Brahmin families use the leaf daily instead of plate for eating.

Only 40 per cent of Kavara Naidy families used plantain leaf on special days. Among the Scheduled castes, leaf was used only during festivals, on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Use of leaf for serving meals by the families surveyed is given in Figure 4. The habit of use of leaf instead of plate for taking food is significantly influenced (at one per cent level) by the caste system and income levels of the families and educational status of the homemakers, (Appendix III).

The reasons for the use of leaf on different occasions were: purity, sacredness and celebrations of functions.

5. Order of serving the different items of the menu in a meal:

The order of serving the different items in the menu is given in Appendix II.

a. Forward castes:

The most common order of serving practised in 84 per cent of the Gounder families for Breakfast is Iddli or Dosai with Kolambu or Chutney. The order of serving

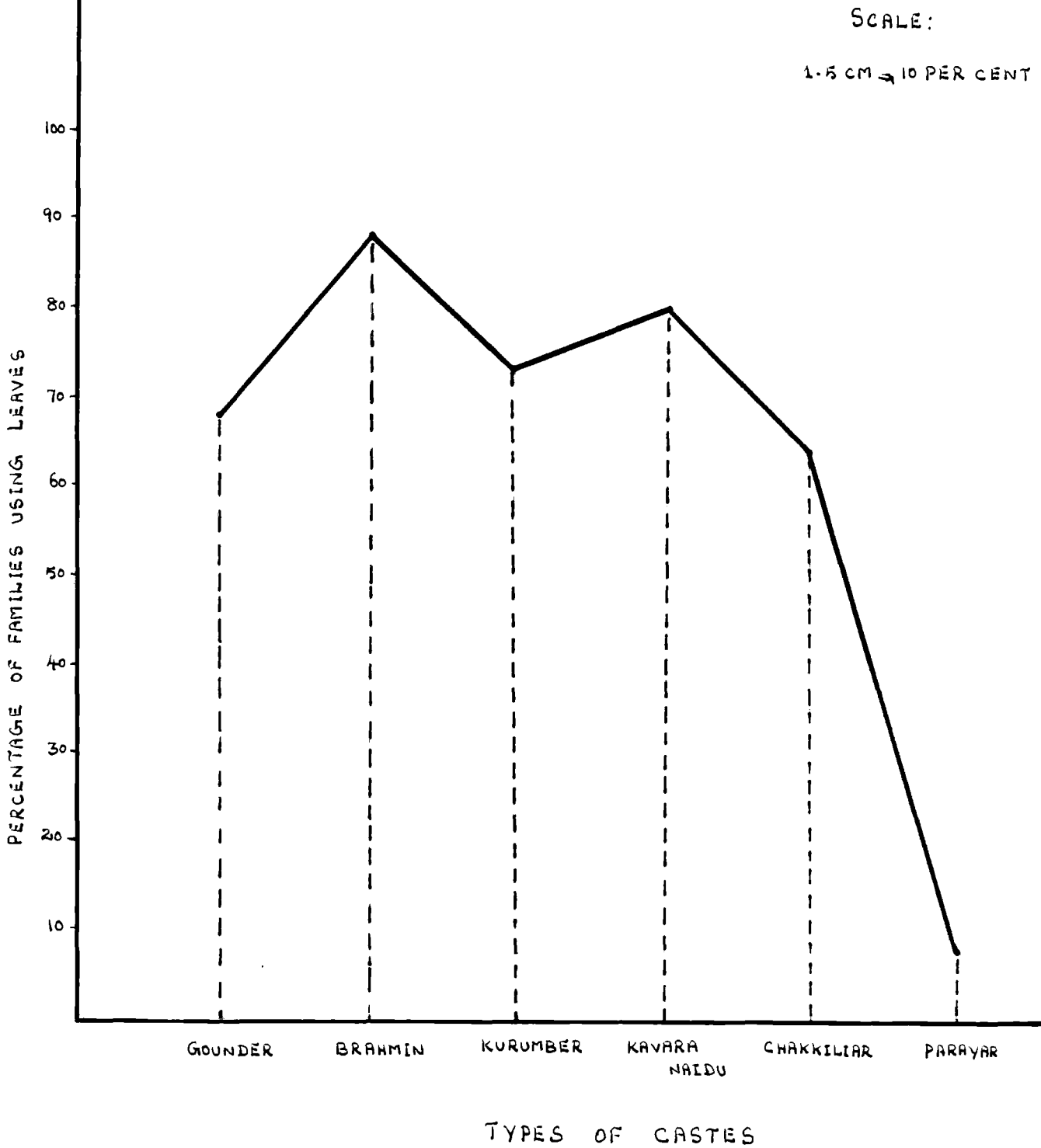


FIGURE - 4

PERCENTAGE OF FAMILIES USING LEAVES FOR SERVING MEALS

Chutney or Kolambu, Dosai or Uppuma and Ghee was found in 40 per cent of the Brahmin families.

During Midmorning, Lunch and Dinner the order of serving the items in a majority of the Brahmin families was pachadi or Curry, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Kolambu, Rasam, Pickle and Buttermilk.

During Lunch and Dinner 44 per cent of the Gounder families served Salt, Porial, Kolambu, Rice, Sambar, Ghee, Rasam and Curd in the order given.

Coffee was taken during tea time by 92 per cent of the Gounder families and by all the Brahmin families. Sixty four per cent had Snacks (Tiffin) also.

b. Backward Castes:

For Breakfast, the order of serving in most of the Kurumber and Kavara Naidu families was: Rice with Salt and Buttermilk. During Lunch and Dinner in majority of these families, the order of serving was Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam, Salt and Buttermilk. Coffee was taken by most during tea time.

C. Scheduled Castes:

For Breakfast, 54 per cent of Chakkiliar families followed the order: Left over Kali, Salt and Water, while 40 per cent of the Parayar families served Kali, Sambar and Rasam.

Rice or Kali, Sambar and Rasam was the order in which Lunch and Dinner were served by a majority of the Chakkiliar (64) and parayar(52) caste families.

6. Changes in Menu during particular seasons or times:

During summer, 15 per cent of the Forward Caste families take 'cold' foods like curds, lime and buttermilk; 20 per cent of the Backward caste take 'cold' foods like cucumber and watermelon. In winter, more of 'hot' foods like chillies, hot drinks and hot rice are taken by a few Forward and Backward caste families.

None of the Backward or Scheduled caste families had any change in the menu either due to changing seasons or times.

F. Special food Practices based on Caste:

The different aspects discussed under this heading are:

1. Special foods included or omitted because of caste.
  2. Influence of caste on adults taking meals from, or giving meals to the people of other castes
  3. Influence of caste on Children taking meals from other castes
  4. Castewise habits given up by the families because of some reasons or difficulties
- and
5. Habits accepted and practised from people of other castes.

1. Special foods included or omitted because of caste:

All the families in the three major castes (Forward, Backward and Scheduled) expressed that they did not include any special feature in their food habits due to caste. No special food was included in the diet because of the particular caste. However omission of certain foods, because of caste, was evident as presented in Table XV.

TABLE XV  
OMISSION OF CERTAIN FOODS BECAUSE OF CASTE

S. No.	Foods omitted	Percentage of families								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Total	Ku	Ka	Total	C	P	Total
1.	Beef	75	--	38	95	100	98	--	100	50
2.	Pork	75	--	38	100	100	100	--	100	50
3.	Fish	15	--	8	92	75	84	--	64	32
4.	Poultry	12	--	6	44	--	22	--	8	4
5.	All flesh foods	8	100	54	--	--	--	--	--	--
6.	All spices	--	88	44	--	--	--	--	--	--
7.	Garlic	--	88	44	--	--	--	--	--	--
8.	Onion	--	84	42	--	--	--	--	--	--
9.	Papaya	--	36	18	--	--	--	--	--	--
10.	Bottle gourd	--	60	30	--	--	--	--	--	--
11.	Ridge gourd	--	49	24	--	--	--	--	--	--
12.	Egg	4	100	52	28	--	14	--	4	2

All flesh foods and egg were omitted by 100 per cent of the Brahmin families and eight per cent of the Gounder families because of caste. Seventy six per cent of Gounder families omitted beer and pork, while 15 per cent avoided fish and poultry also due to caste. All spices, papaya, bottle gourd and ridge gourd were omitted by most of the Brahmin families because of caste.

A majority of the families surveyed in both the Backward castes, avoided taking beef, pork and fish while 44 per cent of the Kurumber families did not include poultry, because of their castes. None of the Chakkiliar families omitted any food due to caste, while a majority of the Parayar families were found to omit beef, pork and fish for caste reasons.

The main reasons for the omission of certain foods because of caste are that they are not accepted in their caste and it is not their custom.

2. Influence of caste on adults taking meals from, or giving meals to other castes:

Table XVI show the influence of caste on taking meals, that is cooked foods, from, or giving meals to the adults from other castes.

TABLE XVI

INFLUENCE OF CASTE IN TAKING MEALS FROM OR GIVING MEALS  
TO THE PEOPLE OF OTHER CASTES

	Castes	Percentage of surveyed families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Can take from:	Higher Castes	75	--	38	52	44	48	--	--	--
	None	24	72	48	40	38	38	--	58	34
	Their own caste	28	--	14	8	--	4	--	32	16
	All castes	--	--	--	--	--	--	100	--	50
Cannot take from:	Lower castes	95	100	98	60	72	66	--	--	--
Can give to:	All castes	100	88	94	80	88	84	--	4	2
	None	12	--	5	8	--	4	--	24	12
	Their own caste	--	--	--	8	--	4	92	54	78
	Lower castes	--	--	--	4	8	5	--	--	--

Seventy six per cent of Gounder families and 48 per cent of the Backward families could take foods from higher castes, while 72 per cent of the Brahmin families could not take food from anyone. Thirty eight per cent of the Backward families and 58 per cent of parayar families could take food from none. This finding about the

Backward and Scheduled castes is most astonishing. Food could be taken from their own castes by 28 per cent of Gounder, eight per cent of Kurumber and 32 per cent of Parayar families. All the Chakkiliar families could take food from all castes.

Food is not taken from 'lower' castes by 98 per cent of Forward and 66 per cent of Backward caste families. Most of the Forward (94) and Backward caste (84) families could give foods to people of all castes, while only four per cent of Parayar families had the same habit. A majority of Scheduled caste families (78 per cent) could give food to their own caste people. Food was not to be given to anybody by 12 per cent of Gounder, eight per cent of Kurumber and 24 per cent of Parayar families. Six per cent of Backward caste families could give food to lower castes only.

### 3. Influence of caste on Children taking meals from other castes:

In a majority of the Forward and Backward caste families children could not take cooked food from other castes, while most of the Scheduled caste children could take foods from other castes. 'Sweets' and 'Karam' were the most common items taken from other castes by the children

of a few Forward and Backward (24 and 22 per cent respectively) caste families.

4. Castewise food habits given up by the families because of some reasons or difficulties:

The following are the castewise food habits given up by a few Brahmin families. During festivals and special days, they are expected to maintain purity. That is, they should cook food only after taking bath and doing prayer. On every morning 'Santhyavandhanam' (Prayer and then only food) must be offered. Now a days they are not able to follow these. Addition of garlic and onion in the diet is not accepted due to caste. However, they are not able to maintain this practice due to the reasons of workload in the family, lack of time and other circumstances.

5. Habits accepted and practised from people of other castes:

In 20 per cent of the Brahmin families, other caste people are now allowed inside their kitchens and even fed. Habits such as going to other people's house and taking meals with non-Brahmins, are now practised by 28 per cent of Brahmin families. Four per cent of the 'pounder families include beef and pork in their diets since they find these flesh foods good for health. These are practises accepted from the 'lower' castes.

The acceptance and practice of some food habits of other castes is significantly influenced (at one per cent level) by the caste system and income levels of the families. The educational status influences at five per cent level, (Appendix III).

G. Food habits on special days, festivals and special conditions:

The aspects discussed are:

1. Observation of fasting on special days of the week or month, on special days for the family and during festivals
  2. Inclusion and omission of certain foods on special days of the week or month, on special days for the family and during festivals
  3. Inclusion or omission of certain foods under special conditions
- and
4. Inclusion or omission of certain foods during sickness.

1. Observation of fasting on special days of the week or month, on special days for the family during festivals:

During special days of the week or month, a few families observe fasting, that is, on Mondays, Fridays and on Saturdays foregoing breakfast. In general, fasting <sup>is</sup> observed by the Brahmin families on special days

such as Death Anniversary, Varalakshmi Nonbu, Adi Friday, Puratasi Saturday, Sivarathri and on Karadaiyan Nonbu. On Saturday, 'Shasti' and on first of the month, Breakfast or Lunch or Dinner is omitted by a few Brahmin families.

Most of the Kavara Naidu families observe fasting on special days of the week or month. On death anniversary either breakfast or lunch is omitted by the Backward caste families.

None of the Parayar caste families observed fasting on special days or festivals. Only 12 per cent omitted breakfast on death anniversary. A few Chakkiliser families fasted by not taking breakfast on Mondays, Fridays and Saturdays (15-28 per cent). In the same caste on death anniversary day, 21 per cent omitted breakfast, 20 per cent lunch and four per cent dinner.

The main reasons for fasting as expressed by the homemakers were: to pray to God, to cure disease, for the future good of their children, custom, for the family to flourish, and to remove the influence of evil stars. Fasting is observed on Varalakshmi nonbu in Forward Castes in order to pray for husband's long life, for the strength of 'Mangalyam' and to pray to Lakshmi,

For the welfare of their husbands and children 35 per cent of Brahmin homemakers observe fasting, by omitting breakfast on Karadaiyar nonbu. On death anniversary day, fasting is observed to pray for the departed sons and to God and to help the souls attain 'Moksha'.

2. Inclusion and omission of certain foods on special days:

The Table XVII and XVIII depict the details regarding the inclusion and omission of certain foods on special days of the week or month, on special days for the family and during festivals by the families surveyed.

TABLE XVII

INCLUSION OF CERTAIN FOODS ON SPECIAL DAYS OF THE WEEK OR MONTH, ON SPECIAL DAYS FOR THE FAMILY AND DURING FESTIVALS

Foods included	Percentage of families in									
	Forward			Backward			Scheduled			
	G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al	
Special days of the week or month	All foods	32	84	58	56	48	52	40	--	70
	Vadai	12	48	30	8	24	15	--	--	--
	Payasam	12	48	30	8	24	15	--	--	--
	Sweets & Karam	8	20	14	4	--	2	--	--	--
	Banana	--	24	12	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Snake gourd	--	15	8	--	--	--	--	--	--

contd.

		Percentage of families in								
Foods included	Forward			Backward			Scheduled			
	G	B	Total	Ku	Ka	Total	C	P	Total	
Special days for the family and death anniversary	All foods	--	76	38	12	56	34	56	--	28
	All porials	28	88	58	40	60	50	80	12	46
	Payasam	24	28	26	36	52	44	20	--	10
	Vadai	24	12	18	36	52	44	16	12	14
	Sweets and Karam	24	36	30	36	32	34	--	--	--
	Gingelly balls and Green gram balls	--	40	20	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Tenkulal	--	50	30	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Murukku	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	All fruits	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Snake gourd	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Honey	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Plantain kootu	--	24	12	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Salad	--	24	12	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Athirasam	--	20	10	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Mutton Kolumbu	--	--	--	20	--	10	80	--	40
Ear boring ceremony	Vadai	--	--	--	--	28	14	--	--	--
	Sweets	28	--	14	40	16	28	--	--	--
	Payasam	--	--	--	--	28	14	--	--	--
	Karam	28	--	14	4	28	16	--	--	--
Puberty attaining ceremony	Sweets	12	--	6	68	--	34	--	--	--
	Pachama	72	--	36	68	--	34	--	--	--
	Karam	12	--	6	36	--	18	--	--	--
	Milk and plantain	--	72	36	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Payasam and Vadai	--	--	--	36	--	18	--	--	--
Festivals Adi 18th	Sweets	80	56	68	80	56	68	8	--	4
	Karam	80	48	64	40	56	48	--	--	--
	Vadai	--	32	16	4	--	2	8	--	4
	Adi milk	--	56	28	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Payasam	--	32	16	4	--	2	--	--	--
	Sithranam	--	20	10	--	--	--	--	--	--

contd....

Foods included	Percentage of families in									
	Forward			Backward			Scheduled			
	G	B	Total	Ku	Ka	Total	C	P	Total	
Pongal	Pongal	80	88	84	95	75	85	8	--	4
	Payasam	12	48	30	--	35	18	--	--	--
	Vadai	--	48	24	--	35	18	--	--	--
	Sweets & Karam	80	48	64	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Avial	--	20	10	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Deepavali	Vadai	--	48	24	40	--	20	60	--
Deepavali	Sweets & Karam	72	48	60	80	72	75	12	--	6
	Payasam	8	48	28	15	--	8	35	--	18
	Legium	--	72	35	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Kolukattai (Blackgram, Raw rice)	--	52	25	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Appam	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Iddli	--	32	15	--	--	--	--	--	--
Vinayagar Chathurthi	Sundal	20	52	35	50	55	58	--	--	--
	Vadai & Payasam	--	28	14	24	--	12	--	--	--
	Sweets & Karam	72	--	35	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Kolukattai	--	--	--	15	35	25	--	--	--
	Pori	--	--	--	--	28	14	--	--	--
	Saraswathi Pooja	Pongal	--	--	--	--	35	18	--	--
Saraswathi Pooja	Sweets & Karam	80	--	40	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Pori	--	--	--	--	20	10	--	--	--
	Sundal	--	75	38	73	40	55	--	--	--
	Payasam	80	12	45	23	--	14	--	--	--

Vadai and Payasam were the special foods included by 48 per cent and 24 per cent of Brahmin and Kavara Naidu families, on special days. A few Brahmin families included also Banana and Snake gourd, specially on these days. None of the Parayar or Chakkiliar caste families included specially and food on special days of the week or month.

The reason for the inclusion of all the Common foods on special days is that they cannot afford to have them on all days. Special foods were included to celebrate festivals and to offer them to God.

On death anniversaries, various foods such as Thenkulal, Murukku, preparations using gingelly seeds and green gram, all fruits, snake gourd, honey, plantain kootu, Salad and Athirasam were specially included by some of the Brahmin families, while upto 15 varieties of Porials, Payasam and Vadai were included by all the three major castes. Thirty per cent of Forward families and 34 per cent of Backward families included also Sweets and Karam. It is worth mentioning that 20 per cent of Kurumber families in Backward castes and 80 per cent of Chakkiliar families in Scheduled castes included specially Mutton kolambu on death anniversaries.

The main reasons expressed by most of the home-makers for including special foods on death anniversaries were to celebrate the day, to offer them before God and to pray for the dead ones with food preparations dear to their hearts.

During ear boring ceremony, Sweets and Karam were specially included by some of the Gounder, Kurumber and Kavara Naidu families, while the latter included also Vadai and Payasam, the reason being to celebrate the day. Sweets, Pachama and Karam were included specially in the diet during attaining puberty ceremony by the Gounder and Kurumber families. Seventy two per cent of the Brahmin families included milk and plantain specially in the diet, while 35 per cent of Kurumber families included Payasam and Vadai during this ceremony. None of the Scheduled caste families included specially any food during either ear boring or the puberty attaining ceremony.

On Adi 18th, Sweets and Karam were the special foods included by most of the Forward and Backward caste families. In some of the Brahmin families, Vadai, Adi milk, Payasam and Sithrannam were specially included to celebrate the day.

During pongal, most of the families, 58 per cent in Forward and Backward castes, included pongal while only eight per cent of Chakkiliar families included it. Vadai and Payasam were included specially by 48 per cent of Brahmin and 35 per cent of Kavara Naidu families. Sweets and Karam were specially included by 54 per cent of Forward caste families while 20 per cent of Brahmin families included also Avial.

Legium, Kolukattai, Appam and Iddli were specially included by the Brahmin families during Deepavali, while most of the other Forward, Backward and Scheduled families included Sweets, Karam, Vadai and Payasam. Sundal is the common item included specially on Vinayagar Chathurti and Saraswathi pooja by 35 per cent of Forward and 58 per cent of Backward caste families. Some of the Backward caste families included Kolukattai during Vinayagar Chathurti while inclusion of Payasam, Sweets and Karam were seen in 80 per cent of Gounder families.

Varalakshmi Nonbu was celebrated by 50 per cent of Forward Caste families, by including foods like Sweets, Karam and Payasam in their meals. Eighty per cent of Brahmin families included specially Sundal during Kolu. Seedai, Murukku, Vadai and Payasam were the special foods included during Krishna Jayanthi by most of the

Brahmin families. During Karthikai Celebrations, special foods such as Pori balls, Coconut with Pori, Adai, Appam, Payasam and Vadai were included by the Brahmin families. Thiruvathirai was celebrated by including Thiruvathirai Kali and seven creeper vegetables specially in the diet. Fifty six per cent included Kolukattai on Karadaiyan nonbu. Iddli, Vadai and Dhal Payasam were the special foods included during Sivarathri by a few Brahmin families.

TABLE XVIII

OMISSION OF CERTAIN FOODS ON SPECIAL DAYS OF THE WEEK  
OR MONTH, ON SPECIAL DAYS FOR THE FAMILY AND  
DURING FESTIVALS BY THE SURVEYED FAMILIES

Foods omitted	Percentage families in									
	Forward			Backward			Scheduled			
	G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al	
Special days of the week or month	Fleshy foods	48	100	74	60	48	54	40	--	70
	All excluded foods	12	88	50	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Ragi and Cholam	12	--	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
Death Anniversary	Fleshy foods	15	100	58	8	60	36	--	--	--
	All excluded foods	--	88	44	--	--	--	--	--	--
	All english Vegetables	--	64	32	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Onion	--	48	24	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Green chillies Papaya and Tomato	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Coconut, Brinjal, Radish, Drumstick and Pumpkin	--	15	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Red gram dhal	--	12	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
Festivals	Fleshy foods	68	100	84	92	88	90	4	8	6

Fleshy foods were omitted on special days of the week or month, during death anniversary and festivals by most of the Forward and Backward caste families. Forty per cent of Chakkiliar families also did not include it on special days of the week or month, while six per cent of Scheduled caste families omitted fleshy foods during festivals. Some of the Brahmin families excluded all 'English' vegetables, onion, green chillies, papaya, tomato, coconut, brinjal, radish, drumstick, pumpkin and red gram dhal on death anniversaries. The reasons for the omission of these foods were that they were custom and need for purity.

3. Inclusion or omission of certain foods under special conditions:

The details of the foods included and omitted under special conditions are given in Appendix IV.

During pregnancy, all foods were included by all the families in the Forward and Scheduled castes and in the Kurumber group, and 92 per cent of Kavara Naidus. Twenty eight per cent of Kurumber families included more of sour foods. The reasons for the inclusion of these foods were "good health" and "for easy labour".

Rasam rice, bread and coffee or milk were the foods included soon after delivery by a majority of the Forward, Backward and Scheduled caste families. Thirty two per cent of the Gounder families included Ragi puttu with palm jaggery, pepper, ghee, and dry ginger along with regular meals, while 'legium' was included by 83 per cent of the Brahmin families. The reasons for the inclusion of these foods were "for good health" and "strength to the body".

During lactation, all the usual foods were included by most of the families in the three castes, while foods like rasam rice, carrot and beetroot were specially included by some of the Gounders for the "health of mother and child". Sixteen per cent of Chakkiliar families included beef also for good milk secretion.

During infancy, breast milk and cow's milk were given to the child by a majority of the families in the three castes, while the supplementary foods such as Ragi porridge, Amul, Mlaxo were included in 56 per cent of Forward caste families and 15 per cent of Kurumber families. Ragi porridge and Idli were included by some of the Brahmin families during infancy.

For the school agers, at puberty and old age, all the usual foods were included by a majority of the families in all three major castes. Sweets, Karasa and Pachama were generally included in the Gounder and Kurumber families at puberty. Milk and plantain were included specially at puberty by 72 per cent of the Brahmin families. Four per cent of Gounder families included semi solid foods during old age.

Papaya and gingelly seeds were omitted during pregnancy by some of the Forward and Backward caste families, while 20 per cent of Scheduled caste families omitted only papaya. Pineapple, pumpkin, cluster beans, banana and jack fruit were also omitted by some of the Brahmin families. The reasons expressed for these omissions during pregnancy were that they were heat producing and not good for health.

Soon after delivery and in infancy, all the foods except those specially included were omitted in the diet by majority of the families in all the three castes. During lactation, mango and jack fruit were omitted by most of the Forward, Backward and Chakkiliar caste families since they were "not good" for health. At puberty, gingelly seeds and papaya were omitted by 12 per cent of the Gounder and Kurumber families. For the

school going children and old people none of the usual foods were omitted.

4. Inclusion or omission of certain foods during sickness:

Appendix V shows the inclusion or avoidance of certain foods during sickness by the selected families.

Kanjee, bread and coffee were the foods included by majority of the Forward, Backward and Scheduled caste families during fever. Fifty two per cent of the Forward, 12 per cent of the Kurumber families and four per cent of the Chakkiliar families included rasam rice. Milk was also added to the diet by 80 per cent of the Forward and 45 per cent of Backward caste families. Glucose, orange and liquid foods were included in the diet for fever by some Brahmin families. The only reason for the inclusion of these items was to cure the fever.

In dysentery and diarrhoea, most of the families in all three major castes included buttermilk. Curd rice was included by 55 per cent of Forward families and curd by 50 per cent of the Brahmin and 72 per cent of Backward families. Arrow root kanjee was included in the diet by 88 per cent of Brahmin families. The reason for these

inclusions was easy digestion. When affected by small pox and chicken pox, most of the families in the Forward, Backward and Scheduled castes included tender coconut water, palm jaggery, plantain and left over cambu water in the diet. Buttermilk and curd were included by most of the Forward and Backward caste families. A few Gounder families included all the fruits, onion, Kanjee and milk also. Salty and fried foods were avoided during small pox and chicken pox by some of the Forward and Backward caste families. The reasons for the inclusion and avoidance of these foods at the time of small pox and chicken pox were to cure and to cool the body. During head-ache Coffee was taken to alleviate it.

## V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study on the food habits of the selected three major castes in Coimbatore District has brought out the following inferences:

Among the 150 families surveyed, all the Brahmins were vegetarians and all the Scheduled castes were non-vegetarians. A majority of the other castes namely, Gounder, Kurumber, Kavara Naidu, Chakkiliar and Parayar were non-vegetarians.

The village Shandy and petty shops were the main sources of purchase for food for all the Scheduled caste and most of the Forward and Backward caste families. Food items such as cereals and pulses were purchased mostly on annual or monthly or weekly basis by the Forward and Backward families, whereas the purchase was mostly on daily basis in the case of the Scheduled castes.

Most of the Forward and Backward caste families had a four meals a day meal pattern, whereas the scheduled caste families had three or two meals a day. For 59 per cent of Brahmin families the meal pattern was different from that of all other groups and it was Midmorning lunch, Tea and Dinner.

The Forward and Backward caste families had variety in menus, food preparations and food combinations while the menu of the Scheduled caste families was simple with a single preparation, that is, kali with water. It is notable that the food pattern was seasonal in the case of Forward and Backward caste families, while the menu is the same in the case of Scheduled caste families due to their poor-economic conditions. In contrast there was change in the usual menu even among the poor in all the castes during festival occasions, with the addition sweet preparations and savouries and strict omission of fleshy foods.

All the families could take tomato in the raw state. Carrot, cucumber, sprouted pulses, sweet potato, onion and beetroot were also taken raw by the Brahmin and Kavara Naidu families.

Boiling was the most commonly used method for cooking all the foods. Frying and stewing were adopted for cooking fleshy foods by most of the Gounder, Backward and Scheduled castes. Earthenware was used by all the castes for cooking food except Brahmins who used Stoneware or stainless steel in the place of Earthenware.

The priority in feeding was given first to the husband, the bread winner, due to custom and respect. Children were considered next. In a majority of the families all the family members sit together while dining. Only in the case of few Backward caste families, the male members sit alone. Only the Brahmins and Kavara Naidus follow some rituals during dining. Use of plantain leaf was adopted for serving food by most of the Brahmin families for reasons of purity, sacredness and celebration of certain occasions.

As for the omission of certain food items, flesh foods and spices were avoided by the Brahmins; beef and pork by the Gounders mainly due to caste and custom. The high and low caste feelings were evident especially among the Forward caste families with regard to accepting and giving food to other castes. On the other hand, some of the Brahmin families had given up their traditional food practices due to the changing trends in the family and society. However a minimum of fasting is observed on special days by majority of the Brahmin families, in expectation of good tidings for the family.

All the caste families paid special attention to the feeding of vulnerable groups. They added nutritious and tradition bound foods. The concept of avoiding papaya and gingelly seeds during pregnancy is still strong. During disease conditions, all the caste members used simple and digestible food items.

This study has brought out new insights into the practices of different castes. There appear to be several sound nutritional practices in existing food habits. In the light of the findings of the study much against the popular conception, caste appears to exert significantly less influence over food habits. Nutrition education programme can assume realistic dimensions, if planned with such studies in the background.

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**A P P E N D I C E S**

## APPENDIX I

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE TO ELICIT INFORMATION REGARDING THE  
INFLUENCE OF CASTE ON FOOD HABITS OF RURAL  
FAMILIES IN PERIANAICKENPALAYAM BLOCK

S.No.:

Date :

I. General Background:

1. Name of the interviewee:
2. Address :
3. Religion :
4. Caste :
5. Type of caste:

Forward Backward Scheduled

**II. Family Background:**

S. No.	Name	Age	Sex	Educa- tion	Occupa- tion	Income/ month
-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----

---

Type of family:

Nuclear  Joint  Extended nuclear

**III. Dietary Practice:**

1. Vegetarian  Non-vegetarian

2. From where do you buy food items?

S. No.	Foods purchased	Frequency	Reasons
--------	-----------------	-----------	---------

Drumstick leaves

Curry leaves

Cabbage

Cauliflower

Coriander leaves

Others

4. Roots and tubers:

Beet root

Carrot

Onion

Potato

Radish

Yam

Others

5. Other vegetables:

Beans

Brinjal

Bitter gourd

Ladies finger

Bottle gourd

Snake gourd

contd..

S.No.	Foods purchased	Frequency	Reasons
-------	-----------------	-----------	---------

Ridge gourd

Pumpkin

Others

6. Nuts and oil:

Coconut

Groundnut

Cashewnut

Coconut Oil

Groundnut Oil

Gingelly Oil

Sunflower Oil

Others

7. Condiments and spices:

Cardomom

Chillies (green)

Chillies (red)

Cumin seeds

Coriander

Garlic

Ginger

Pepper

contd....

S.No.	Foods purchased	Frequency	Reasons
-------	-----------------	-----------	---------

Turmeric

Tamarind

Others

8. Fruits:

Apple

Banana

Orange

Grapes

Mango

Guava

Others

9. Flesh Foods:

Egg

Poultry

Mutton

Beef

Pork

Fish

Others

contd...

S.No.	Foods purchased	Frequency	Reasons
-------	-----------------	-----------	---------

10. Milk and milk products:

Milk

Curd

Butter milk

Butter

Ghee

Others

11. Others:

Sugar

Jaggery

4. Mention the combination of foods you include in your daily meal:

Meal	Time	Combination of foods
------	------	----------------------

Breakfast

Mid-morning

Lunch

Tea

Dinner

Snacks

5.

Foods eaten as raw	As part of which meals	Reasons
-----		

IV. Methods of cooking used:

No.	Foods	Boil- ing	Steam- ing	Roast- ing	Fry- ing	Stew- ing
-----						

1. Cereals
2. Pulses
3. Leafy vegetables
4. Others vegetables
5. Flesh foods
6. Others

V. Type of Utensils used for cooking:

<u>Utensils</u>	<u>Food cooked</u>	<u>Reasons</u>
Earthenware		
Brass		
Stainless steel		
Copper		
Aluminium		
Iron		
Hindolium		
Bronze		

IV. Serving and dining:

1. In feeding, whom do you consider as the most important person in the family? Why?

Most important person

Reasons

2. Mention the persons who will sit together while dining.

---

Meal	Time	Those who sit together
Breakfast		
Lunch		
Tea		
Dinner		

---

3. Do you follow rituals before start eating of while eating?

Yes

No

If yes, what are they?

4. When will you use leaf instead of plate for eating? Why?

5. Mention the order in which you serve the different item of the menu in a meal.

---

Meal	Order of serving
Breakfast	
Lunch	
Tea	
Dinner	

---

6. Will you have any change in your menu during particular seasons or time?

Change in menu

Season:

Summer

Winter

Time:

Morning

Afternoon

Night

VII. Dietary practice with special reference to caste:

1. What are the special features of your caste in regard to food habits?

2. Do you include/omit any food because of your caste?

---

Foods included	Reasons	Foods omitted	Reasons
-----			

---

3. Does your caste prohibit you taking meal from or giving meals to the people of any other caste?

	<u>Castes</u>	<u>Foods</u>
Can take from		
Can not take from		
Can give to		
Can not give to		

4. Do your children take food from people of other castes?

Yes

No

If yes, what are the foods?

5. Mention the habits that have been given up by you because of some reasons or difficulty.

Habits given up	Reasons
-----	

6. Mention the habits that are accepted and practised by you from other castes?

Habits accepted and practised	From which caste?	Reasons
-----		

VIII. Food habits on special days, festivals and special conditions:

	Meal (fasting)	Reasons	Foods included	Reasons	Foods omitted	Reasons
<u>Special days of the week or month:</u>						
	Monday					
	Friday					
	Saturday					
	Amavasai					
	Kiruthigai					
<u>Special days for the family:</u>						
	Birthday					
	Marriage anni- versary					
	Death anniversary					
	Soon after delivery					
	Naming the child					
	Ear boring ceremony					
	Puberty attaining ceremony					
	Marriage					

contd...

	Meal (fasting)	Reasons	Foods included	Reasons	Foods omitted	Reasons
--	-------------------	---------	-------------------	---------	------------------	---------

**Festivals:**

Adi 18th

Pongal

Deepavali

Vinayagar  
Chaturthi

Saraswathi Pooja

Others, mention

2. Do you include or omit certain foods under special conditions?

Conditions	Foods included	Reasons	Foods omitted	Reasons
Pregnancy				
Soon after-Delivery				
Lactation				
Infancy				
Schoolage				
Puberty				
Old age				

3. Do you specially include or omit any food during sickness?

Sickness	Foods included	Reasons	Foods omitted	Reasons
Fever				
Dysentery				
Diarrhoea				
Small Pox				
Chicken Pox				
Headache				
Stomach ache				
Vomitting				
Others, mention				

## APPENDIX II

## THE ORDER OF SERVING THE DIFFERENT ITEMS IN THE MENU

A. Forward Castes:

Meal	Order of serving	Percentage	
		G	B
Breakfast	Iddli or Dosai with Kolambu or Chutney	84	--
	Iddli, Sambar	4	--
	Coffee only	4	--
	Uppuma with Sugar and Plantain	12	--
	Rice, Kolambu, Salt, Buttermilk	12	--
	Puri, Kuruma	12	--
	Kali, Kolambu, Salt, Buttermilk	12	--
	Chutney, Iddli, Ghee	--	28
	Chutney or Kolambu, Dosai or Uppuma Ghee	--	40
	Iddli, Sambar or Chutney with Chilley powder and oil	--	8
Midmorning	Payasam, Salad, Porial, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Kolambu, Rasam, Salt, Curd	--	28
	Porial, Rice, Dhal, Sambar, Rasam, Curd	--	15
	Dhal, Porial, Rice, Ghee, Kolambu, Rasam, Buttermilk, Salt	--	12
	Pachadi or Curry, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Kolambu, Rasam, Pickle, Buttermilk	--	35

Meal	Order of serving	Percentage	
		G	B
Lunch	Salt, Porial, Kolambu, Rice, Sambar, Ghee, Rasam, Curd	44	--
	Salt, Porial, Rice, Kolambu, Rasam, Curd	20	--
	Rice, Sambar, Porial, Rasam, Curd	15	--
	Rice, Kolambu, Rasam, Salt, Buttermilk	8	--
	Porial, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Sambar, Rasam, Pickle, Salt, Curd	--	12
	Kootu, Currey, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Rasam, Pickle, Salt, Curd	--	8
Tea	Coffee	92	100
	Tiffin	--	64
	Tea	--	32
	Cool Drinks	--	12
Dinner	Salt, Porial, Kolambu, Rice, Ghee, Sambar, Rasam, Curd	40	--
	Salt, Porial, Rice, Kolambu, Rasam, Curd	16	--
	Rice, Sambar, Porial, Rasam, Curd	15	--
	Rice, Kolambu, Rasam, Salt, Buttermilk	8	--

Meal	Order of serving	Percentage	
		G	B
	Dhal, Porial, Rice, Ghee, Kolambu, Rasam, Buttermilk, Salt	--	16
	Porial, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Sambar, Rasam, Pickle, Salt, Curd	--	20
	Payasam, Salad, Porial, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Kolambu, Rasam, Salt, Curd	--	28
	Porial, Rice, Dhal, Sambar, Rasam, Curd	--	12
	Pachadi or Curry, Rice, Dhal, Ghee, Kolambu, Rasam, Pickle, Buttermilk	--	8
	Iddli or Uppuma with Chutney and Plantain	--	16

**B. Backward and Scheduled Castes:**

Meal	Order of serving	Backward		Scheduled	
		Ku	Ks	C	P
Breakfast	Rice, Salt, Buttermilk	49	68	--	--
	Iddli or Desai with Chutney or Kolambu	40	56	--	8
	Kali, Sambar, Rasam	8	--	8	40
	Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam, Buttermilk	12	--	--	8
	Salt, Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam, Curd	16	--	--	--

contd...

Meal	Order of serving	Backward		Scheduled	
		Ku	Ka	C	P
	Rice, Porial, Kolambu, Rasam	8	--	--	--
	Uppuma with Sugar and Plantain	4	35	--	--
	Puri, Kuruma	--	15	--	--
	Left over Kali, Salt, water	--	--	54	35
	Kali, or Rice, Kolambu, Rasam	--	--	4	4
	Left over Kali, Sambar, Salt, Water	--	--	15	4
	Kali or Rice, Sambar, Rasam, Porial	--	--	--	4
	Rice or Kali, Sambar, Porial	--	--	--	4
Lunch	Rice or Kali, Sambar, Rasam	8	--	54	52
	Kali or Rice, Kolambu, Rasam	--	--	32	24
	Kali, Sambar, Porial	--	--	--	8
	Rice, or Kali, Sambar, Rasam, Porial	--	--	--	12
	Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam	15	--	--	4
	Kali, Sambar, Rasam, Salt, Buttermilk	15	4	--	--
	Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam, Salt, Buttermilk	35	60	--	--

contd...

Meal	Order of serving	Backward		Scheduled	
		Ku	Ka	C	P
	Salt, Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam, Curd	12	--	--	--
	Salt, Porial, Rice, Sambar, Ghee, Rasam, Buttermilk	12	8	--	--
	Porial, Salt, Rice, Sambar, Rasam, Salt, Buttermilk	--	16	--	--
	Salt, Porial, Rice, Sambar, Rasam, Curd	--	12	--	--
Tea	Coffee	92	100	8	12
	Tiffin	--	24	--	--
Dinner	Rice or Kali, Sambar, Rasam	8	--	68	56
	Kali or Rice, Kolambu, Rasam	--	--	32	24
	Rice or Kali, Sambar, Porial	--	--	--	4
	Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam	--	--	--	12
	Kali, Sambar, Rasam, Salt, Buttermilk	12	4	--	--
	Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam, Salt, Buttermilk	40	60	--	--
	Salt, Rice, Porial, Sambar, Rasam	20	16	--	--
	Rice, Porial, Kolambu, Rasam	20	--	--	--
	Salt, Porial, Rice, Sambar, Rasam, Curd	--	12	--	--
	Salt, Porial, Kolambu, Rice, Dhal, or Sambar, Ghee, Rasam, Curd	--	8	--	--

## APPENDIX III

'CHI-SQUARE' TEST FOR THE FACTORS INFLUENCING THE  
SELECTED FOOD HABITS OF THE  
FAMILIES

A. Caste:1. Caste Vs the habit of including raw foods in the diet:

Caste	Yes		No		X <sup>2</sup>
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
Gounder	60	71	40	29	
Brahmin	88	71	12	29	
Kurumber	68	71	32	29	68.75**
Kavara Naidu	96	71	4	29	
Chakkliar	60	71	40	29	
Parayar	52	71	48	29	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

2. Caste Vs. the habit of following the rituals:

Caste	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
Gounder	4	21	95	79	
Brahmin	92	21	8	79	
Kurumber	28	21	72	79	351.67**
Kavara Naidu	--	--	100	79	
Chakkiliar	4	21	95	79	
Parayar	--	--	100	79	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

3. Caste Vs. the use of leaf instead of plate for taking food:

Caste	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
Gounder	58	53	32	37	
Brahmin	98	53	12	37	
Kurumber	72	53	28	37	169.15**
Kavara Naidu	80	53	20	37	
Chakkiliar	54	53	36	37	
Parayar	8	53	92	37	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

4. Caste Vs. the acceptance and practice of habits from other castes

Caste	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
Gounder	8	5	92	95	
Brahmin	20	5	80	95	
Kurumber	4	5	96	95	49.73**
Kavara Naidu	--	--	100	95	
Chakkiliar	--	--	100	95	
Parayar	--	--	100	95	

\*\*Significant at one per cent level

B. Income of the family:

1. Income Vs. the habit of including raw foods in the diet:

Income range in Rs.	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
0 - 200	50	74	50	26	
201 - 400	80	74	20	26	41.85**
401 - 600	86	74	14	26	
601 and above	81	74	19	26	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

2. Income Vs. the habit of following the rituals:

Income range in Rs.	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
0 - 200	6	26	94	74	91.39**
201 - 400	7	26	93	74	
401 - 500	32	26	58	74	
501 and above	57	26	43	74	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

3. Income Vs. the habit of using leaf instead of plate  
for taking food:

Income range in Rs.	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
0 - 200	35	72	65	28	93.04**
201 - 400	80	72	20	28	
401 - 500	91	72	9	28	
501 and above	81	72	19	28	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

4. Income Vs. the acceptance and practice of habits from other castes:

Income range in Rs.	Yes		No		x <sup>2</sup>
	Observed value	Expected Value	Observed value	Expected value	
0 - 200	4	7	96	93	
201 - 400	--	--	100	93	10.80**
401 - 600	14	7	86	93	
601 and above	10	7	90	93	

\*\*Significant at five per cent level

C. Education of the Homemakers:

1. Education Vs. the habit of including raw foods in the diet:

Education of the homemakers	Yes		No		x <sup>2</sup>
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
I - Vth Std.	75	78	25	22	
VI - VIIIth Std.	89	78	11	22	27.77**
IX - XIth Std.	86	78	14	22	
Illiterate	61	78	39	22	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

2- Education Vs. the habit of following the rituals:

Education of the homemakers	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
I - Vth Std.	19	35	81	65	84.25**
VI -VIIIth Std.	47	35	53	65	
IX-XIth Std.	64	35	36	65	
Illiterate	9	35	91	65	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

3. Education Vs. the habit of using leaf instead of  
plate for taking food:

Education of the homemakers	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
I - Vth Std.	81	74	19	26	40.91**
VI-VIIIth Std.	63	74	37	26	
IX-XIth Std.	93	74	7	26	
Illiterate	58	74	42	26	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

4. Education Vs. the acceptance and practice of habits from other castes:

Education of the homemakers	Yes		No		$\chi^2$
	Observed value	Expected value	Observed value	Expected value	
I-Vth Std.	6	10	94	90	
VI-VIIIth Std.	11	10	89	90	38.62**
IX - XIth Std.	22	10	78	90	
Illiterate	3	10	97	90	

\*\* Significant at one per cent level

## APPENDIX IV

## INCLUSION AND OMISSION OF CERTAIN FOODS UNDER SPECIAL CONDITIONS

Condi- tions	Foods included	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Preg- nancy	All foods	100	100	100	100	192	96	100	100	100
	More of sour foods	--	--	--	28	--	14	--	--	--
Soon after delive- ry	Rasam Rice	96	84	90	75	28	52	44	60	52
	Bread	96	76	86	96	76	86	88	56	76
	Coffee or milk	96	56	76	56	56	56	96	56	76
	Ragi Puttu+ Palm Jaggery+ Pepper + Ghee+ Dry Ginger	32	--	16	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Iddli	12	--	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Only liquid foods	--	24	12	--	--	--	--	--	--
	'Legium'	--	88	44	--	--	--	--	--	--
Lactat- ion	All foods	92	100	96	100	88	94	100	100	100
	Rasam Rice	16	--	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Carrot	20	--	10	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Beetroot	20	--	10	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Beef	--	--	--	--	--	--	16	--	8

Condi- tions	Foods included	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Infancy	Breastmilk	100	100	100	96	88	92	96	76	85
	Cow's milk	100	75	88	88	92	90	15	68	42
	Supplementary foods	48	84	65	15	--	8	--	--	--
	Ragi porridge	--	24	12	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Iddli	--	32	15	--	--	--	--	--	--
School age	All Foods	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Puberty	All foods	92	88	90	75	100	88	100	92	86
	Sweets+Karam	32	--	15	68	--	34	--	--	--
	'Pachama'	44	--	22	50	--	30	--	--	--
	Milk+Plantain	--	72	36	--	--	--	--	--	--
Old age	All foods	96	88	92	100	76	88	100	100	100
	Semi Solid foods	4	--	2	--	--	--	--	--	--
Pregn- ancy	Papaya	35	32	34	15	28	22	32	8	20
	Gingelly	35	40	38	4	35	20	--	--	--
	Pine apple	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Pumpkin	--	15	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Cluster beans	--	15	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Banana	--	28	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Jack Fruit	--	20	10	--	--	--	--	--	--



## APPENDIX V

INCLUSION AND OMISSION OF CERTAIN FOODS DURING SICKNESS  
BY THE SURVEYED HOMEMAKERS

Sick- ness	Food included	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Fever	Kanje	92	88	90	92	88	90	68	68	68
	Bread	84	100	92	88	75	82	40	24	32
	Rasam									
	Rice	12	92	52	12	--	6	4	--	2
	Coffee	24	72	48	52	68	60	72	28	50
	Milk	84	76	80	44	48	46	--	--	--
	Glucose	--	68	34	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Orange	--	52	26	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Liquid Foods	--	32	16	--	--	--	--	--	--
Dysen- sery + Diarr- hoea	Butter- milk	68	72	70	96	92	94	88	28	58
	Bread	32	--	16	4	--	2	--	4	2
	Coffee	4	--	2	4	--	2	--	8	4
	Curd rice	64	88	56	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Curd	--	60	30	76	68	72	--	--	--
	Arachid Kanje	--	88	44	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Iddli	16	--	8	--	--	--	--	--	--
		Hot Butter milk with curry leaves	--	16	8	--	--	--	--	--

Sick- ness	Foods included	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Small Pox + Chick- en Pox	Tender Coconut Water	95	100	98	100	88	94	100	88	94
	Palm jaggery	100	72	86	100	76	88	95	95	96
	Plantain	28	72	50	80	76	78	100	88	94
	Left over Cambu water	52	--	25	60	92	76	76	68	72
	Butter milk	32	55	44	55	55	55	--	--	--
	Curd	--	64	32	52	48	50	--	--	--
	Curd rice	52	100	74	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Milk	--	68	34	--	--	--	--	--	--
	All Fruits	28	--	14	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Onion	12	--	6	4	--	2	--	--	--
	Kanjee+ milk	12	--	6	--	--	--	--	--	--
	Head ache	Coffee	84	68	76	64	--	32	12	--
Fever	All other foods (other than the included foods)	100	92	96	100	100	100	100	84	92
	Fried foods	--	8	4	--	--	--	--	--	--

Sick- ness	Foods Omitted	Percentage of families in								
		Forward			Backward			Scheduled		
		G	B	Tot- al	Ku	Ka	Tot- al	C	P	Tot- al
Dysen- tery + Diarr- hoea	All other foods (ot- her than the inc- luded foods)	100	88	94	96	100	98	88	32	60
Small Pox + Chick- en Pox	All other foods (other than the foods included)	100	88	94	80	88	84	100	92	95
	Salt	24	48	35	35	28	32	--	--	--
	Fried foods	--	52	26	28	28	28	--	--	--

## APPENDIX VI

## GLOSSARY OF THE TERMS USED IN THIS STUDY

Adai	--	A preparation made out of rice and all dhals, in shallow fat frying.
Adi milk	--	Coconut milk with jaggery.
Appam	--	Made out of rice, fenugreek seeds, black gram dhal and vegetables like tomato in shallow fat frying.
Arrow root Kanjee	--	A porridge made out of a commercial food, 'arrow root'.
Athirasam	--	Made out of rice flour and jaggery and fried in ghee or oil.
Avial	--	Prepared with all the vegetables and curds.
Chutney	--	Coconut, roasted bengal gram, chillies, curry leaves, ginger and coriander leaves ground into semi solid consistency.
Dhal	--	Cooked dhal with the addition of salt only.
Dhal Payasam	--	A dessert made out of green gram dhal and jaggery.
Dosai	--	Prepared with rice and black gram dhal and shallow fat fried.
English vegetables	--	Beetroot, carrot, Cauliflower, Radish, Peas, Beans, Chow-Chow, etc.
Iddli	--	Prepared with rice and black gram dhal by steaming.

Kali	--	Prepared with millet flour.
Karam	--	All savouries.
Kolambu, Kuruma	--	Prepared with vegetables, spices, coconut and roasted bengal gram dhal.
Kolukattai	--	Made out rice flour, seasoned and added with coconut and it is steamed.
Laddu	--	A dessert prepared with bengal gram flour, sugar syrup and condements.
Left over cambu water	--	The water kept with cooked cambu for over night.
Legium	--	A dessert prepared with the powder of all condiments and spices and mixed with jaggery and honey.
Mangalyam	--	Symbolic ornament of the Hindu married women.
Manthras	--	Religious sayings pronounced in Praise of God.
Moksha	--	Believed to be the Heaven which can be attained with good deeds in one's life time.
Murukku	--	A savoury made out of rice flour, bengal gram flour or black gram flour in deep fat frying.
Mutton Kolambu	--	Kolambu prepared with fleshy foods.
Neivethyam	--	Offering food to God.
Pachadi	--	Vegetable salad.
Pachama	--	A dessert made with rice flour and sugar or jaggery syrup.

Payasam	--	A dessert prepared with vermicelli, sago, sugar and condiments.
Plantain kootu	--	Prepared with raw plantain and bengal gram dhal.
Porial	--	Vegetables cooked and seasoned with coconut scrappings.
Pori ball	--	Puffed rice with jaggery syrup.
Puri	--	wheat flour made into a dough and deep fat fried.
Ragi Porridge	--	A Porridge made out of ragi flour.
Rasam	--	Seasoned and boiled tamarind water.
Sambar	--	Prepared out of red gram dhal, tamarind, vegetable, onion, chillies and curry leaves.
Santhya-vandhanam	--	Prayers done in the evening.
Seedai	--	A savoury made out of rice flour, gingelly seeds mixed with jaggery syrup and deep fat fried.
Seven Creeper Vegetables	--	Snake gourd, ridge fourd, bottle gourd, white Pumpkin, yellow Pumpkin, creeper beans and bitter gourd.
Sithranam	--	Lime rice, tamarind rice, coconut rice, gingelly rice and curd rice.
Sundal	--	Cooked bengal gram or green gram or dried peas seasoned with coconut scrappings.
Sweets	--	All desserts
Thenkulal	--	A dessert made out of rice flour and black gram flour and deep fat fried.

- Thiruvathirai -- A dessert prepared out of rice flour,  
Kali dhal, coconut scrappings and mixed  
with sugar syrup.
- Uppuma -- Prepared with wheat raval or suji  
adding seasoning and ghee.
- Vadai -- Prepared with dhal and condiments  
and deep fat fried.