

Appendix 1

CASE STUDIES

1.1 K. Machagandhi

President of a fisherwomen's cooperative society

Age	: 47 years
Education	: 5th standard (5 years of schooling)
Occupation	: Housewife. At times markets the fish caught by her sons
Marital status	: Married
Age at marriage	: 16 years
Religion	: Hindu
Caste	: Chinnapattinavars (a sub-caste of Pattinavars)
Family planning status	: Underwent sterilization operation after her tenth delivery.
Position held in the village	President of the fisherwomen's cooperative society
Husband's occupation	Traditional fishing
Ownership of means of production (family)	: Four types of net including "Peria valal" (shore seine), masula boat and two kattumarams
Type of house	: Presently living in a temporary thatched hut. Will be shifting to a cement concrete house being constructed (free of cost) by the government.
Village	: Panaiyur kuppam (coastal village)
Location	: Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu, India

Machagandhi Ammal¹ is the president of the newly formed fisherwomen's cooperative society in Panaiyur village. She is 47 years old. She is thin and her face is furrowed with lines of thought reflecting problems she had faced through the years. She is a reliable and sincere woman. She believes that hard work alone will help her improve the living conditions of her family.

Position held in the village

Fisherwomen cooperatives are multipurpose cooperatives with the following main objectives:

- to provide credit for marketing,
- to develop leadership among women,
- to help organize transport facilities for marketing,
- to initiate adult education for women, and
- to establish fair price shops.

Machagandhi was selected as the president of the fisherwomen cooperative society by the Fisheries Department officials and the village leaders after she attended the fisherwomen linkworkers training on community organisation organised by the FAO/BOBP. The village elders and leaders play a key role in selection in nearly all the villages. The villagers do not disagree with or question the selection procedure but abide by the decisions taken by the elders and leaders

The selection of the president of the fisherwomen's cooperative society by officials of the Fisheries Department and village leaders denies to fisherwomen their democratic right to elect a president and other office bearers. According to the officials, there is tremendous pressure on them to make the cooperative society functional as quickly as possible and this forces upon them the need to select, rather than elect, the office bearers. Officials say that unless the cooperative society starts functioning soon after inception, fisherwomen tend to lose trust in governmental efforts which would affect future government programmes as well.

In the case of village leaders, the procedure of selection enables them to gain control over the newly formed society. Being chary of the fisherwomen's cooperatives developing into formidable rivals of the fishermen's cooperatives, the leaders naturally prefer that the leadership of the former should be vested in women they can control. Machagandhi fits the bill admirably as

¹ Ammal – A Tamil term denoting respect for elderly women. Literally, the word means mother.



K. Machagandhi (right), president of the fisherwomen's cooperative society in Panaiyur kuppam village. Below: Machagandhi collects loan dues from a resident of Panaiyur. The loans advanced by the cooperative society are to be repaid in daily instalments.



Machagandhi is a diligent housewife.

her husband is a close associate of the president of the fishermen's cooperative society.

The selection of loanees is based on the fisherwomen paying Rs. 11 (Rs. 10 as share amount and an admission fee of Re 1) to enroll themselves as members of the cooperative society. The fisherwomen cooperative provides loans to the women for fish marketing. The repayment of the loan is done on a daily basis. Each member of the cooperative board is assigned the task of collecting the amount to be repaid from a group of women. Every evening around five, the member goes to the houses of the women who have to repay the loan. She has a book in which she notes the amount repaid and the date of repayment.

Machagandhi is very polite in asking the women whether they have earned enough income for the day to repay or whether they would require a postponement of repayment to the next day. The women in turn seem to appreciate her, though at times they feel she is very prompt and firm in getting them to repay. Machagandhi herself feels that this particular task of getting them to repay is very frustrating, and she is discouraged. She continues with the task, hoping that the women would one day voluntarily come to her house and pay, instead of her going from house to house. She is able to perform her task well since her husband and son are very cooperative. They do not object to her going from house to house to collect the money, though there is no remuneration for the task.

Machagandhi's early childhood and family background

Machagandhi was born in Royapuram, a suburb of Madras city. Her family had settled in Royapuram because her father worked as a coolie in the Madras harbour. After his retirement he went fishing in shallow waters with his "mani-valai" (castnet).

Machagandhi belongs to a big family consisting of ten brothers and sisters. Of these, one sister and one brother died as infants. Though her father had a regular source of income while he was working in the harbour, her mother was forced to do fish marketing. In fact, her mother started fish marketing at the age of 35. She went to the Royapuram market to sell the fish. Her daughters did the cooking and took care of the house. Machagandhi feels that without her mother's income the family would have had a difficult time.

Her father was educated and could read and write well. Therefore, he insisted that all his children should go to school. Her mother was illiterate but was strict with her children about school. Machagandhi proudly states that all her sisters and brothers have studied at least up to the fifth standard. One of her brothers completed 10 years of schooling and found employment with the railway department.

Machagandhi cannot remember anything striking that took place during her childhood. She can only recall how her mother insisted that she marry a traditional fisherman and live in a village. Her mother felt that Machagandhi would adjust and adapt to the new environment.

Marriage and background of husband's family

About six months after Machagandhi attained puberty, her marriage was arranged. She was only 16. Her husband, who was 24, came with his parents with a marriage proposal. The marriage plan was mooted by Machagandhi's relative who lived in Panaiyur. Her mother was keen on getting Machagandhi married to a traditional fisherman, since her other two daughters were married to men working as 'coolies' in Madras harbour. She wished that at least one of her daughters should marry a fisherman to perpetuate the traditional family occupation. Therefore, without even getting Machagandhi's consent she accepted the marriage proposal. She feared that Machagandhi would find life difficult in the village. Her mother agreed to give her gold ear studs, nose ring and a pair of silver anklets. She also gave her utensils, bedding and pillows. In turn, her husband's family gave her a pair of gold bangles and a silk sari worth Rs. 500 for the marriage.

In order to reach Panaiyur, Machagandhi and her family had to travel, by a boat down the river. From the river bed they had to walk nearly 5 km. Those days there were no roads that linked Panaiyur with the city. Panaiyur was surrounded by casuarina groves and Machagandhi initially felt lost since she had no experience of village life.

Her husband, Kattandi, is the eldest of three children in his family. He has studied up to the fifth standard and can read and write Tamil. He assists the president of the fishermen's

cooperative whenever representations have to be made to government officials and ministers. He accompanies the president to government offices for discussions and helps draft petitions.

Kattandi's father was involved in traditional fishing. His mother was one of the few women who did fish marketing (30 – 40 years back). Since she had to keep going out of the house during the day, Kattandi's father decided to get married to another woman. Though his mother objected initially, she finally consented because she felt that it would be additional help for her at home, and the problem of his father's second marriage was solved amicably. His mother went fish vending while the step mother did the cooking and all the other household chores. Kattandi cannot recollect any incident of quarrelling between the two women. They had clearly defined their tasks and carried them out efficiently. Also, problems did not arise because his step mother did not have any children of her own. In fact he was looked after by his step mother and he "loved her as much as he loved his own mother."

Machagandhi speaks very highly of her 'mothers-in-law.' Her mother-in-law got acquainted with the agricultural coolies and small and marginal farmers who regularly bought fish from her. She lent money to them. They mainly took advances from her during the ploughing and sowing season, with a promise to repay in the form of paddy after harvest. In those days her family did not have to buy rice because they stored paddy in big earthen pots. They took the daily quota of paddy for husking and grinding which was a tedious process. The practice of lending money or giving advances to agricultural workers is declining because the fishermen earn less income and are themselves indebted in many cases.

Machagandhi's husband has one brother and one sister. Both of them were looked after by Machagandhi. She arranged for their marriages, because her mothers-in-law had died. She arranged her sister-in-law's marriage with a railway worker. She says that her sister-in-law is economically well placed and has a three-storeyed house in Royapuram. She hopes that her sister-in-law will consent to give her daughter in marriage to Machagandhi's son.

Her brother-in-law does traditional fishing in a coastal village 25 km from Panaiyur. He settled in his wife's native village, because his wife felt that they can earn more in her village and also live closer to her parents.

Machagandhi admits that her husband Kattandi has taken good care of her and has provided for all material needs. But, since he started drinking she has had to look after him. She quotes instances of his fights with her which were, however, followed by quick reconciliations. Their fights have mainly been over Machagandhi not spending time with him or not fulfilling his physical needs.

Machagandhi's children

Machagandhi gave birth to eleven children including a twin. She explains that 15 years back, there were no proper roads from Panaiyur to the city. In cases of emergencies like illness or childbirth, the villagers were helpless and could not get immediate medical care. So she went to her mother's house in Royapuram, which was close to a hospital, for all her deliveries. In spite of this, she says that three of her children were born at home instead of the hospital. The delivery was conducted by a local mid-wife. Of the five children who died, three died of chicken pox while the other two died because of dysentery. Talking about chicken pox, Machagandhi says: "At times 12 to 15 children died because of chicken pox in our village. The Goddess '**Mariatha**'¹ took away our children. We do not give any treatment to cure chicken pox. We let the child lie on neem leaves and keep our house clean. We wait for the rashes to disappear. When that happens, the Goddess has shown mercy and left the child."

She is fond of her eldest son. But then, he did not live up to her expectations. She feels that he let her down when she needed his support, mainly financial. Her first daughter was given in marriage when she was 18 years old. Her daughter has four children. Machagandhi has persuaded her to undergo sterilization. She lives in Madras and her husband works in the Madras harbour as a coolie. Machagandhi got her second daughter married just two months back. Her second daughter's husband lives in Pondicherry and is a traditional fisherman. Comparing the marriage of her two daughters she says:

¹ Mariatha — a Goddess who is believed to take possession of children and manifest herself in the form of measles and chicken pox.

“for my second daughter, we had to spend a substantial amount on transport charges. We had to arrange a lorry for all our relatives and close friends, so that they could attend the marriage in Pondicherry. For my first daughter it was easier because the marriage was conducted in Royapuram and we had to pay less for the transport charges of our relatives. Generally, the cost of articles and essential goods was much cheaper those days. Now the prices have shot up and we had difficulty meeting the marriage expenses. In short, ‘Ayndhu pennai pethal arasanum andi aavaan’.”¹

It is the custom to conduct the engagement function in the bride’s house. The engagement expenses are borne by the bride’s family while the expenses of the actual marriage are borne by the bridegroom’s family. In spite of the sharing of expenses, the bride’s family has to spend a large sum on buying gold and silver jewellery and household articles like utensils, bedding, cupboard and food articles. This has led to indebtedness in the family and an aversion to female children.

Fish marketing

Machagandhi was involved in fish marketing till two years back. When she married, she was responsible only for household chores, like filling water, cooking (at times) and taking care of her brother-in-law, sister-in-law and her children. Her mother-in-law was involved in fish marketing. Thirty to 40 years back, there were only a few women in the whole village who did fish marketing. A few Muslim traders settled in Panaiyur also engaged in fish marketing. These women and the Muslim traders gave ‘huge’ sums of money, commonly termed as ‘advances’,² of Rs. 500 or less for fish. This meant that the fish marketing women were entitled to the daily fish catch of the fishermen who had received the advance. They fixed the price of the catch. The fishermen could not bargain. There was no auctioning system at that time.

Her mother-in-law used to leave the house as early as eight in the morning and return by one o’clock in the night. Since there were no proper roads, she had to use boats and ‘jutkas’ (carriage drawn by horses). Her mother-in-law employed Muslim men to carry the baskets of fish. She ran along with the men to the canal. Then they took a boat. After the boat journey, they loaded the baskets into the jutkas and went to the Saidapet market. After the fish was sold they returned in the same manner. Her mother-in-law spent a maximum of five hours at home. Machagandhi feels that under the circumstances, her father-in-law was justified in marrying again because there was no one to manage the house.

She recollects that her mother-in-law incurred losses on those days when she went late to the market or when the fish got spoilt.

When she made profits, however, they were quite high. This was so because the fish her mother-in-law bought was usually for a low price that she herself fixed. Because of the ‘advance’ amount received, the fishermen were not able to bargain and, in fact, were indirectly paying high interest rates for the amount received.

Her mother-in-law kept the money that she earned and usually brought home vegetables, snacks for children, clothes and other household goods. Machagandhi says they had nearly twelve earthen pots filled with paddy, dhal, tamarind, chillies (dried), ragi and other household essentials. So they always ate well. She explains that the earthen pots have become empty after her mother-in-law died.

Machagandhi started going to the seashore after the death of her mother-in-law to ensure that the fish is sold for a good price. She went fish marketing after the marriage of her son, who began to live separately. She collected the fish from individuals to whom she had given ‘advances’ and took it to the market. The auction system was introduced recently and she got the fish by bidding in the auction. She herself carried the basket of fish and walked seven kilometres (one way) to a fish market – Medavakkam near Tambaram (about 26 km from Madras). On the way, she had to wade across a river. She sold fish to the villagers as she walked to the market. After selling the remaining fish in the market, she went to the house of

¹ Machagandhi quotes a Tamil saying: “Even a king will become a pauper if five daughters are born to him

² ‘Advances’ — Though termed an advance, it is in reality credit. The fisherman thinks he pays no interest, so it is an advance of money. This system is prevalent today especially in the sale of prawns.

an agricultural family. She ate in their house and slept in their courtyard along with the women of the house. She explains that this family has been good to her and has given her accommodation and shelter. In return, she gave them fish everyday. They did not give her any money for the fish, neither did she pay them for the food and accommodation.

She started from the village around one o'clock in the afternoon. She reached the market around 4 p.m. Then around 6.30 p.m. she wound up, took the unsold fish to the family she was eating with. She ate a simple meal of rice, curry and fish and went to sleep. Early next morning she returned to her village.

In many instances women from the agricultural households did not give Machagandhi money for the fish, but paddy, tamarind, dried chilly, coriander, vegetables, ragi, etc. Sometimes if Machagandhi had more of these items than was required for her family she sold them to her neighbours when she returned home. During this time, Machangandhi had to either give the money earned to her husband or at least account for the money spent by her.

She stopped marketing because her son, who had got married, asked her to do so. He was ashamed that his mother was involved in marketing. She says that they are now facing a lot of financial problems and she is wondering whether she should start marketing fish again. But she fears that her status-seeking son will still object.

Her daily routine

She gets up around 4.00 a.m. to pack some cooked rice kept overnight in water for her son going fishing. She then goes back to sleep.

- 5.30 – 7.30 a.m. She wakes up and has a wash. She walks 15 minutes to reach a big and not very deep pit where other women also answer nature's call since there are no toilets in this village. On returning, she sweeps the hut and cleans the courtyard. She then washes the utensils while her youngest daughter fetches water. The water is pumped from the common pump situated about 25 yards away from the house.
- 7.30 – 9.00 a.m. She goes to the shore and waits for her son to return with his catch. After the catch is auctioned, she takes home the fish kept aside for cooking. On the days when the auction price is low, she takes the fish to the market, but this is rare.
- 9 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. She serves cold rice to her children and husband. She then eats. She gets her son and daughter ready for school. After seeing them off to school – the son studies in the high school situated five miles away from Panaiyur and the daughter studies in the primary school in Panaiyur – she goes to the shop to buy rice, oil, vegetables, etc., for cooking. Twice a week she goes to collect firewood. She walks two miles to reach the casuarina groves. She returns with a headload of dried twigs, branches and leaves neatly arranged and bundled. She then starts cooking for the day.
- 12.30 – 2.30 p.m. She completes cooking by 1.30 p.m. and serves food to her husband, son and daughter and eats with them. Her daughter returns home during the lunch break.
- 2.30 – 3.00 p.m. She washes clothes.
- 3.00 – 4.00 p.m. She rests for an hour.
- 4.00 – 5.00 p.m. She washes utensils and sweeps the hut. She serves food to her son who has returned from school.
- 5.00 – 6.00 p.m. She goes out to the houses of the loanees to collect the instalment amount.
- 6.00 – 7.00 p.m. She talks with her children and gives them pocket money. She gives her husband an average of Rs. 3 per day for alcohol.

7.00 – 8.00 p.m. She serves food that is left over from the afternoon. Occasionally, she fries salted fish, if there is nothing left of the curry made in the afternoon.

8.00 – 9.00 p.m. She eats with her husband.

At times he eats alone if he is late. She always keeps aside some food and an extra share of the fish curry he likes. Then she sits around with their children and grandchildren. She puts her grandchildren to sleep by telling them stories and singing songs. She sits up for her husband to return if he is late and serves him food. It is always 10 or 10.30 p.m. when she goes to sleep.

Decision-making in the family

Machagandhi did not have any right to express her views when her mothers-in-law were alive. The mother-in-law who did marketing was the sole decision-maker when it concerned the family – food, clothing, household expenditure, etc. When it came to matters like buying a new net or kattumaram, Machagandhi's father-in-law and husband would consult between themselves and then tell her mother-in-law who in turn would arrange for the money. In fact the mother-in-law who did marketing kept all the income earned and would give pocket money to the menfolk in the family.

After her mother-in-law's death, Machagandhi had to take on the responsibility of running the household and getting her sister-in-law married. During this time her husband kept the money and gave her a fixed sum every day for the household expenses. Machagandhi had to manage the food expenses within the amount given by her husband.

Her husband started wasting his money on drink after his first son got married. So she decided that if she did not take charge of the money he earned, they would be doomed. So she persuaded her husband to give her the money, by reasoning with him that the smaller children needed to be cared for and if he was not careful, they would be on the streets. This coincided with her husband falling ill, so it helped her take charge of the finances.

Though now she has taken full charge of the income, she has to give accounts of her expenses. But Kattandi now realises that Machagandhi is careful in dealing with money. Machagandhi exclaims:

“I have no control over the money my son (second son) earns, it is just that I keep it and spend it carefully. If my husband forces me to give Rs. 5 for alcohol, I try to drive some sense into him, but if he persists I climb down. I cannot decide not to give him money, I have learnt bitter lessons when I refuse. The other day he went and borrowed Rs. 5 from my neighbour and I had to repay the amount.”

She feels that more joint decisions are being taken by her and her husband after their first son got married and started living with his wife in a separate hut. If a net has to be bought, her husband and son inform her and she tells them about the financial situation. The decision regarding the type of net to be bought is taken by her husband and son.

Her role in the family and in the village

She laughingly narrates now she fooled her husband and went to her mother's house in Royapuram and underwent a sterilization operation. After she got her first daughter married, she did not want to bear any more children. But her husband did not agree. After her daughter gave birth to a child, Machagandhi conceived. She felt ashamed and decided to put an end to having more children. So after the youngest daughter was born, she asked her sister's husband to sign the necessary papers and underwent the sterilization operation without her husband's knowledge. She decided to do this because it was her tenth delivery and she knew that she would not be able to cope up with any more child-bearing. Her husband was very angry with her but the elders in the family explained that his grand-daughter was older than his own daughter and that this was not good. So he reconciled to the fact and agreed that Machagandhi did the right thing. Machagandhi boldly decides on her own, when the decision directly affects her alone. But anything concerning her family and the menfolk in particular, she discusses with her husband, but the final decision is taken by her husband.

Machagandhi is a good mother. She takes good care of her children and does all the

household work with the help of her daughters. Now that she is the president of the cooperative society, she has to represent the problems of fisherwomen to the government officials concerned. She also collects the loan amount distributed. Though she performs these tasks, she cannot express her viewpoint at any village meeting. In fact, women cannot attend any village meeting. Not even Machagandhi, who is an office-bearer in the cooperative.

Talking of the role women can play in bringing about social change in the village, Machagandhi says,

“First of all let us change ourselves and our views. We have to accept that women are capable and then we can see how the village can be changed. I agree we women have a role to play, but many years will pass before they do play it.”

1.2 P. Angamma

Fish marketing woman	
Age	37 years
Education	Illiterate
Occupation	Fish marketing (fresh and dry)
Marital status	Married (widow, remarried)
Age at marriage	16 first marriage 22 second marriage
Family planning status	Has undergone sterilization operation after the seventh delivery
Husband's occupation	Traditional fishing
Family's ownership of means of production	Nil
Type of house	Thatched hut
Religion	Hindu
Caste	Chinnapattinavar (sub-caste of Pattinavar)
Village	Panaiyur kuppam (coastal village)
Location	Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu, India.

Angamma is quite well-known in Panaiyur village because she markets fish. She is tall and walks erect in spite of carrying heavy loads of fish for marketing. She wears a 'thali'¹ but does not apply a pottu² or keep flowers in her hair.

Her early childhood and family background

Angamma was born and brought up in Thennadu, a fishing village near Pondicherry.

“My mother was a non-conformist. She was a daring and bold person. She was forced to marry her maternal uncle even before she attained puberty.

My mother was brought up by her grandparents who in turn became her father-in-law and mother-in-law. She was not fond of her husband. He initially did not bother about her because she was young. But when my mother attained puberty, he expected her to bear him a child. My mother got scared and returned to her mother's house. Elders in the family persuaded her to go back to her husband, but my mother refused. After two years, my mother got acquainted with another man – my father – and they decided to run away and get married. This family members heard about their plans.

Initially, they objected, but my mother's grandfather was considerate and took the initiative to get my mother married to my father. My mother's first husband also married another woman. So the problem was solved amicably.”

Angamma's mother gave birth to 13 children. Only four survived. Angamma does not know the causes of the death of her brothers and sisters. She has heard her mother talk about one brother who was found dead in the cradle. She explains that an evil spirit had struck the child dead. Of the children in the family, only the youngest sister studied up to the fifth standard. Angamma and her brothers are illiterates.

¹ Thali: A sacred yellow thread tied round a Hindu woman's neck signifying that she is married.

² Pottu: A red or coloured mark which Hindu women apply on their forehead.



P. Angamma of Panaiyur kuppam, who is active in fish marketing. She buys fish at an auction shed in Panaiyur, carries it by headload and boat to Sholinganallur village for sale (right).



Below: Attending to her daughter, one of six children – four boys and two girls.



Angamma's father went Kola fishing. Kola fishing is highly remunerative but risky. This fishing needs special skills and is done mainly during the Tamil month of 'Adi'. If a fisherman plans to go Kola fishing, he has to sleep on the sea-shore for seven days because he is supposed to abjure sex during this period. If the wife happens to get her menses during that time, the plan is dropped. It is believed that a menstruating woman is unclean and will bring ill-luck to men. After these restrictions are observed the men go out to sea. The kattumaram used is big in size and consists of seven logs. The fisherman takes along the paraphernalia of puja or worship, and also bundles of leaves, made up of branches of the screw-pine, leguminous shrubs and palm tree – devices to attract the Kola fish. During the period when the husband is out at sea, the women at home are expected to stay indoors and keep pure; God's wrath may hit the men at sea if the women get defiled. So the women keep indoors praying for the safe return of the menfolk.

Kola fish is generally dried and sold for a good price to traders from Sri Lanka where it is a delicacy. Angamma's mother used to engage in curing and drying fish. She sold it to Sri Lankan traders, and spent the money on food and household items. Angamma's father never asked her mother about how she spent the money. The two took joint decisions on whether a craft or gear should be bought.

Angamma attained puberty at the age of **15**. Immediately, her 'jadhagam' was written. The puberty rites were done and her family started looking for a suitable man for her.

Marriage and family background

At the age of **16** Angamma's marriage was arranged. Her husband was 20 years old. Her parents gave her a pair of gold ear studs and silver anklets. The wedding ceremony was simple, and as weddings go, a frugal affair.

Her husband was a very hardworking fisherman and earned a good income. The only problem was that for the first two years of married life, she did not conceive. Her husband's relatives ill-treated her and threatened that they would get him married again to beget a child. But fortunately she became pregnant in the third year of her married life. A son was born and she was happy. After the birth of her son Angamma developed a burning sensation in the lower part of her feet. Therefore she was treated with 'kallu' tapped from a tree every morning. This treatment helped. But just when she was recovering, her husband fell ill. He contracted jaundice; and the Indian medicine treatment failed and he died.

Angamma felt helpless when it dawned on her that she had become a widow at the age of 19. Her mother-in-law took care of her and the baby for a few months. But Angamma wanted to earn her own living. At this time, her mother and brothers were persuading her to live with them. Though she hesitated initially, she agreed because she felt that her son had to be cared for.

She put up a pavement snack stall. She made iddlies, dosais, vadai, appam, etc. The sales were good. Her younger sister helped with the work. Angamma earned up to Rs. 5 per day. With her earning she managed to buy jewels for her sister and also arranged for her marriage. She looked for a good bridegroom for her sister and got her married.

Her brothers were living separately with their families. On seeing their sister Angamma earn, they decided that they should get her married again. This was because Angamma had her own money and it was felt that she was becoming far too independent. They told her:

"We cannot take responsibility for you. You are still young and you have money of your

1 Kola – Flying fish

2 'Adi' – Mid-july to mid-August

3 'Puja' – Fishermen worship their deity with flowers, incense and coconut. They pray for protection from dangers and for a good catch

4 'Jadhagam' – Horoscope. This is analysed before a person's marriage is fixed. If the horoscopes of the boy and girl "match", they get married.

5 'Kallu' – Toddy

6 Popular South Indian snacks made of boiled and black gram ground in various proportions

own. Men will use you and you might fall into their trap. This will bring a bad name to the family. So it is our duty to get you married.”

Angamma disagreed but they were very persistent.

Her second marriage

Finally, Angamma's brothers met a 35 year-old widower in the same village who agreed to marry her. No gold was given, as in the first marriage. Against her will, Angamma got married to Perumal at the age of 22. To avoid possible problems, she left her son with her mother and started living separately with her second husband.

Angamma does not talk to her brothers any more. She is angry with them because they forced her into marriage, without caring to find out whether she liked the man selected. Her main complaint is that her brothers earn well because they have craft and gear while her husband has none. And while her sisters-in-law stay at home she has to work hard to contribute to the family income.

Her husband and children

Her husband Perumal worked as a coolie fisherman for a net owner who had lent him Rs. 2,000 when Perumal's father fell ill. Perumal could go out fishing only with this net owner, unlike those fishermen free from debt who could choose any net owner (employer) and enjoy some flexibility about working hours and days.

Perumal at one time evinced keen interest in party politics and supported a particular political party, but he has now lost interest in politics. He calls all politicians 'crooks' and feels cheated by them, because they have not fulfilled promises made to the people.

Perumal and Angamma have six children: four boys and two girls. After the birth of their first two sons, Angamma wanted a female child. She visited temples and prayed for a female child. This is uncommon because fisherfolk usually pray for sons. Angamma says: "I wanted a female child to help in the household work, just as sons help the father in fishing."

Just as she hoped, her third child was a girl. Unlike Angamma, she is dark in complexion and villagers teasingly call her 'Karuppy' ('blacky').

Angamma's two sons are sturdy young men who go fishing regularly. Perumal himself rarely goes out to sea. He has taken to liquor; he enjoys staying at home, confident that his sons will earn enough to keep the family going.

Migration to Panaiyur

In Thennadu, Perumal was a member of the Janata Party, while the majority of the villagers supported the Congress.⁽¹⁾ A quarrel took place between supporters of the two parties. Perumal was actively involved in the fight. To escape retaliation, Angamma brought Perumal to Madras. They stayed in Ayodhyakuppam – a fishing settlement in Madras city. The two-room house was divided in two by a partition, one portion was occupied by the owners and the other by Angamma and family. For this portion, Angamma paid Rs. 300 as rent advance and Rs. 30 as rent every month. Since they had come away from Thennadu, Perumal's creditor forced him to repay his Rs. 2,000 loan. Angamma borrowed the money from a distant relative at a monthly interest rate of 10% and gave it to the net owner. Living in Ayodhyakuppam proved to be expensive, and Perumal earned only a meagre sum by going out to sea as a coolie fisherman.

Perumal and Angamma were on the look-out for another place, when they met a family from Panaiyur kuppam. They had come to Madras to attend a wedding and the family asked Perumal and Angamma to visit Panaiyur. They did so and decided to shift. Reasons: they would be able to save Rs. 30 every month on rent by putting up a small thatched hut of their own and also reduce their cost of living. In Panaiyur they initially lived for three months with the family which introduced them to Panaiyur. After informing the local leader, Angamma and Perumal built their own hut at a cost of Rs. 300.

Angamma had to repay the Rs. 2,000 loan borrowed from the relative. So Perumal approached a net owner for a loan, promising to go fishing only for him. The male head of the family who

¹ The Janata and the Congress (I) are two of India's leading political parties.

introduced Perumal to Panaiyur stood guarantee for him. The net owner loaned the money, and Angamma repaid her debts. They have been living in Panaiyur for the past three years.

Perumal became irregular in going out to sea, so the net owner called Angamma and asked her to repay the loan. Perumal said he could not work hard any more because he was growing old; he suggested that two of the sons sign a bond with the net owner. Angamma and her two sons have now signed a bond and assured the net owner that the sons would regularly go out fishing for him. But in spite of the sons' labour, the income earned is not sufficient to maintain the family. The revenue from sale of catch is divided in two. One share goes to the net owner, the other is shared among the crew. The net owner generally accompanies Angamma's sons. So he not only gets 50% of the amount earned but also a share from the 50% meant for the crew members.

Angamma's fish marketing occupation

After settling in Panaiyur, Angamma realised that the children were growing up; so was their demand for food and apparel. She didn't want to set up a snack stall again despite her experience with it. She thought her children would eat up the snacks themselves and she would end up with losses. She saw women in the village going to the market to sell fish, but hesitated to go fish marketing herself, because she knew little about it.

While on this dilemma, she got acquainted with two women from the Harijan¹ colony of Sholinganallur, an agricultural village five miles away from Panaiyur. These two women came to Panaiyur to sell illicit liquor. During this period Perumal imbibed heavily, and sometimes came away without paying for the liquor. So the women asked Angamma to pay up. Sometimes they felt sorry for her and took fish instead of money. They suggested to Angamma that she could sell fish and earn for the family. They asked her to sell fish in the Harijan colony itself since all its womenfolk had to go to the market, situated in the main part of Sholinganallur village.

Angamma was unsure whether she should take the risk. Perumal encouraged her to take up fish marketing. Initially he accompanied her to the Harijan colony and helped her carry the headload of fish.

In a few months, Angamma picked up confidence; today she is considered a good marketing woman. On an average, Angamma markets fish five days a week. She sits under a particular tree, spreads her fish on a tarpaulin sheet in neat heaps and fixes the price on the basis of the type of fish and the quantity she has. She sells only the smaller varieties and crab: Seer, pomfret or shark command no market in the Harijan colony. She says,

“Seer and pomfret are meant only for persons earning a monthly income and not for daily wage earners. Like me, these Harijans are also daily wage earners and I cater to their needs.”

On an average she invests between Rs. 35 and Rs. 50 every day on buying fish. Usually, the fish bought is around six to eight kilograms in weight. So, Angamma carries a headload of about eight kg. She walks three miles up and three miles down. Instead of taking the regular route to the Harijan colony, she takes a shorter route. That is, she crosses a river, reaches the other side, and walks two miles. She saves two miles by crossing the river; her husband helps her cross it. She says that at times the river flow is strong, and water reaches up to her shoulder. She holds on to Perumal's shoulder and he guides her when the current is strong. After crossing the river, she spends 15 minutes on the shore drying her drenched clothes. Perumal goes to the illicit liquor shop on the river bed while Angamma proceeds to the colony. She is there by 4 p.m. (She normally leaves her house around two in the afternoon.) She finishes selling by 6.30 and meets Perumal who waits for her near the river. They return home by 8.30 at night.

Angamma has regular customers. There are four families who buy fish almost every day and pay her for the whole month on their salary day. There are six families that buy fish nearly on all days and pay her on the Saturday of every week. The others buy whatever their income for the day permits.

¹ Harijans — 'God's people,' the name given to 'untouchables' by Mahatma Gandhi. Persons belonging to the 'scheduled' castes, who are regarded as untouchables in the Hindu caste system.

On an average, if she invests Rs. 35 per day, she earns Rs. 6. But there are also days when she loses money. Her income depends on what the farm hands and construction workers who live in the colony earn. On the day she loses money, she borrows from Panaiyur residents who lend money at a monthly interest rate of 10%. She borrows regularly from two persons and they lend because she repays promptly.

On certain days – when the people in the Harijan colony are without work – she returns home with a large chunk of her fish, sometimes as much as 50%, unsold. She immediately cleans the fish and salts it, so that she can dry it out in the sun the next day. Whenever the auctioned fish is of the expensive variety, beyond the reach of her customers, she takes the dry fish to the Harijan colony for sale. She earns on an average Rs. 2 per day when she sells dry fish.

On certain days, when she is ill, for example, she buys the fish and sends it through her husband to the colony. A woman from the colony, a close friend of Angamma, lays out the fish exactly the way Angamma would. Perumal gives her a heap of fish, sells the rest and returns with the money.

Angamma keeps the money she earns through fish marketing. All of it is used to buy food articles for the family.

Her daily routine

Angamma wakes up around 5.30 in the morning to ensure that her sons go fishing. At 6a.m. she has a wash and walks some distance to answer nature's call. About an hour later, she serves cold rice soaked in water to the children and her husband. By 7.30 am. she is on the sea shore waiting to observe the day's catch. She also enquires from the women sitting around her about whose kattumarams have returned and how many are yet to come. Once she has this information she goes to the auctioning shed. Baskets with fish are lined up for auctioning. She glances around to see the type of fish the men are sorting out. The auction begins and she carefully notes the quantity, type of fish and the price it is going for.

Depending on the number of kattumarams that have returned, she decides whether to bid for a basket of fish or wait. She usually waits till the last few kattumarams arrive because she sets out only around 2 p.m. and wants the fish to remain fresh. She spends nearly four hours on the shore. At about 11.30 am. she returns home. She buys the food articles for the day and gives her daughter instructions about what has to be cooked; she occasionally helps with the cooking herself. Then she serves her sons, who return from fishing, with cold rice.

Around noon she spreads the salted fish for drying. Her youngest son keeps her company as she chats with passersby or calls out to her daughter who is cooking. At times she goes out to gather fuel.

Around 1.30 p.m. she serves her children and husband with lunch, then eats herself with her daughter. Around 2 p.m. she gets ready for the market. She arranges the fish neatly in the basket so that it does not get crushed, and waits for her husband. It is 8.30 p.m. before husband and wife return from the colony. They eat the rice and the curry left over from the afternoon's cooking. Then they sit around and chat. By 10 p.m. they go to sleep.

Angamma's role in the family

There is a good deal of task-sharing in the family. Angamma's main task centres on market-going. Her husband assists her. Her Sons go fishing regularly. Her daughter takes care of the cooking, while Angamma helps. She also buys the groceries – her daughter can be cheated by the shopkeeper. The daughter takes care of the younger children when the parents go out.

Decision-making in the family

Angamma keeps the family income with her. Her sons give her their daily income, while she gives them the pocket money they demand. Her sons are reasonable and take less money when the income is low. Her sons, husband and she discuss how much they should put aside for the chit funds, how much they should spend on clothes for the children and on loan repayments. All decisions are taken only after the main family members are consulted.

Though her husband does not contribute to the family income, he is consulted because “anyway he is the head of the household” (to quote Angamma). Her sons occasionally question her on why she has diverted some of the family income into her fish marketing business. But they do not ask her how much she earned and how much she spent. They feel that since all of them contribute equally to the family income, they have an equal right to express their view.

Problems faced by Angamma and her family

Since she has been in Panaiyur village only three years, Angamma has not been allotted a government-built house yet. She bemoans her ill-luck and curses her husband because the village leaders brand him irresponsible. She hopes she would be allotted a house so that at least her son will live in a better place.

Angamma is a family-loving woman and rarely talks about village problems. Being a recent immigrant to the village, she is not well-versed with the happenings of the village. Being a woman, she does not attend the village meetings. In spite of her economically active role, she has no right to voice her opinions in the villages, like she does in the family.

1.3 J. Vedavalli

Housewife

Age	26 years
Education	6th standard (6 years of schooling)
Occupation	Housewife. Rarely engages in fish marketing
Professional skills	Net-making and plastic wire basket making
Marital status	Married
Age at marriage	16 years
Family planning status	Underwent sterilization after the birth of fourth child.
Position held in the village	President of the fisherwomen’s cooperative society
Husband’s occupation	Traditional fishing
Ownership status of the family	Fourtypes of nets, television set, small two-roomed tiled house
Type of house	Concrete, tiled house
Religion	Hindu
Caste	Periapattinavar (sub-caste of Pattinavar caste)
Village	Chemmencheri kuppam (coastal village)
Location	Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu, India.

Vedavalli is a small-built woman with a serious face. She smiles occasionally. She is 26 years old and has done six years of schooling. Being one of the few educated women in the village, she is contacted whenever officials pay a visit. She talks to them boldly and considers it her responsibility to represent the problems of the villagers and of fisherwomen in particular.

Early childhood

Vedavalli was born in Nochikuppam, a fishing settlement in Madras city. Her mother gave birth to 11 children of whom three died when they were young. Her parents emphasized the need for education and sent all their children to school. They hoped that the boys would find good jobs and that the girls would at least know to read and write. Vedavalli had to discontinue her studies because she fell ill. After recovering she wanted to continue school. But unfortunately she was not permitted to because she had attained puberty. She was confined to the house. There were curbs on her going out or even talking to neighbours.

Vedaiali’s father was a traditional fisherman. His catch was sold by her mother. After his death, Vedavalli’s mother began buying fish at the auction for marketing.

Vedavalli’s four elder brothers are married and live separately with their families. Her two younger brothers and her sister live with her mother. The entire family maintains itself on the mother’s fish marketing income. Her brothers occasionally contribute some money to the family expenses.



I. Vedavalli (above) is the president of the fisherwomen's cooperative society in Chemmencheri kuppam. Right: She measures a net made by a village woman for her husband Jayabalan.



Vedavalli gets her youngest son ready for the "balwadi".

Vedavalli does not think highly of her younger sister. She says: "My sister is a very different type of a person. Though she had the opportunity to study up to the 7th standard she did not utilise the opportunity. My sister enjoys going out shopping with my sister-in-law. She also goes out to see films without my brother's knowledge. I was not allowed to even stand near the door and watch the happenings in the street. but now after my father's death, my sister is given a lot of freedom to do what she wants."

Her marriage

Vedavalli was married when she was only 16. Her eldest brother and mother arranged the marriage. Her parents-in-law who lived in Chemmencheri kuppam did not demand gold or other household articles. They asked Vedavalli's mother to give whatever she could give. So, Vedavalli was given gold jewellery – chain, nose ring, a ring and ear studs. She was also given silver anklets. Other than the jewellery, she was given a cot, wooden cupboard and kitchen utensils and a full set of the materials needed for "puja" (worship) of the family God every week. She does not know how much money was spent on her wedding.

The wedding ceremony expenses were borne by the bridegroom's family, the "pariyam" (engagement) expenses by the bride's family. During "pariyam," the bridegroom gives either a gold chain or a pair of gold bangles to the bride. This is usually taken back by the husband's family after the wedding.

Vedavalli's mother and brothers also gifted her a radio for the 'Thalai Deepavali'. Through these gifts, Vedavalli's natal family prestige was kept up.

Her husband Jaya ba/an

Jayabalan is a sturdy young man, who is considered a good fisherman in the village. Though he has studied only up to the 6th standard he reads and writes fluently in Tamil. These merits have helped him take up leadership roles in the village. In fact, he is one of the highly respected young leaders of the village.

Jayabalan is the youngest son in his family. His two brothers also live in Chemmencheri kuppam with their families. His parents initially lived with Jayabalan and Vedavalli; recently they started living separately.

Jayabalan goes out to work on all days except the days he is ill or has to attend to some work outside the village. He owns four types of nets – "Medhappa," "Kavalai," "Thattakavalai" and "Tharavalai." He says that they are worth nearly Rs. 7,000. He does not own a kattumaram but shares it with his neighbours. He and two of his neighbours go fishing together. Generally 10% of the money earned goes to pay for use of the kattumaram; the rest is equally shared among the crew since all of them take their nets along.

Her married life

It is 10 years since Vedavalli and Jayabalan got married. As is the custom, Vedavalli started living in Chemmencheri with her husband after her marriage. She rarely visits her mother who lives in Nochikuppam.

Jayabalan and Vedavalli lived with Jayabalan's parents for nearly nine years after their wedding. During their stay together, Vedavalli's mother-in-law did not treat her well. There were constant problems between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law. Jayabalan always took a neutral position and supported neither his mother nor his wife. This aggravated the problem. Immediately after marriage, the house was managed by Vedavalli's mother-in-law. Vedavalli did the cooking, while the purse strings were held by her mother-in-law. Soon after the birth of the first child, Vedavalli started asserting her rights in the family. She demanded that she should be given the money so that she could run the household affairs more efficiently. Finally, a part of her father-in-law's and husband's earnings was handed over to her. This was for food expenses alone. The rest of the money was kept by her mother-in-law.

1 Thalai Deepavali – the first Deepavali after marriage. The newly married couple is invited by the bride's parents to spend Deepavali with them. The bride's family presents new clothes (and sometimes a gold ring as well) to the bridegroom. Subsequent Deepavalis are celebrated in the bridegroom's house.

Vedavalli started managing the household affairs and her mother-in-law was relieved of these responsibilities. However, this caused a lot of friction between the two. The mother-in-law and father-in-law now live separately.

Her children

Vedavalli and Jayabalan have four children. The first son is eight years old and is in the second standard in the local school. The second son is six and mentally retarded. He has just started walking. He is not able to talk. He recognises people and is very attached to his grandfather. Vedavalli recalls how her second son was a very healthy baby when he was born. She explains:

“When he was one year old, he developed high temperature. I immediately took him to the local “Maruthuvachi” (midwife). She asked me to apply a herbal oil to make the fever subside. But the fever continued to rise and finally the boy fell unconscious. After that we rushed him to the hospital. The fever came down but the child became inactive and symptoms of retardation appeared.”

With the help of the BOBP social worker, Vedavalli put him in a residential school for the mentally retarded. After six months Vedavalli brought him back, because she missed him and preferred that he stay with her.

Her third child, a girl, is four years old. She goes to the village balwadi. Her youngest son is two and a half years old. He too goes to the balwadi along with his sister. Both Jayabalan and Vedavalli hope that they will study and find “office jobs” instead of having to go fishing.

All the children were born in the Government hospital in Madras. Vedavalli would go to her mother’s house in Madras for every delivery because she felt that “it would not be safe to trust the local midwives.” There was a gap of two years between each of her children. Her first child was born when she was only 17 years old. For three months after the first child was born she stayed with her mother who took great care of her. Her mother presented her first baby with silver anklets and a silver belt for the waist. But the other children got only clothes and money and not jewels.

Vedavalli asks her eldest son to go to the seashore and wait for Jayabalan to arrive. He is to help sort out the fish and mend the nets. She asks her daughter to help in sweeping the house and washing the dishes. She chides her daughter for playing too long on the seashore. Slowly, she is getting her daughter to conform to the unwritten code of conduct for women in fishing villages.

Vedavalli's family planning status

Soon after the third child was born, Vedavalli wanted to undergo sterilization. But both her husband and her mother objected. Her husband felt that four children is the ideal number for a fishing family. Therefore she underwent sterilization after the birth of her fourth child.

As Vedavalli was brought up in Madras, she is familiar with family planning slogans. Her mother’s financial and health problems resulting from a large family have induced Vedavalli to limit her family size.

She complains of having become weak after the sterilization operation. She is not able to carry headloads of fish or walk long distances. She feels giddy very often. She attributes all her health problems to the sterilization operation she underwent.

On being questioned as to why her husband did not undergo vasectomy, she explains that it would decrease his strength and energy. She feels that a fisherman should not undergo a family planning operation because he has to work hard at sea.

A woman has to get her husband’s consent before undergoing sterilization. If the husband disagrees, she cannot go against his wish. So the woman takes a decision on her own only in rare cases.

Family savings

Vedavalli was one of the few women who readily accepted the presence of the BOBP social worker in the village. The latter initiated a savings scheme, and Vedavalli took active part in

enrolling members. The savings scheme formed an activity of the "Mahalir Mandram" (women's organization). The mandram's office bearers collected savings and recorded the amounts in specially printed books and an interest of 5 per cent per year was paid on savings of Rs. 100 or more. In all, 35 members were enrolled in the savings scheme. Credit facilities were also made available at a later stage to women at 2% interest.

To begin with, women participated actively in the scheme but at present the enthusiasm is dying down. It is because the villagers feel that savings through a chit fund¹ is better. The savings scheme gives them only a low rate of interest and the credit provided is also meagre. The chit fund makes available a larger sum of money because it aggregates contributions of more than one person. Secondly, it is like an interest-free loan. A member can bid and collect the entire amount in an auction chit fund system even before paying the total amount. But he/she keeps paying monthly instalments toward the chit fund till all the members get the total amount once.

Family debts

Vedavalli does not borrow large sums of money because Jayabalan and she save through the chit system. In case of dire need, she pawns her jewellery in Madras city and gets the money. The interest is fixed at 3 per cent per month.

Through the fisherwomen's cooperative society, Vedavalli has borrowed Rs. 300. The amount is to be repaid within three months, in daily instalments of Rs. 3. For the amount borrowed she has to pay an interest of Rs. 2.50. The women have to pay the share amount of Rs. 10 and an entrance fee of Re. 1 to be eligible for the loan.

Vedavalli did not use the Rs. 300 for fish marketing, the purpose for which the loan was given. She deposited it into a bank to enable her husband to receive a Rs. 2,000 loan under the Integrated Rural Development Programme for purchase of nets.

Most of the women who receive the loans do not utilise them for fish marketing. They buy gold jewellery, or a kilogram of net. A few others use it for household expenditure.

Women who engage in marketing need loans only when they lose money in their business. Generally the women pay for the auctioned fish only after they return from marketing.

The office bearers of the cooperative society have to go from member to member to collect the loan repayment. Initially they pay regularly, but they slacken over a period of time. A few loan recipients complain that the office bearers collect instalments regularly from them but do not remit it promptly. In fact it is rumoured that with this money they give out individual loans at an interest of 5 per cent per month and generate some personal income. The validity of this statement has not been verified.

Vedavalli's occupation

Vedavalli seldom goes fish vending. She goes only on those days when the price of fish at the auction is very low. She was never involved in 'fish marketing' – that is, buying fish at an auction, then selling it in markets for a profit. This would give her a personal income, while selling fish caught by her husband does not give her any income. The amount she gets by selling the fish is handed over to her husband; she can only claim the bus fare and coffee expenses. Vedavalli feels that selling fish is an additional responsibility and not an income-generating activity in her case.

Role and tasks performed by Vedavalli

Vedavalli mainly performs the roles of a housewife and a mother in the family. She does the cooking and collects water. She goes out to collect fuel when the children are in school and when her mentally retarded son is asleep. Vedavalli has the additional task of looking after her mentally retarded son who has no control over his bowels and keeps dirtying himself and the house.

¹ A chit fund is a saving and fund-raising device very popular in South India. A few persons get together and agree on a certain sum they pay every month. The month's collection goes to one person – a different person every month

She feels that the most difficult task is to manage the household expenditure within the fixed amount given by her husband, which is now Rs. 12 per day. With this amount she has to provide two meals, consisting of rice and fish curry, and has to give pocket money of 25 paise each for the children. She says that her husband has very conveniently forced this task of making both ends meet on her with the limited finance available. Jayabalan at times earns more than Rs. 12 but gives her only Rs. 12 every day. He feels that his wife is a spendthrift.

Decision-making

What about decision-making? Vedavalli is consulted on matters concerning the family. But the final decision is taken by Jayabalan. Even though she complains to her husband that Rs. 12 per day for household expenditure is insufficient, he does not give her more money. She says the amount is too small for her to make any decisions about priorities. All the money has to be spent on necessities.

Jayabalan does not permit Vedavalli to give her mother any money, but he gives his own mother money every week without consulting his wife. Jayabalan allows Vedavalli to question him to a limited extent; for example, she can ask him whether he is going out at four in the evening or the next day. But she cannot ask him where he is going, or for what purpose. He also does not wait for her consent. Vedavalli, on the contrary, cannot do anything without his consent. She has to even ask him whether she should go for fuel collection in the morning or in the afternoon.

As for decision-making in the village, women are totally excluded. They cannot participate in village meetings when decisions concerning the village are taken. They cannot represent directly to the village panchayat, they can do so only through their husband, father or brother. Women get to know the matters discussed at the panchayat but they have no right to express their views or criticise any decision. Fisherwomen in general have accepted this norm and do not question it at all.

Vedavalli's leadership position

Vedavalli is the president of the fisherwomen's cooperative society. Like the other office bearers, she too collects the daily instalments from members. She was selected because she can read and write, but the older women of the village question this selection. They feel that she has come to Chemmencheri as a daughter-in-law and does not originally belong to the village. They also think she is too young to be a leader.

Vedavalli talks boldly at women's group meetings. Given her city background she is able to grasp and digest information quickly, especially those concerning government schemes and programmes.

Her daily routine

Vedavalli has to wake up when her husband goes fishing, whether it be 4 a.m. or earlier. After he leaves, she goes back to sleep.

- | | |
|-------------------|---|
| 6.00 – 7.30 a.m. | She wakes up and buys a cup of tea from the shop opposite her house. Then she wakes up her children and asks them to drink their tea. She bathes her retarded son, then goes to a casuarina grove to answer nature's call. On her return she sweeps the courtyard, then has a wash. |
| 7.30 – 9.00 a.m. | She washes utensils and fetches water from a water pump 20 yards away from the house. She then serves the children cold rice soaked in water. |
| 9.00 – 9.30 a.m. | She prepares the children for their school or balwadi. Then leaves the younger ones in the balwadi which is five minutes away on foot from her house. |
| 9.30 – 11.30 a.m. | She serves her husband cold rice soaked in water when he returns from fishing. Then she goes to collect fuel. She leaves her mentally retarded son on the verandah of the house and he sleeps there. |

- 11.30 – 1.30 p.m. She returns from fuel collection, then starts preparing lunch. She gets the Rs. 12 from her husband and buys provisions for the day's cooking. She finishes cooking, serves food to her husband and feeds her mentally retarded son. She also eats herself.
- 1.30 – 3.00 p.m. She cleans the utensils, washes the kitchen. Fills all the containers with water, washes the clothes.
- 3.00 – 3.30 p.m. She sits around and chats with a few women.
- 3.30 – 4.30 p.m. The children return and she gives them a wash. They pester her for money and she gives them pocket money to buy biscuits and sweets.
- 4.30 – 5.30 p.m. She goes for loan collection.
- 5.30 – 6.30 p.m. She supervises the children while they study.
- 6.30 – 7.00 p.m. She serves the night meals, which is always the food left over from the afternoon meal.
- 7.00 – 9.00 p.m. The family owns a television set and villagers trouble them to switch it on. The programme is watched for an hour. jayabalan sends his son around to collect 10 paise from every viewer.
- 9.00 p.m. She puts her mentally retarded son to sleep. The other children also go to sleep.
- 9.30 p.m. Vedavalli and jayabalan go to sleep.