

Working Paper Number 59**The Changing Position of *Thottam Farmers* in Villages in Rural Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, between 1981/2 and 1996**Judith Heyer^{*}

This paper looks at thottam farmers, the elite in selected villages in Coimbatore district in 1981/2 and 1996. These were relatively small operators in the regional economy, but strong in the villages, where they exerted tight control over those beneath them in the village hierarchy. They were backed by the state which both supported them and gave some support to those beneath them. In 1981/2, agriculture was doing well and thottam farmers looked forward to a bright future despite indications of problems ahead. They were a confident group, powerful in their own local domain, in 1981/2. By 1996, this had changed. Agriculture had declined, and urban and industrial development was having more influence particularly on labour and on labour costs. In 1996, many thottam farmers had sunk capital into a failing agriculture, and faced a difficult future, without the resources to move into alternatives, not well placed to take advantage of alternative opportunities. Their power base depended strongly on agriculture, and their position in the villages. A few had made successful moves into non-agricultural activities. A few were still doing well in agriculture. The majority were doing much less well, pinning their hopes for the future on their sons, and investing in ways that might make it possible for their sons to do well in areas other than agriculture. Despite their weakened position in the villages, these thottam farmers still had a surprisingly strong hold over labourers and others at the bottom of the hierarchy in the villages though. It was taking time for the old relationships to give way.

All of this was taking place in the context of continuing urban and industrial development in the vicinity, which was getting closer all the time. One might have expected thottam farmers to take more advantage of this. A minority did. The majority were affected only indirectly, as much on the losing as on the winning side.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on the elite in a group of Coimbatore villages which was made up of *thottam farmers*,¹ a group of relatively capital-intensive farmers investing in well-fed land, with a reputation for working in the fields alongside their labourers. They worked *thottam* land which was the land fed by large open wells, and some dry land as well. The paper starts by considering the position in 1981/2 when agriculture was thriving and *thottam farmers* were confident, looking forward to a future in agriculture for themselves and their sons. The paper then looks at these same people and their descendants in 1996, after a period during which a serious decline in the water table was accompanied by an increase in non-agricultural opportunities for their labourers. The costs of labour increased as irrigation became much more problematic. What had been a community that was very sure of its future in agriculture in 1981/2 had to consider a future in which agriculture was no longer doing well. The paper looks at how *thottam farmers* and their descendants were adjusting to the new situation in 1996, many of them somewhat slowly, and not very well.

The study villages were very successful agriculturally in 1981/2 and their elite was almost exclusively involved in agriculture. Wealthy households that were involved in other activities (mainly trade and processing) were substantial *thottam farmers* as well. Nearly all were still marrying their daughters into agricultural families in 1981/2; and most still saw agriculture as providing a good future for their sons.

In 1996, this had completely changed. Agriculture was in decline as a result of the collapse of the water table, combined with a substantial rise in labour costs, and 1981/2 *thottam farmers* and their descendants were having to consider alternatives. In 1996, most were investing in ways that would make it possible for their sons to move out of agriculture in future. Not many had got very far with this yet though. Many sons en route to moving out of agriculture were still in the process of getting enough education to do so.

In 1981/2 *thottam farmers* were an impressive group. They managed a variety of complex market and non-market relationships with considerable skill. They handled relatively large investments in fixed and working capital associated with which were small margins and high degrees of risk. They had been investing heavily in the previous two decades in land and wells, land improvements, and large comfortable houses and other buildings on their *thottams*. They did not spend much on consumer goods or consumer durables, preferring to accumulate more directly instead. They were confident and thriving in 1981/2, in an environment that was risky and challenging, which they were handling well.

Their success depended partly on their ability to manage production, and investments, well. They were involved in a system in which continuing investment was crucial in order to maintain the productivity of their wells, let alone increase it. Their success also depended on an active involvement in the promotion and maintenance of a network of social relations in which

¹ *Thottam farmers* are defined for the purposes of this paper as people farming large enough areas of *thottam* i.e. well-fed land to justify employing permanent labour to do so.

marriage strategies, and investments in marriages, played an important part. This played a part in the accumulation of capital, and insurance against risks associated with this, as well as in the management of labour and other relations within the villages. The state's role in determining the prices of agricultural inputs and outputs, developing transport, communications and other infrastructure, and supporting agricultural research, was an important factor contributing to their success. Likewise, the state's role in maintaining law and order and supporting their dominant position in the villages of which they were a part.

Labour management was one of the strong points of *thottam farming* in 1981/2. The tight-knit social stratification, reinforced by people other than *thottam farmers* as well, contributed to the maintenance of a plentiful supply of labour, and helped both to keep labour subservient, and to keep labour costs low. *Thottam farmers'* subversion of state attempts to reach 'weaker sections' also helped to sustain the ample supplies of low cost labour to which they had access, despite all the development in the surrounding region which might otherwise have made the labour supply more problematic as far as *thottam farmers* were concerned. By 1996 this had changed. Labour costs had increased very substantially as non-agricultural employment opportunities became available to agricultural labourers and agricultural wages rose to a level comparable with wages in the towns. 1996 terms and conditions of employment were much more favourable to agricultural labourers than they had been in 1981/2. However, the control that *thottam farmers* maintained over their labourers in 1996 was still surprisingly strong (Heyer, 2000).

There was an unusual combination of sophisticated market relationships and non-market relationships in the study villages in 1981/2. Many exchanges took place within caste, kin, '*jajmani*', and employment relationships. Credit was widely provided through kin and caste networks and through employment relationships. Insurance was provided both by kin (through the tradition of in-laws helping households in trouble e.g.) and by employers (for their labourers). Clothing and many consumer durables were acquired almost exclusively as gifts associated with life-cycle ceremonies and festivals. Many '*jajmani*' relationships continued. A range of consumer goods produced on *thottam* farms were distributed as payments in kind, though on a decreasing scale in 1981/2. Fodder was a bi-product of *thottam* farm employment. And so on. There was less of this non-market exchange by 1996. Much of it remained though.

Much had changed by 1996, though the relationships that had been built up continued to be powerful nevertheless. *Thottam farmers* had gone on sinking capital into agricultural investments which were no longer productive. They did not appear to have anticipated the decline in agriculture at all well. In 1996, many were having difficulty turning round, and building up alternative positions for the future. Their relationships and experience did not seem to serve them at all well in this.

The paper is organised as follows: after brief sections giving some background on Coimbatore, and the study villages, the first main section focuses on accumulation in agriculture and in non-agricultural activities in *thottam farmer* households in 1981/2; this is followed by a section on 'investment' in sons and daughters in *thottam farmer* households in 1981/2. Then

there is a section on accumulation in agriculture and in non-agricultural activities in *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households in 1996; followed by a section on 'investment' in sons and daughters of these households in 1996. The final section concludes.

The paper relies on data from two periods of fieldwork, one in 1981/2, the other in 1996. The first set of data was collected between September 1981 and March 1982 from a random sample of 20% of the households in 6 hamlets in 2 revenue villages. This paper focuses primarily on the data collected from households headed by *thottam farmers* in that sample in 1981/2. The number of households concerned is relatively small. Interviews covered different aspects of the long-term economic position of the households concerned. The interviews were conducted by the author and V. Mohanasundaram. The second set of data was collected between May and July 1996 from households descended from the households interviewed in 1981/2 still resident in the villages. The majority of the 1996 interviews were conducted by V. Srinivasan and S. Paul Pandian, a minority by the author and V. Mohanasundaram. The interviews were designed to obtain longitudinal data on the changing economic fortunes of households in broad outline. No attempt was made to obtain details of current economic activities. The data nevertheless provide evidence of many important aspects of long term economic change between 1981/2 and 1996 as well as in the period running up to 1981/2.

1. COIMBATORE AND COIMBATORE DISTRICT

Coimbatore and the smaller towns surrounding it form a strong industrial centre.² There is a heavy concentration in cotton textiles, hosiery and knitwear, and in metal-based industries producing textile and other machinery and irrigation pumps. The district is a centre of medium and small-scale manufacturing rather than large, with levels of technology, and capital-intensity, that are above average rather than near the top of the range for India. A substantial proportion of the labour force consists of migrant farm labourers from all over Tamil Nadu and from neighbouring states. Significant growth in the 1950s and the 1960s was followed by slower growth in the 1970s and the 1980s. Tiruppur hosiery and knitwear production was the exception, growing phenomenally in the 1980s (Cawthorne, 1995; Chari, 1997).

Coimbatore is a 'dry' district with a small amount of canal irrigation and a relatively high concentration of wells. It was in the forefront of the spread of electric pumpsets that revolutionised the agriculture of 'dry' areas following rural electrification in the 1950s. New seed varieties, fertilisers and pesticides accompanied the expansion of wells, and agriculture became increasingly input intensive, capital intensive, and commercialised.³ The study villages

² Tamil Nadu has long been one of the more industrialised states in India. In 1980/81 Tamil Nadu had the second highest industrial value added of all Indian states, after Maharashtra, and the third highest numbers in factory employment, after Maharashtra and West Bengal (MIDS, 1988). Coimbatore is the second most industrialised district in Tamil Nadu. It is also one of the more urbanised. The proportion of the population living in what were classified as urban areas in 1981 was 33% in Tamil Nadu, 54% in Coimbatore district, compared with 24% in India as a whole

³ In 1981/2 Coimbatore was the district with the most commercialised agriculture in Tamil Nadu (B. Harriss, 1981).

are good examples of this. The main irrigated crops grown are cotton and sugarcane. There are also many minor commercial as well as food crops grown on well-irrigated land. The main dry land crops are sorghum, groundnuts, and to a lesser extent pulses.

Coimbatore's agricultural development slowed in the 1970s, and even more so in the 1980s and the 1990s, as the water table fell.⁴ It was in the mid-1980s that wells began to dry up on a large scale in the study villages. Previously cultivated land began to be left uncultivated and land still in cultivation began to be cultivated less intensively. This was a process seen earlier in some other parts of the district, and later elsewhere.

The numbers and sizes of very large landholdings in Tamil Nadu fell with the intensification of agriculture, and asset distributions became more concentrated than land (Kurien, 1981). Coimbatore has for decades had a significantly higher proportion of labourers in the rural population than other districts in Tamil Nadu.⁵ A large proportion of rural labourers are Scheduled Caste, both in Tamil Nadu and in Coimbatore.⁶

In the past there were strong divisions between Brahmin and non-Brahmin landowning castes, and there were strong divisions between these and Muslim landowners. By 1981/2, rural areas were dominated by *Gounders*, *Naidus*, and *Chettiars* in Coimbatore. Most of the Brahmins and Muslims had left. Strict divisions between Caste Hindu and Scheduled Caste communities remained however.

The state in Tamil Nadu was highly interventionist from the 1970s to the 1990s. The Dravidian parties, the DMK (*Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam*) and the AIADMK (All-India Anna DMK), which ruled with few interruptions since the DMK first came to power in 1967, sought to undermine the rural elite by discouraging rural institutions (cooperatives, *Panchayat* unions, *Panchayats*) which were the traditional power base of Congress. Both DMK parties pursued strategies alienating the rural elite in some ways, appeasing them in others (low taxes, subsidies on agricultural inputs, etc.), and both engaged in mass politics over the heads of the rural elite (MIDS, 1988).

The farmers' lobby led by the TNAA (Tamil Nadu Agriculturalists' Association) was powerful in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It lobbied very effectively for low taxes, low water charges in canal-irrigated areas, low electricity prices, low agricultural input prices, loan write-offs, and high paddy procurement prices. The Association was still evident in the study villages

⁴ Sivanappan and Aiyasamy (1978) note evidence of a continuously falling water table in Coimbatore going back to 1923.

⁵ NSS estimates suggested that 45% of the rural population in Tamil Nadu were labourers in 1972, and 55% in 1983. This compares with just under 40% of the all India rural population in 1972 and just over 40% in 1983. (MIDS, 1988). According to estimates from the 1991 Population Census 58% of the population were (agricultural) labourers in rural Tamil Nadu and 71% in rural Coimbatore.

⁶ In 1986/7 in Tamil Nadu 20% of the rural population was Scheduled Caste, but 40% of the labourers; 80% of the Scheduled Caste rural population were labourers; and furthermore there was a disproportionate proportion of male child labourers aged 5-14 (NSS 1987/8, quoted in Majumdar, 1996).

in 1981/2, although by then it was past its peak. The last overt confrontation with the state in the vicinity of the study villages was over electricity dues, in 1984. That ended with a showdown in which the farmers lost.

In the 1980s state intervention was critical in providing support for the poor.⁷ The AIADMK government introduced a wide range of social security measures, and developed what became a notably successful PDS (Public Distribution System).⁸ Food subsidies and food distribution were emphasised rather than public works programmes. In 1982 the Chief Minister introduced a Noon Meals Scheme which entitled all 2-14 year-olds, and a few years later old-age pensioners too, to a free midday meal. Free school uniforms and books were part of a programme to encourage school enrolment. Expenditure on housing schemes for the Scheduled Castes increased in real terms in the 1980s. These were very visible in the study villages. At the end of the 1980s, the new DMK government introduced a social safety net.⁹ The benefits did not reach all who for whom they were intended, but they did reach a large number. Farmers were not completely neglected in the 1980s. One of the more important measures from which they benefitted was the deepening subsidy for electricity which was provided free to small farmers from 1984, and free to all farmers from 1990. There were also significant improvements in the transport infrastructure, which benefitted both farmers and non-farmers in the study villages and elsewhere.

The state financed the increased expenditures of the 1980s by relaxing prohibition, by shifting resources from capital to current expenditure, and by increasing levels of borrowing (MIDS, 1988). In the first half of the 1990s the Tamil Nadu state continued to protect much of its social expenditure in a similar way despite the reduction in contributions from the Centre (Narayanan, 1996; Prabhu, 1996).

The state had an important influence both in bolstering up small and middle farmers, and in protecting the poor, and this in turn had an important influence on agrarian relations between 1981/2 and 1996. The state had effectively been promoting the development of rural capitalism through expenditure which supported the development of productive capacity at the same time as helping to contain class conflict in the rural areas by measures to reduce poverty and decrease inequality.

⁷ The proportion of the population estimated to be below the poverty line in Tamil Nadu is high relative to other parts of India. 'Expert Group' figures 72/3, 77/8, 83/4, 87/8: 57-58-54-46% v. All India 56-53-46-39%; non-Expert Group figures for the same years were 63-56-44-40% v. 54-51-40-33% (Narayanan, 1996).

⁸ There was an increasing element of state subsidy from 1984/5, which became very high indeed in the 1990s (Narayanan, 1996).

⁹ The Government of India social safety net introduced in the 1995/6 budget was modelled on Tamil Nadu experience.

2. THE STUDY VILLAGES

The villages on which the detailed discussion in this paper is based¹⁰ are 40-60 km. north east of Coimbatore in western Tamil Nadu, and 20-30 km. west of Tiruppur. In 1981/2, 40% of the land in the study villages was well-fed, and agriculture was dominated by *thottam farmers*. All of the working irrigation wells were mechanised, but the mechanisation of field operations, transport, and other tasks was limited. A wide variety of crops were grown using substantial inputs of labour throughout the year. Dryland agriculture was more seasonal. Livestock-keeping had declined, and the livestock activities that remained were relatively labour-intensive.

The focus had moved to the urban areas in the decades preceding 1981/2. The richer, more ambitious families were more likely to live in the urban areas than they had been in the past. High levels of education and urban contacts and experience were considered *increasingly* important for the younger generation. Ceremonies that used to be held in the villages were held in urban areas. Important people visited less. Furthermore, the needs of the relatively wealthy who still lived comfortably in the villages, were met increasingly from outside. There had been a marked decline in village services and manufacturing in the decades preceding 1981/2. They were increasing again in 1996, by which time transport and communications had improved and economic activities were spreading out from towns that had become increasingly congested.

Thottam farmers in the study villages were relatively unaffected by the high degree of urbanisation and industrialisation despite the fact that much of it was going on relatively close by in 1981/2. The villages were still very successful agriculturally, transport was not yet well enough developed for commuting, and non-agricultural employment opportunities were not yet near enough.

By 1996, problems had developed in agriculture and non-agricultural activities had become more accessible. *Thottam farmers* had invested heavily in compressor pumps and submersibles that could draw water from much greater depths, but these produced smaller quantities of water than before. As the irrigation crisis developed, labour costs rose too. *Thottam farmers* responded by moving into crops that were both less labour-intensive and less irrigation-intensive, and planned for their sons to move out of agriculture in future.

Thottam farmers, defined here as those operating well-fed land on a scale sufficient to justify the employment of permanent labour, formed an oligarchic elite. They made up 12% of village households in 1981/2 and owned 41% of the village land (Table 1). They were not large landowners. The majority of *thottam farmers* had holdings between 5 and 12.5 acres; the largest (not in the sample) had 40. Small farmers, most of whom had less than 5 acres, did not have enough well-fed land to justify the employment of permanent labour. They were more numerous than *thottam farmers*, making up 23% of village households in 1981/2 (Table 1).

¹⁰ Detailed figures are given in Tables at the end of the paper. Many of the statements made in the text are based on statistics drawn from the sample data.

Households headed by agricultural labourers, with or without small areas of land, were more numerous still, making up a larger proportion (42%) of village households than those headed by *thottam* and small farmers combined. *Chakkiliyans* were the attached labourers, or farm servants, in this area. *Pannadis* were the other large Scheduled Caste group, many of whom were migrant agricultural labourers crushing sugar cane elsewhere as well as working within the study villages. *Caste Hindu* labourers were higher status casual labourers with more room for manouvre than the two Scheduled Caste labourer groups (Heyer, 2000, focuses on these labourer groups).

By 1996 the number of *thottam farmers* had fallen, as had the number of small farmers. There were more non-agricultural enterprises in the villages, e.g. a small workshop, a groundnut oil extractor, a unit producing elastic for underwear. There were also more commuters, and more state employees.

3. THOTTAM FARMER ACTIVITIES IN 1981/2

Agriculture

Agriculture was a very profitable activity for *thottam farmers* over the decades prior to 1981/2 which was a period of substantial intensification of agriculture. The irrigated area increased significantly. The irrigated area was also irrigated more intensively than before. Village level figures show 37% of the cultivated area irrigated (Table 2), 35% by wells, in 1979/80.¹¹ (The remaining 2% was tank irrigated. The tank irrigated land does not feature in the study sample at all.) The percentage of *thottam farmers'* land that was irrigated was much greater than that of the village as a whole. It was 58% in 1981/2.

There was less grazing land, and less dryland available for rainfed cropping over time. Only 7% of the cultivable area was uncultivated in 1979/80 in the revenue village in the study for which figures are available. None of this was grazing land. Livestock were fed mainly on crop residues.

Table 2 shows cropping patterns in the villages from 1975/76 to 1980/81. The principal irrigated crops were cotton and groundnuts. A whole range of minor crops were irrigated as well. The area under cotton fell from 68% in 1975/76 to 44% of the irrigated land in 1980/81. The area under sugarcane increased from 8% in 1975/76 to 29% of the irrigated land in 1980/81. Coconuts were another valuable crop grown in association with irrigation. Many of the coconut palms were planted along the edges of irrigated plots, near irrigation channels and wells. Sorghum and groundnuts had long been the major dryland crops. They were responsible for 46% and 37% of dryland respectively in 1980/81.

¹¹ Land use figures are available for the revenue village from which about half of the households in the study came for the years preceding 1981/2. In the other revenue village they would have been very similar.

Livestock played an important role, as a source of draught power for cultivation and for transport, and as a source of manure. Milk was used for domestic consumption only in *thottam farmer* households.

The use of purchased inputs of all kinds increased from the early 1950s, well before the increase associated with the green revolution in paddy growing areas.¹² By 1981/2 farmers in Coimbatore district had a reputation for very high levels of use of purchased inputs, some too high. Crop yields and returns increased, but farmers had difficulty keeping up with the increased costs of production (B.Harriss, 1984).

As agriculture became more intensive, and traditional relationships with *pannayaal* (permanent labourer) supervisors weakened, *thottam farmers* became more continuously involved in farming operations on a day to day basis. The control of labour was crucial to success as was the management of relationships with markets for outputs, inputs and finance. There were rewards to successful entrepreneurial activity associated with *thottam farming*, but it was risky, and it was hard work. By 1981/2 one of the main complaints of *thottam farmers* was that they had to be so continuously involved that they "could not be away even for a day". Their role as hardworking farmers working alongside their labourers intensified with the development of agriculture in the decades preceding 1981/2.

The capitalisation of agriculture was reflected in the value of land, land improvements, and wells, and in buildings and equipment.¹³ Land improvements included drainage, levelling, bunding, and building up soil fertility by carting soil taken from waste land and the banks of rivers and tanks, and by applying manure. Investment in wells involved excavating substantial quantities of hard granite rock, and, from the 1970s, sinking bores through the rock to reach water at greater depths than before.

Irrigation was fully mechanised in 1981/2. All irrigation water was lifted by pumpsets, powered by electricity. There was very little mechanisation other than in irrigation however. Less than 5% of the *thottam farmers* in the study villages owned or used tractors. The most expensive items of equipment owned by many *thottam farmers* were sugar cane crushers.¹⁴ The most substantial physical assets owned by 1981/2 *thottam farmers* other than land and wells, and the very occasional tractor, were buildings. Livestock holdings were relatively small: an average of 2.9 bullocks, 2.9 cows and 2.0 buffaloes, in 1981/2. Just under 20% of *thottam farmer* households also had motorcycles in 1981/2.

¹² In Tamil Nadu as a whole, fertiliser consumption rose from 2kg/ha in 1961/62 to 67kg/ha in 1984/85 (MIDS, 1988).

¹³ Estimates of the relative value of different classes of assets are available for Coimbatore District in 1970/71-1972/73 from the AERC Studies in Farm Management (quoted in Kurien, 1981, p78). They give the relative importance of different assets as: land 60-75% of the value of all assets in different holding size groups; wells 12-14%; and dwellings 6-11%. Gold, tools, implements and equipment; animals; and agricultural buildings; each made up less than 7% of the total. The proportions were probably not too different for *thottam farmer* households in the study villages in 1981/2.

¹⁴ A tractor cost Rs.100,000 in 1981/2. Sugar cane crushers cost about Rs.10,000 in 1981/2. The most expensive of the other items (pumpsets and powersprayers) cost less than Rs.5000 each.

Land

The distribution of land owned by *thottam farmer* households in the sample in 1981/2 is shown in Table 3a. These holdings were not large, averaging 6.6 acres *thottam* and 4.8 acres dry land. A few households were classified as *thottam farmers* because they employed *pannayals* (permanent labourers) despite their small areas of land. In one case the household concerned was leasing *thottam* land from the temple.

Thottam land varied from relatively poor land with very little irrigation, to high quality land with substantial irrigation that had been the subject of a great deal of investment over time. There was a continuous process of land improvement going on on many holdings. *Thottam* land on the market was changing hands at Rs.10,000-15,000 per acre in 1981/2. Much of the most valuable did not come onto the market though.

Much of the best dryland, both in terms of soil and in terms of location, had been converted into *thottam land* by 1981/2. Dryland was changing hands at Rs.5000-7000 per acre in 1981/2, more if in a good location and if suitable for conversion to *thottam*, less if not.

Large landowners, who farmed *thottam* land and rented out large areas of dryland, had virtually disappeared from the villages by 1981/2. Houses in the villages, some run down, attested to the presence of the 'big families' of the past. There were many factors that made it less easy for large landowners to maintain the required degree of control over the production process in the 1960s and 1970s. Agriculture had become technically and commercially more demanding. It had become increasingly important for *thottam* farmers to be closely involved on a continuous basis. It had become increasingly difficult to keep returns ahead of costs (B.Harriss, 1984; Guruswamy, 1985).

1981/2 *thottam farmers* were an elite with smaller holdings than their predecessors. Earlier generations had been regarded as capital intensive farmers by the standards of the time, but they were much less so than the generation of the 1960s and 1970s. By 1981/2 *thottam farmers* were getting high returns from relatively small holdings. They were using the land much more intensively than before.

There was considerably dynamism among 1981/2 *thottam farmers* in the decades preceding 1981/2. They had been investing very significantly in land, land improvements and wells. The holdings of 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households of land alone had doubled over the previous generation. Much of this land had come from the large holdings of land that had come onto the market in the decades preceding 1981/2 as some of the wealthiest households sold land, many of them selling out completely and moving to the towns. Some 1981/2 *thottam farmer* land also came from the sales of smaller landholders. The increased proportions of irrigated land resulting from the increased investment following electrification in the 1950s and 1960s was very significant. The trend was towards smaller, more manageable holdings in general.

It was possible for households starting with no land at all to build *thottam farms* up from virtually nothing in one generation or less if they came from the right social group. A few people had returned to the villages to become *thottam farmers* when their urban businesses failed.

Despite losing all their capital, they had been able to rebuild their *thottam farmer* status, gradually, using family and other connections with the village elite. These rags to riches stories made it clear that it was membership of the right social group that was a pre-requisite to entry into *thottam farmer* status as much as anything else. Others who had built *thottam farmer* holdings up from nothing had started from nothing because their fathers had gone bankrupt.

More than 80% of the 1981/2 *thottam farmers* in the sample were from families that had been large farmers either in the previous generation or in the previous generation but one. The 20% that not been part of the landowning elite in preceding or earlier generations were all *Chettians* from produce trading and/or processing families. Some had moved to the urban areas after building up successful trade and processing businesses in the villages in the 1960s and 1970s. Others had moved into the landowning elite in the villages. For those who had become *thottam farmers*, *thottam farming* was the most important activity in 1981/2.

Wells

The large open wells that were characteristic of the area were one of the keys to *thottam farmer* success in 1981/2. They were also risky, and problematic.

The 1950s to the 1970s period of heavy investment in irrigation in the study villages and elsewhere represented the replacement of the old *kavalai* system of lifting water with bullock power was replaced by electrified pumpsets. Electric pumpsets enabled more water to be lifted from lower levels; it also enabled wells to be dug where they would not otherwise have been viable.

The growth of electrified wells was at its height in Coimbatore district in the 1960s. It continued, at a decreased rate, through the 1970s, by the end of which 41% of the land under cultivation in the district was irrigated. About half of all the wells in operation on *thottam farmer* holdings in the sample in 1981/2 were dug in the 1960s and 1970s.

There were serious worries about the falling water table in the 1970s. It became much more expensive to dig wells and the returns to doing so declined.

Shortages of water had been getting more serious for a long time. According to one estimate the water table dropped an average of 16.5 metres between 1928/29 and 1968/69 in Coimbatore district. Other studies by the Tamil Nadu Groundwater Board showed that 'the lowering of the water table has been in the order of 1 metre every year during the decade ending in 1977' (Sivanappan and Aiyasamy, 1978, p21). This was attributed to a combination of factors including increased run-off and poor conservation measures, as well as patterns of agricultural production that involved both more extensive and more intensive use of irrigation over time (Sivanappan and Aiyasamy, op.cit.).

Despite the worries over the declining water table, electricity was heavily subsidised in 1981/2. Electricity connections were quick and easy to obtain. The supply of electricity was limited however. It was only available at certain hours of the day and night in 1981/2 when a great deal of irrigation was taking place at night.

Thottam farmers had an average of just under 1 well each in 1981/2. Moreover, 50% of their wells and 30% of their total well capacity was in shared wells in 1981/2. This led to problems.

Well shares came about as a consequence of the system of inheritance according to which each son was entitled to a share of his father's property and well(s). Few of the 1981/2 *thottam* farmers had been able to dig or acquire enough wells to enable more than one son to inherit undivided wells. In earlier generations this would not have been a problem. Sons would have gone on to dig their own wells without much difficulty. It was as well digging became more expensive that the problem arose.

Each of these large open wells represented a very substantial investment. The cost averaged about Rs.30,000 in the 1960s and Rs.50,000 in the early 1970s (supported by government loans of Rs.10,000 until these were stopped in 1973). The cost was approaching Rs.100,000 (1 *lakh*) in 1981/2, when government loans were no longer available. The increased cost was due both to rising labour costs and to the increased depth required. There was a high degree of risk associated with digging a new well. There were several instances of failure among sample households over the two or more decades preceding 1981/2.

Well depths varied considerably, as did the areas of land irrigated by each well. Whether water was available, and how deep, depended partly on the general area in which the land was located, partly on the particular site at which a well was dug.¹⁵ In 1981/2 most *thottam* farmers were getting water from wells that were from 60 to 120 feet deep. A handful near the tank were getting it from wells that were only 50 or 60 feet deep. Some had added 100 foot bores that increased the depth to as much as 220 feet. The amount of land irrigated by a single well varied from 2 to 16 acres in 1981/2, depending on the well's quality, and the intensity with which the land was irrigated.

As the water table fell, wells had to be deepened, and new wells had to be dug to replace old wells that ran dry. New wells were also dug to avoid well-sharing.

There was no control over where new wells were dug. When a neighbour dug or deepened a well, or even began extracting water at a greater rate, what was once an adequate source of irrigation water could suddenly become problematic. This was costly for all, and particularly serious for those who could not afford the investment required to keep up. A common property solution could have averted the self-defeating competition for limited water. This was not even being discussed in 1981/2.

Buildings

Eighty five percent of the 1981/2 *thottam* farmers were living in *thottam* houses in 1981/2, many lavish, many built relatively recently. The other 15% were living in village houses many of which were substantial and most of which were older. There were a number of

¹⁵ The granite geological formation meant that there were pockets of water, rather than continuous water reservoirs under the rock.

deserted houses in the villages, some falling down, some in a run down state, some still being used not as dwellings but as stores. There were a few that were being rented out as dwellings, or "given free" to labourers or other dependants. The rental market was thin.

Substantial investment in buildings took place in the 1960s and 1970s, as large farmers moved to their *thottams*, sometimes keeping their village houses as well, sometimes abandoning village houses in favour of new *thottam houses*. It became increasingly advantageous to live on *thottams*, in order to supervise agriculture closely, and to reduce the costs of transporting and/or guarding inputs, stored crops, agricultural equipment and livestock. *Thottam houses* were also often more spacious and more airy than houses in the village, and they had better water supplies. Those with *thottams* close to the villages still tended to stay in the villages though, as did one or two of those with school-age children whose *thottams* were far off.

Nearly all of the households in the 1981/2 *thottam farmer* sample had built substantial, spacious, stone houses, in the 1960s and the 1970s even though not all were living in these. Many had also built cattle sheds, and stores costing as much as dwellings. Most of the houses cost between Rs.30,000 and Rs.50,000 at 1982 prices¹⁶. The most expensive of all, a village house not in the sample, cost Rs.100,000 in 1981/2. This was the only house resembling a modern town house in the study villages. At the other extreme, were one or two single roomed buildings that were parts of extended family complexes, costing Rs.10-15,000 each.

Buildings were major investments, the majority costing about half as much as a new well, or about as much as the purchase price of 4 acres of fully developed *thottam land*. Houses served as dwellings, and as stores. They were also important status symbols. The house being built for Rs.100,000 was being built prior to a daughter's marriage. The *thottam farmer* concerned was taking his daughter out of school because he could not afford her school fees as well as the house. He thought the house more important if he was to marry her successfully. Others built houses before the marriages of sons, both as status symbols, and to provide separate dwellings for married sons.

Finance

Most *thottam farmer* investment (and very substantial quantities of working capital) was financed out of profits in 1981/2. Dowry gold also played a part.¹⁷ Formal credit was important in these villages in the 1960s and 1970s, but it played only a minor role as far as *thottam farmers* were concerned. They used it to finance small amounts of working capital.

Many *thottam farmers* made a point of not borrowing at all. About a quarter of the *thottam farmers* in the sample had never borrowed and said that they never would, stating that

¹⁶ Using a deflator of 7% per annum.

¹⁷ Dowry gold was used for short-term crop finance, and as a security for short-term loans. It was sometimes also used to finance the purchase of land, and the digging of wells, but this was usually done in the name of sons rather than fathers, dowry gold being regarded as sons' not fathers' property. At the very least, dowry gold was an important form of insurance, enabling a *thottam farmer* household to take risks and extend itself further than it otherwise would.

this was a matter of principle, or honour. Many others were wary of over-extending themselves. Others accepted much less than banks offered them. Most of the three quarters or so who had borrowed at some stage had had loans that were relatively small. It was not surprising that there was such reluctance to borrow, given the risks involved. The history of bankruptcy and default in the area was a salutary reminder of the dangers faced by all.¹⁸

Two *thottam farmer* households in the sample had large debts however. One was a household that had got heavily into debt as a result of digging a failed well. (The loan was foreclosed in 1985 with serious consequences for the sons as well as for the father in the household concerned.) The other household had accumulated a debt of Rs.40,000, from relatives and friends, on comparatively easy terms, to buy 4 acres of dry land. The household concerned had also put considerable sums into developing its existing holding. In 1981/2 the household head talked of selling the 4 acres of dryland again, if necessary, to repay the loans that were proving difficult to pay off. (In the event the household turned to cattle trading and had still not sold the land by 1996 when the household was doing well and was even more extended financially than it had been in 1981/2.)

Thottam farmers who financed all, or nearly all, of their activities themselves were regarded by others as over-cautious, or not very entrepreneurial. Some of the even less entrepreneurial *thottam farmers* used surpluses for low interest moneylending, or for buying gold ahead of marriages. The more entrepreneurial *thottam farmers* felt that there were "too many good uses" for there to be any cash to spare for such things as these. Relatively small amounts went into consumption. Day to day consumption levels were very low, though expenditures on ceremonies, gifts, and transfers were substantial, and substituted to some extent for this. Many consumer goods, and much of the rather simple clothing possessed by members of *thottam farmer* households, were acquired as gifts associated with festivals and life-cycle ceremonies. There were very few furnishings or consumer durables of any value in *thottam farmer* houses. Electrical goods such as fans and refrigerators were rare. There were none in the households in the sample.

Non-agricultural activities

There were not many non-agricultural activities that could be combined with successful *thottam farming*, nor any that could really compete successfully as alternatives to *thottam farming* for those residing in the villages in 1981/2. Most activities that were attractive alternatives to agriculture as far as 1981/2 *thottam farmers* were concerned involved moving to the towns. Some had done this, selling out in the villages to raise the capital to do so.

Three quarters of the 1981/2 *thottam farmer* sample concentrated exclusively on *thottam farming*. The rest combined *thottam farming* with other activities, *thottam farming* remaining the dominant activity. Activities that combined successfully with agriculture in 1981/2

¹⁸ One *thottam farmer* explained that people did not want to dig new wells with loans as "they might fail and then they might lose reputation". A *thottam farmer* in the sample had dug a well with a loan and the well had failed (see below).

included cotton and groundnuts trade; input distribution; moneylending; and labour contracting for public works. Village *munsiffs* (tax collectors) also combined their official positions with *thottam farming*.¹⁹ One or two *thottam farmers* had organised Chit Funds in the past, but there were very few of these in existence in 1981/2. One or two were considering groundnut oil extraction.²⁰ One or two were considering setting up powerloom enterprises. *Thottam farmers* who engaged only in *thottam farming* were doing as well as those combining it with other activities in 1981/2.

Summary on *thottam farmer* activities in 1981/2

It was only relative to others in the villages that the *thottam farmer* elite could be considered a wealthy group in 1981/2. At a regional or national level they would not have been regarded as very wealthy at all. They had a frugal life-style, with large spacious stone houses, and good domestic water supplies, but very few consumer durables. Their everyday patterns of consumption and styles of dress were simple. They spent substantially on festivals and ceremonies, and on gold jewellery (which played an important role in household finances). They used most of the surpluses they had for re-investment, in agriculture and a few related activities. They also invested in social relationships, in particular through their children's marriages and festivals and ceremonies.

We now look at the way in which *thottam farmers* were investing in their sons, and their daughters, in 1981/2. These were important parts of their overall accumulation strategies. An important aspect of this is that while sons were thought of as a continuation of the household in this community, daughters were not. Investments in daughters were considered to contribute only very indirectly to their natal household. Much of what was invested in daughters was considered a waste, albeit a necessary waste.

4. THOTTAM FARMER SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN 1981/2

Thottam farmers provided for their sons primarily through their investments in land and wells, and buildings, all of which would be inherited by sons in due course. They provided for their daughters by marrying them well. This was regarded as crucial, even though expenditure on daughters was considered a drain.

Before considering what was happening to sons and daughters in *thottam farmer* households in 1981/2, we consider how many sons and daughters there were. One of the more striking things about *thottam farmers* in the study villages in 1981/2 was the relatively small

¹⁹ This position was abolished in 1985 after which tax collection became the responsibility of village administrative officers appointed on the basis of their educational qualifications rather than on a hereditary basis. They combined tax collecting with other duties. None of the village administrative officers were *thottam farmers* or members of the village elite in the sense used here.

²⁰ Some had done this in the past (and others were doing it again in 1996). None were actually doing this in 1981/2.

numbers of children they had. Even more striking was the small number of daughters relative to sons.

Table 4 shows the numbers of children surviving at least up to marriage for completed families of couples in 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households and their descendants in the sample. The mean for couples with completed families who married in 1955 and before was 3.5; the mean for those married between 1955 and 1975 was 1.9.²¹ The large majority (80%) in the earlier period had 3 or 4 children. The majority married between 1955 and 1975 had 1 or 2. These numbers of children per couple are low. They are similar to those that have been observed in some other agricultural communities with limited resources, particularly land (cf. Clark, 1983, and others on Indian agricultural communities that have limited their numbers very deliberately over specific periods in recent history).

The relatively small numbers of children in *thottam farmer* households in the study villages predated the family planning programme which was very influential in Tamil Nadu in the 1960s, and even more so in the 1970s and after. The first women in *thottam farmer* households in the sample to be sterilised were sterilised in the 1970s.

The majority of *thottam farmers* in the sample had 1-2 surviving sons. Nearly 50% of the couples with completed families in *thottam farmer* households in 1981/2, and nearly all married between 1955 and 1975, had only one son. This left them with the considerable risk that the one son would die or not do well.²² They were also foregoing diversification and economies of scale advantages by having only one son. There were enormous advantages to having only 1 son however if that son survived and did well.

In 1981/2 most *thottam farmers* aimed to set their sons up as *thottam farmers*, mainly by providing them with land and wells. It was difficult to provide adequate land and wells for more than one son. Families were likely to be more successful if there was only one son, or at most two.

Three quarters of the couples with completed families in *thottam farmer* households in 1981/2, and all married between 1955 and 1975, had either 1 daughter or none. The ratio of surviving daughters to surviving sons for couples in 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households in the sample (i.e. those married before 1975) was 0.68²³. This ratio is extremely low.

²¹ Completed families are defined as those in which the youngest child was 7 or over in 1996, or in which the wife had been sterilised in 1996. An arbitrary cut-off point of marriage before 1976 is used to distinguish what was happening in 1981/2 and before from what happened after 1981/2.

²² There were enough examples of sons dying young even in *thottam farmer* households for this to be a very real risk in 1981/2. There was also a risk that a son would not study well, or play the role expected of him. If there were only daughters in *thottam farmer* households they would be married to husbands who would inherit and take the place of sons in the daughters' parents' household. If there were no children at all, a close relative, usually a nephew, would be adopted and take the position of a son.

²³ The figures refer to offspring that survived at least up to marriage. All such offspring were included no matter where they lived. There are possible biases in the data. (i) Although considerable care was taken to elicit full information, it is possible that there was some underenumeration, and that this was more serious for daughters than for sons. (ii) Some

It is relatively easy to control the total numbers of children per couple. To ensure a sex ratio favouring boys is much more difficult. To achieve this it is necessary for more girls than boys to die at some stage between conception and maturity. There was no direct evidence of female infanticide in the study villages.²⁴ Nor was there any evidence of foeticide in or near the study villages in 1981/2. It seemed likely that lower female survival rates resulted from lack of care. Whatever the means, sex ratios very strongly unfavourable to girls were being achieved in *thottam farmer* households in these villages in 1981/2 (see Heyer, 1992, for a fuller discussion of this).

Providing for daughters involved *thottam farmer* households in very substantial 'investment', investment on a similar or greater scale to that associated with sons. However, it was an investment most of the benefit of which would accrue to other households. It was important for households to be seen to be doing well by daughters. But daughters were considered a drain on their parents' households and this was something that had very serious consequences as far as girls in *thottam farmer* households such as these were concerned.

Sons' Education and Occupations

Most *thottam farmers* were providing for sons with land and wells rather than with education and capital to set them up in non-agricultural occupations in 1981/2. Only a handful of *thottam farmers* in the villages had undertaken the investment involved in higher education for their sons. In 1981/2 the relatively few households that were doing this to enable sons to go into non-agricultural occupations were among the highest accumulators of land and wells, not the lowest. Educating sons for alternative occupations went together with unusual degrees of success in *thottam farming* not the reverse. The majority of 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households however, were not considering non-agricultural occupations seriously for their sons at all in 1981/2.

Some education was considered useful for *thottam farming*. Most of the older generation of *thottam farmers* had had some primary education. The village elite in the 1950s, led by *Naidus*, had lobbied intesively for a High School because they wanted more than primary education for their sons. They were successful in getting a High School set up in one of the villages in 1960.²⁵ Many *thottam farmer* sons had attended that school. The first class sat

wives with only female children were rejected (although it is clear from a complete enumeration of all the wealthiest large farmers in 2 of the hamlets that this did not always happen). There are also possible sources of bias in the other direction. (iii)The small farmer group included households that would have been classified as large farmers were it not for the fact that they had large numbers of daughters. (iv)Surviving up to marriage was a more stringent criterion for sons than for daughters who married at a younger age. Thus there are elements of underestimation as well as elements of overestimation of the extent of anti-female bias in these figures.

²⁴ Female infanticide has been documented on a significant scale, both among high income groups and among low income groups, in Tamil Nadu (see George et al., 1992; Athreya et al., 1997; Harriss-White, 1997; e.g.).

²⁵ The High School catered for Standards VI-XI, and then VI-X. SSLC was taken at the end of Standard XI until 1977, and at the end of Standard X thereafter.

for SSLC in 1966. For a decade or more the school had a good SSLC record. In 1981/2, however, it was doing less well.

Few *thottam farmers* sent their children to schools outside the villages in 1981/2 although it was recognised that the quality of education that their children received was likely to be considerably better if they did so. The cost of sending a child away to school in the absence of suitably placed relatives was considered high, at Rs.3000-5000 p.a. in 1981/2.

Higher education²⁶, education beyond SSLC, involved a substantial financial commitment. A B.A. or B.Com. degree took 5-7 years or more after SSLC, and it meant staying in hostels unless suitably placed relatives were available.

In 1981/2 the level of education to which most *thottam farmer* households aspired for their sons was Standard X or XI. Many did not feel that their sons needed to pass, or even to sit, the SSLC examination, but they valued the 10 or so years in school. A minority of *thottam farmer* sons had gone further than SSLC in 1981/2. This can be seen in Table 5 which shows levels of education by age for male members of 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households and their descendants in 1996. Table 5 shows that the majority aged 30-40 in 1996, who would have been aged 15-25 in 1981/2, and all older than that, had SSLC or less. A significant minority in the age group that was 15-25 in 1981/2 had more than SSLC though.

The only son from a *thottam farmer* household in the sample in an occupation not combined with *thottam farming* in 1981/2 was a Tiruppur clerk who had a B.Sc. degree (Table 6a). One or two others from *thottam farmer* households in the sample had recently completed higher education and were looking for employment. A son who had passed his SSLC was the Secretary of the Milk Cooperative. There were also sons from ex-trader families, most with very little education or none, who were going into trade or business. One of the sons from an ex-trader family had started a Teacher Training course and then gone back into agriculture. The majority were expected to go into agriculture in 1981/2, with SSLC or less.

Summary on sons in 1981/2

There were strikingly small numbers of sons in *thottam farmer* households in the study villages in 1981/2. The majority were going into agriculture, with SSLC or less. A minority were going further with education and/or into non-agricultural occupations. This was a community with confidence in agriculture, looking towards a future in agriculture, in 1981/2.

Daughters' Education and Marriages

The marriage system changed radically in the decades preceding 1981/2, from a system dominated by cross-cousin marriage, in which dowries barely featured at all, to a system in which marriage outside the family was common, and significant dowries were paid (Heyer, 1992). It might have been thought that this would have reduced the ability of *thottam farmers* to concentrate economic power in closely related kin groups, as maintained in much of the

²⁶ PUC, Diploma, Teacher Training, and Bachelors and Masters degrees.

anthropological literature which suggests that this is such a strong feature of cross-cousin marriage systems (Goody and Tambiah, 1973; Bourdieu, 1977; et al.). It did not seem to be the case that the move to a dowry system was weakening the strong and cohesive position of *thottam farmers* here. Indeed it may have strengthened it, making it even more effective in concentrating capital and economic power in the economic environment of the time. The new system made it possible to concentrate power and capital within small groups, but the membership of such groups was not as limited as before. The new system widened the choice of alliances that could be made. The fact that *thottam farmers* had fewer sons may also have been a factor making them less reluctant to look for marriage alliances with households that were not close relatives. As property was not being dissipated among so many sons they could afford to branch out in a way in which they had not been willing to before.

What was considered important as far as *thottam farmer* daughters were concerned was to marry them into high status families with good reputations, usually with large dowries attached. *Thottam farmers* made huge efforts to achieve this. They spent very considerable sums in the process.

Very few *thottam farmer* households in the sample saw daughters' education as a route to valuable marriages in the urban areas or elsewhere in 1981/2. *Thottam farmer* daughters were all still being married within the rural community where potential husbands could not be expected to have much education themselves. It could be difficult to find a suitable bridegroom for an educated bride. This helped to explain why at most a limited amount of secondary education was considered by most *thottam farmers* to be appropriate for daughters in 1981/2. In 1981/2, all of the women aged 30 or over in *thottam farmer* households had never been to school at all (Table 7). Those between 20 and 30 had had varying degrees of education, ranging from none to some secondary (Table 7). The first two daughters in *thottam farmer* households in the sample to reach SSLC did so in 1980. One of these subsequently went on to complete the two years following SSLC (Plus 2).

Seclusion was an issue for girls' secondary schooling. Girls who were sent to secondary school were often taken out at the onset of puberty or earlier. This prevented them from completing secondary school. One of the three with SSLC had been sent to stay with relatives in Coimbatore for Standards VI-X.

In *thottam farmer* households getting daughters married could be thought of as equivalent to setting up sons in agriculture or in non-agricultural occupations. Good marriages for daughters were considered important in their own right. They were also considered important as a status symbol or statement, important for sons. Nevertheless, they were a significant drain on the household. While it was considered better not to have daughters, and certainly not to have more than one, for the daughters they had it was important to do well, and be seen to do well (see Heyer, 1992).

Daughters were not thought of as part of the next generation, but as belonging, once married, to other households, families, lineages. Their marriages were important for the self-respect, reputation, standing in the community of their natal households. Also for connections. Another reason for getting daughters married into households that were doing well was that

natal households had responsibility for daughters throughout their lives. This meant that if daughters' households were not doing well it was to their natal households that they would go for help. Some *thottam farmer* households in the study had received very significant help from in-laws for reasons such as these. An example is a *thottam farmer* in the 1981/2 sample who had had a business in Coimbatore that had failed and who had then been set up again by his wife's brother and father as a *thottam farmer*.

As in other village societies (ref Dyson and Moore, 1983, et al.), social status was of overriding importance for *thottam farmers*. Spending substantially on daughters' marriages and dowries, and/or successfully marrying daughters into high status households, confirmed, re-established, or raised, households' reputations. Not spending substantially on daughters' marriages lowered households' reputations. Households with marriageable daughters could not avoid the fact that daughters' marriages made important statements. Having marriageable daughters was a much more substantial liability than it would have been were this not the case.

Expenditures associated with daughters' marriages were substantial and there was relatively little flexibility with respect to their timing. (Most daughters in 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households were married between the ages of 17 and 23.) Some households incurred sizeable additional expenditures that they might not otherwise have incurred to maintain the reputation or prestige necessary to marry daughters well. The most obvious of these were expenditures on housing referred to earlier. The most significant expense directly associated with marriage was the dowry payment which was highly visible and identifiable. Other expenditures were associated with marriage ceremonies and the gift-giving that went with these. A great deal of clothing and many consumer durables were acquired as gifts associated with marriage. Bridegrooms received watches, radios, bicycles, and even motorcycles from their in-laws. Clothing was given to different family members too. In the early years of marriage responsibility for clothing daughters and their husbands was often taken over completely by daughters' parents ("son and wife being clothed by in-laws"). There were also expenditures associated with ceremonies that occurred after marriage and well into the lifecycle of the next generation. There were often contributions to the marriages of granddaughters, and/or the education of grandsons, for example. The relationship between natal households and their daughters was an open-ended, continuing relationship involving expenditures throughout the daughters' lives (cf. Randeria and Visaria, 1984, inter alia).

Dowries were by far the most substantial of the expenditures incurred at the time of a daughter's marriage, though it was easy for expenditures over a lifetime to add up to more than the original dowry payments in total.

Table 8a shows the distribution of dowries, measured in gold *pavans* (sovereigns), for daughters of *thottam farmers* and *ex-thottam farmers* in the sample. None was less than 20 *pavans*. The majority were between 20 and 35; one or two were 40 or more; the highest was 75. These represented very considerable sums, ranging from Rs.28,000 to Rs.105,000 at 1981/2 prices. It looked as if there was a norm, and *thottam farmers* felt that they had to keep up with it. This made it difficult for the less wealthy particularly.

There was some tendency for dowries to increase over time, more noticeable in the figures including incoming dowries associated with the marriages of household heads and their sons (see Table 8b) than in the figures on daughters' dowries. There were some dowries that were very high early as well as late though.

For daughters of 1981/2 *thottam farmers* married before 1981/2, the mean dowry (32.1 *pavans*) was comparable to the value of 4 acres of fully developed thottam land, half a well, or a substantial stone house. This was a very sizeable sum, much more so when one considers all the other expenses that were added to it. There were *ex-thottam farmer* households in the larger sample that had become small farmers or worse, because their finances had got overextended through dowry and other expenses associated with daughters' marriages. It was the least well off, and least well-established in terms of status, that had to spend the most and found this hardest to do. Even for the wealthiest, daughters' marriages could be a problem though.

Some households took the marriages of daughters more seriously than others. Some needed to or wanted to make particularly strong status statements. Some chose to marry their daughters into higher status families and had to pay high dowries to do so. Some used their daughters' marriages to play for high stakes. There was marrying up as well as marrying down. Some of the really well connected married their daughters well without having to pay very high dowries or have very good economic positions at all. They married their daughters easily and/or cheaply because of past favours.

Summary on daughters' education and marriages

Most 1981/2 *thottam farmers* only had one daughter, and many had none. Daughters tended to have somewhat lower levels of education than sons. Daughters' marriages were expensive and considered a drain on the natal household. They were taken very seriously however. They had important bearings on the success or failure of households into which they were born.

Sons' Marriages

Sons' marriages were not considered nearly as important as daughters' marriages in themselves. A son's marriage would be a good one, both in terms of the dowry it brought in and in other terms, if the household had been successful. Sons' marriages brought dowries, transfers, connections, insurance, depending on how the household chose to play it as well as how well the household was placed and how well the household managed its strategy overall. The effort put into seeking a good bride and/or a good dowry, and the actual expenditure on the marriage itself, were considered relatively unimportant however. That the marriage was considered respectable was very important however. The bridegroom's family benefitted from being seen to be able to attract a well endowed bride from a well placed family. Moreover, the incoming dowry and other transfers was an advantage, albeit an advantage that was not very widely discussed.

There was much more flexibility with respect to the timing of sons' marriages than daughters'. Daughters were nearly always married first. Time then elapsed to allow the household to recover from a daughter's marriage before embarking on a son's. (Sons could be married at any age from the early 20s to the mid-30s without any shame being attached. Later than the mid-30s was considered shameful though.)

Dowries brought in by the wives of *thottam farmer* household heads and *thottam farmer* sons were more widely distributed than dowries paid for daughters, as Table 8b shows. The majority were 20 to 35 *pavans* as in the case of daughters, but there was also a large minority lower than 20, some considerably lower. There was a considerably greater spread.

There was a relationship between the numbers of daughters, their upbringing, and the marriage strategies adopted for them, on the one hand, and sons' marriages and inheritance (because of lifelong transfers to sisters) on the other. Sons' marriages and inheritance benefitted from households being seen to do well by daughters. But more daughters and better marriages and upbringing also meant that there was less left for sons. There were important questions relating to the distribution of household wealth between daughters' and their husbands' households on the one hand, and natal households and their sons on the other. Sons had a lifelong obligation to their sisters in these communities.

Summary on sons' marriages

It was important for the natal household for sons to marry well though there were wide variations in practice not obviously related to wealth et al. Dowries and other transfers could be a considerable help. Support from in-laws performed an important insurance role for major disasters particularly.

5. THOTTAM FARMER AND EX-THOTTAM FARMER ACTIVITIES IN 1996

This section considers the way in which *thottam farmers* had responded to the more difficult situation they faced in agriculture between 1981/2 and 1996.

All but one of the original 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households were still represented in the villages in 1996, and most of the sub-units in those still represented in the villages were still in the villages too. Only a very small number of sub-units from those still represented in the villages had migrated. The 26 1981/2 households still represented in the villages had become 40 households by 1996. Partition often took place very late in the life-cycles of these households. Some of the additional 14 households created by partition involved sons of couples married before 1955, in the generation in which more than 2 sons was not unusual. Other 2-son households were partitioned into 3, the father retaining a share temporarily. Three of the subdivided households within the 1996 group had gone to live elsewhere. That left 37 households which were members of the 1981/2 *thottam farmer* sample and their descendants in the villages in 1996. These 37 form the basis of the 1996 data.

The decline in the water table, already a problem in 1981/2, had become a major problem in the mid-1980s, turning a trend increase in irrigated area into a decrease over the

district as a whole.²⁷ The quality of irrigation also fell. Farmers invested heavily in new technology, which consisted of deep bores with compressor and submersible pumps that could draw water from great depths. These were expensive. Many of the bores were unsuccessful, and most of those that were successful produced much smaller quantities of water than before. Labour costs also rose between 1981/2 and 1996. Bananas replaced cotton and sugarcane on a large scale. There was virtually no increase in the mechanisation of field operations though.

Returns were generally much lower in agriculture in 1996 than they had been in 1981/2. Some *thottam farmers* did well, a few even better than before, by substantially increasing their irrigation investments in locations in which water was available if they spent enough and were willing to risk enough to reach it. Two or three farmers diversified within agriculture, one setting up a microdairy, another a poultry unit, another going in for tractor hire. Others diversified outside agriculture. Most could not themselves move out of their increasingly unsuccessful agriculture. They were leaving this to their sons. They were investing in their sons' education to enable them to do so.

Land

The distribution of land owned by 1981/2 *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households in 1996 is shown in Table 3b for the 1981/2 households and their descendants, ignoring partitions between 1981/2 and 1996. Table 3c shows the distribution for 1996 households remaining in the villages, after partition. Despite the decline in agriculture, most *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households acquired more land over the period from 1981/2 to 1996, at the same time as investing in non-agricultural alternatives for their sons. Only two households actually sold land, and very few neither bought nor sold. By the time partition had been taken into account, the mean holdings were back to just under the 1981/2 level, for significantly more households. There was some polarisation, a few ending up with a few significantly larger landholdings than in 1981/2. There was very little correlation with previous landholdings though.

The proportion of *thottam* land had declined from 58% to 47% between 1981/2 and 1996. This reflects the increasing difficulties with irrigation water but the figures understate the problem. Although people still distinguished strongly between '*thottam*' and 'dry' land, in practice the distinction was often blurred. There was a significant decrease in the intensity of irrigation on much of the land still classified as *thottam*, some of which was barely being irrigated at all in 1996.

People were beginning to hold on to dryland for its potentially increasing value for non-agricultural purposes in 1996. There were reports of expressions of interest from outsiders. There were also hopes of a new power station in the vicinity which might increase the possibilities further in future. Expectations of high returns to the sale of dry land were not yet

²⁷ Government of Tamil Nadu, Tamil Nadu Economic Appraisal, District figures.

affecting *thottam farmers* or *ex-thottam farmers* as much as some small farmers. They might do so in the future though.

Wells

Thottam farmers and *ex-thottam farmers* had sunk more wells, and despite the problems they had also bought more land with wells on it, since 1981/2. By the end of the 1980s many of the old open wells and pumpsets in the study villages were no longer producing any water. New technology involving borewells with compressors and submersibles, had been introduced. It was expensive, problematic, and produced much less water than under the previous system of open wells and pumpsets.

The first compressors and submersibles appeared in the district around 1985 and in the study villages in 1987. In 1996 67% of the undivided 1981/2 *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* household groups in the sample had compressors, and 11% had submersibles.

Those using compressors and submersibles were getting water from 450-550 feet. About half of the borewells were inside the old open wells, about half sunk from the surface at sites that were new.

People were going to tremendous lengths to find water. Many had sunk bores, some successful, some not. One household had dug very deep in July 1996 before giving up having failed to find water at 650 feet. Another household had spent 6 *lakhs* between 1989 and 1992 on 3 submersibles and the accompanying borewells. The household head was very pleased with the success of the investment. He was getting ample water in 1996. Another household had spent 1.3 *lakhs* on a submersible et al. since 1987. Expenditures on compressors and borewells tended to be lower. They varied from as little as Rs. 25,000 to nearly 1 *lakh*, both in the early 1990s.

A minority of *thottam farmers* and *ex-thottam farmers* from the 1981/2 sample were still using old open wells with conventional pumpsets. They had sunk more bores to enable them to do so. One household had sunk 13 bores and was getting water from 5. The wells were giving much less water than earlier though. One of the 1981/2 *thottam farmer* households was no longer irrigating at all.

Increased costs of labour

In 1996 labour costs were far higher than in 1981/2 (Heyer, 2000). Agricultural wages had risen 2-3 fold in real terms²⁸, and were now on a par with industrial wages for unskilled labour. In 1981/2 they had been well below.

Thottam farmers were using less *pannayal* (permanent) labour, more contract labour, and less casual labour in 1996 than they had been in 1981/2. Employers were treating labourers

²⁸ The increase was 2-3 fold if a wholesale price index was used to deflate the nominal figures. The increase would have been more than this if more appropriate deflators had been able to be used instead.

with more care in 1996 than they had done in 1981/2 (see Heyer, 2000, for a detailed discussion of this from the labourers' point of view). There was not much evidence of labour shortages however. Less labour was used as the extent and intensity of irrigation fell, and as less labour-intensive crops were substituted for crops that were more labour-intensive.

Buildings

One of the most marked differences between the period prior to 1981/2 and the subsequent period was that there was very little new building, and very little expenditure of any kind on housing, between 1981/2 and 1996. This contrasted strongly with the decades before 1981/2 when there had been so much substantial investment in housing. The 1960s and 1970s buildings had lasted well, some anticipating partition. It was significant that there was so little building or improvement in the 1981/2 to 1996 period nevertheless, given the number of new households that had been formed. More village as well as *thottam* houses were in use. One or two *thottam farmers* in the sample were even renting accommodation in 1981/2.

Finance

Thottam farmers continued to take out formal sector loans in 1996, but not much more so than in 1981/2. Many still took out small-scale loans for crop finance. A few had larger formal sector loans, one for a microdairy, another for a poultry unit and another for a tractor hire business. Some also had formal sector loans for non-agricultural businesses. Moreover, Chit Funds were back in favour in 1996, having been popular earlier, but not in 1981/2. *Thottam farmers* were committing themselves to paying Rs.1000 per month, or Rs. 2-3000 every 6 months, for up to 5 years. This enabled them to accumulate sums that were useful for large scale expenditures.

Non-Agricultural Activities

Although there had been so much industrial development in the region between 1981/2 and 1996, and there was so much more involvement in this by people residing in the villages in 1996, there was still relatively little non-agricultural activity in the villages themselves, and in particular relatively little run by *thottam farmers* or *ex-thottam farmers*. The major developments since 1981/2 were 5 powerlooms (all on *thottams*), 2 elastic factories (also on *thottams*), a knitwear factory (making men's underwear), a cotton seed mill, a khadi spinning and reeling mill, and a metal-working workshop. All but the last two were run by *thottam farmers* and *ex-thottam farmers*, one in the sample. The most successful of all of the non-agricultural entrepreneurs in the villages was an astrologer drawing customers from a wide geographical area in 1996. Also very successful was the cotton seed mill and associated cotton business built up by one of the *thottam farmers* in the sample who had been combining *thottam farming* with small amounts of cotton trading in 1981/2. Other successful *thottam farmer* investments were the elastic factories. The powerlooms were not as successful. There was also much more moneylending than before however. A number of *thottam farmers* and *ex-thottam farmers* were doing very well out of moneylending in 1996.

Summary on *thottam farmers* and *ex-thottam farmers* in 1996

Agriculture was distinctly less successful, with one or two notable exceptions. Only a small minority of *thottam farmers* had moved into non-agricultural activities. However, many of their sons were in non-agricultural occupations in 1996, and it was likely that more sons would be in future. Daughters were being married outside agriculture too. We consider what was happening to sons, and daughters, in 1996, next.

6. THOTTAM FARMER SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN 1996

The big change for sons in *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households in 1996 was that virtually all *thottam farmers* aimed to set them up in non-agricultural activities with substantial education and capital to start with. The big change for daughters was that higher education became valued, and even jobs, and that they were likely to move out of agriculture too.

The numbers of children in *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households remained low. There were considerably more couples with 2 sons again (Table 4). There were a few households with 2 daughters again, and also a higher proportion with none. The overall sex-ratio was more unfavourable to girls than ever, the larger number of boys more than offsetting the barely increased number of girls. In the 1980s and 1990s all women in *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households in the sample were sterilised once their families were completed. One had been sterilised after the birth of two daughters and no sons.

Sons' Education and Occupations

One of the most important differences between 1981/2 and 1996 was the occupations and the planned occupations of *thottam farmer* sons. Whereas in 1981/2 most *thottam farmers* were planning for sons going into agriculture, in 1996 most *thottam farmers* were making plans for their sons to go into non-agricultural activities, and most sons were doing so, or were on the way to doing so.

1996 *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households were providing sons with education and capital to set them up in non-agricultural occupations, rather than with land and wells for agriculture. Higher education was considered much more important in *thottam farmer* households in 1996 than it had been in 1981/2 (Table 5). Virtually all boys and young men under 20 years old were still in school, and most under 30 had finished their education with more than an SSLC. It was taking time to produce sons with the levels of education that would equip them to move into non-agricultural occupations successfully. It is not possible to create an educated pool of people overnight. In 1996, the process had only recently begun.

Most *thottam farmers* sent their children to schools in the villages in 1981/2. In 1996, sons (and some daughters) were being sent to English medium schools nearby in Annur for which there was a daily bus. Others were being sent further away (Coimbatore, Erode, et al.), staying with in-laws or at hostels. The daily bus trip to Annur took a lot out of the children

concerned. If it was too much, the options were to send children to a school with a hostel (one of the *thottam farmers* in the sample was doing this for his young sons right from the start of primary school, following the example of a *thottam farmer* outside the sample); to send children to relatives; or to send them to schools in the villages after all (one was doing this for a son for whom going to Annur had proved too much). There was noticeably less elite involvement in village schools in 1996, including in the High School. Scheduled Caste and other children were taking their place. (The fact that *Chettians*' had taken over the High School Parent Teachers Association from *Naidus* in 1995 was significant.)

Higher education still involved substantial financial commitments. Commuting was often possible in 1996, unlike in 1981/2. A new feature however was that capitation fees or "donations" of as much as 1 *lakh* could be required for a place on a higher education course. Since 1981/2, there were two more sons with bachelors degrees, one with a teacher training qualification, and three with Plus 2. More were on track for higher education though.

Table 6b shows the education and occupation of male members of *thottam farmer* households in 1996. One of the 1981/2 *thottam farmer* sons with a bachelors degree was a workshop owner, another a cotton businessman, a third a cotton trader, and a fourth, the Tiruppur clerk in 1981/2, was a mill supervisor in Coimbatore. The three who had completed Plus 2 were a Tiruppur clerk, and a millworker, and a cotton trader respectively. The Milk Society Secretary with SSLC was still the Milk Society Secretary. One or two with lower levels of education had become traders. The most educated of all, the son who had already got an M.Sc. before 1981/2, was one of the few *thottam farmers* who with his father was making a success of agriculture in 1996. He was from the household that had invested 6 lakhs in submersibles and bores which was still getting enough water in 1996 to be successful. Altogether, between a third and a half of the male members of *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households in the sample between the ages of 20 and 40 were in non-agricultural occupations in 1996.

One or two 1981/2 *thottam farmer* sons were doing more within agriculture too in 1996: one had started a microdairy, another (with primary schooling only) a poultry unit. The one with the microdairy, who had completed one of the two years following SSLC, had started running a workshop in Tiruppur but this had failed after a few years. He had returned home to do something enterprising within agriculture instead.

Summary on sons, sons' education and occupations

There were small numbers of sons still, but not quite as small numbers as in 1981/2. *Thottam farmers* were investing more in their sons' education with a view to their moving into non-agricultural occupations. Agriculture was no longer seen as a possibility for a successful future except for a very few. The move into non-agriculture was a slow process, however. Some had completed the move in 1996. More were on the way to doing so.

Daughters' Education and Marriages

By 1996 many *thottam farmers* and *ex-thottam farmers* were marrying or aspiring to marry their daughters in urban areas, where secondary education was a necessity, and higher education an advantage. It was not only in urban areas that education was considered an advantage either in 1996 however. Women's education was looked on much more positively by *thottam farmers* in rural areas too in 1996. There were more educated men to whom they could be married, educated husbands were themselves at a premium, and educated men wanted educated wives. It was much less likely that a potentially good marriage would involve a less educated man in 1996, than in 1981/2.

In 1981/2 there was one daughter from a *thottam farmer* household in the sample who had completed SSLC and started studying for Plus 2, which she subsequently completed. The other daughter who completed SSLC before 1981/2 did not take her education any further. In 1996, there were a daughter with a B.A., a daughter with a Diploma, a daughter with a Teacher Training qualification, and 2 more daughters with Plus 2 (Table 7). Moreover, all but one of the daughters under 18 in *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households in the sample were in school. The one who was not had already completed her SSLC.

Whereas in 1981/2 it would have been inconceivable that it might be considered appropriate for a daughter from a *thottam farmer* household to have an outside occupation, in 1996 this was conceivable too. One *thottam farmer* daughter was doing a typing course; another was pursuing a B.Com. with the intention of getting a job.

Daughters were marrying into urban and non-agricultural households in 1996. Dowries did not seem to have increased since 1981/2 (Table 8), but the numbers for whom there is information on dowries in the period between 1981/2 and 1996 are too small to draw any strong conclusions here. It is possible that dowries did not increase, however, partly because *thottam farmers* and *ex-thottam farmers* were not doing as well in 1996 as in 1981/2, and partly because dowries were no longer as important within the *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* community.

Summary on daughters in 1996

There were still small numbers of daughters in *thottam farmer* and *ex-thottam farmer* households in 1996. Daughters were getting more education though, and a few were getting jobs. Moreover, they were no longer confined to marrying into agricultural households in the rural areas. These changes were significant, both for the daughters themselves, and for their natal households.

7. CONCLUSION

In 1981/2, agriculture was doing well and *thottam farmers* looked forward to a bright future despite indications of problems ahead. They were a confident group, powerful in their own local domain. By 1996, this had changed. Agriculture had declined, and urban and industrial development in the vicinity was having more influence particularly on labour and on

labour costs. In 1996, many *thottam farmers* had sunk capital into a failing agriculture, and faced a difficult future, not well placed to take up alternative opportunities. Their power base depended strongly on agriculture, and their position in the villages. Their resources were depleted. They had to wait for their sons to take alternative routes, once they had been given the sort of start that would enable them to do so. Many of their sons were already making a start in non-agricultural activities. Others who would do so in future were still in education in 1996.

Some had already made successful moves out in 1996. A few were still doing well in agriculture. The majority, particularly but not only in the older generation, were doing much less well. A number of these were pinning their hopes for the future on their sons, and investing in ways that might make it possible for their sons to do well. A number were less optimistic.

There is a lot to learn here about investment in agriculture providing the capital for investment in non-agriculture. One way of doing this is for people to sell out to produce the capital to invest in non-agriculture. The other way of doing it is for people to maintain their agricultural base and invest in non-agriculture as well. This means finding enough capital to invest in non-agriculture without getting rid of agricultural capital, and having enough people to continue to run an agricultural base as well as a non-agricultural.

Table 1: Occupational Groups of Households and Shares of Land in 1981/2 Sample

	No. of Households	% of Households	Thottam Land	% of Dry Land	% of Total Land
Thottam Farmers	28	12	57	29	41
Small Farmers	53	23	37	45	42
Agricultural Labourers	96	42	0	7	4
Traditional Services	21	9	3	7	5
Modern Services	23	10	1	11	7
Non-Agric. Employment	9	4	2	1	2
All	230	100	100	100	100

Table 2: K Revenue Village, Cultivated Crops 1975/76 - 1980/81
(percentages of irrigated and dry areas)

	1975/76	1976/77	...	1978/79	1979/80	1980/81
<u>Irrigated</u>						
Cotton	68	67		60	41	44
Sugarcane	8	16		18	26	29
Turmeric	0	0		3	15	16
Groundnuts	1	1		4	5	6
Bananas	1	1		2	3	3
Tobacco	0	0		0	2	2
Coconut	1	1		1	2	2
Tapioca	0	0		0	0	0
Chillies	1	1		1	1	1
Mulberry	0	0		1	0	0
Paddy	8	7		3	1	2
Bullrush Millet	0	1		2	1	1
Sorghum	10	0		2	0	0
Finger Millet	1	2		2	0	0
Maize	0	0		1	0	0
Other veg/fruit	1	1		0	3	4
Other foodgr.	0	0		0	0	0
Total Irrigated	100	100		100	100	100
(% irrigated)	39	29		36	37	37
<u>Dry</u>						
Sorghum	49	53		40	46	46
Groundnut	35	32		34	38	37
Gingelly	0	0		9	3	4
Redgram	2	4		2	3	4
Greengram	1	1		2	2	3
Horsegram	2	2		3	2	2
Beans	2	2		2	2	3
Cotton	3	3		4	1	0
Castor	1	1		1	1	1
Blackgram	2	2		1	0	0
Other pulses	0	0		2	0	1
Other foodgr.	3	0		0	0	0
Total dry	100	100		100	100	100
(% dry)	61	71		64	63	63

Table 3a: 1981/2 Thottam Farmers: Land Distribution 1981/2

acres	< 2.5	2.5 < 5	5 < 7.5	7.5 < 10	10 < 12.5	12.5 < 15	15 < 17.5	17.5 < 20	20 < 22.5	22.5 < 25	25 < 27.5	27.5 < 30	30 < 32.5	32.5 < 35	35+	All
no. of HH	1	0	7	4	7	2	0	1	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	27
% of HH	4	0	26	15	26	7	0	4	11	0	7	0	0	0	0	99

Mean holdings: Median holding: 10 acres
 Thottam 6.6
 Dry 4.8 74% of the households had holdings of 5<12.5 acres
 Total 11.4
 %Thottam 58

Table 3b: 1981/2 Thottam Farmers and their Descendants (HH Groups*): Land Distribution 1996

acres	< 2.5	2.5 < 5	5 < 7.5	7.5 < 10	10 < 12.5	12.5 < 15	15 < 17.5	17.5 < 20	20 < 22.5	22.5 < 25	25 < 27.5	27.5 < 30	30 < 32.5	32.5 < 35	35+	All
no. of HH*	0	1	2	6	5	1	4	1	1	3	1	0	1	0	1	27
% of HH*	0	4	7	22	19	4	15	4	4	11	4	0	4	0	4	102

Mean holdings: Median holding: 12 acres
 Thottam 7.1
 Dry 7.9 52% of the household groups had holdings of 5<12.5 acres
 Total 15
 % Thottam 47

* HHGroups = descendants of 1981/2 Households ignoring partitioning into separate households

Table 3c: 1981/2 Thottam Farmers and their Descendants (Partitioned HH): Land Distribution 1996

acres	< 2.5	2.5 < 5	5 < 7.5	7.5 < 10	10 < 12.5	12.5 < 15	15 < 17.5	17.5 < 20	20 < 22.5	22.5 < 25	25 < 27.5	27.5 < 30	30 < 32.5	32.5 < 35	35+	All
no. of HH*	1	6	5	7	6	3	5	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	37
% of HH*	3	16	14	19	16	8	14	3	3	3	0	0	3	0	0	102

Mean holdings:

Median holding: 9.5 acres

Thottam 5.2

Dry 5.8

49% of the household groups had holdings of 5 < 12.5 acres

Total 11

% Thottam 47

Table 4: 1981/2 Thottam Farmers: Numbers of Children (Completed families* only)

All marriages listed:

	0	1	2	3	4	4+	All	<u>Means:</u>	
Male	1	21	17	5	0	0	44	Male	1.59
Female	13	22	8	0	0	1	44	Female	0.98
Total	0	2	24	12	5	1	44	Total	2.57
								F/M Ratio	0.61

Pre-1956 marriages only:

	0	1	2	3	4	4+	All	<u>Means:</u>	
Male	0	3	8	4	0	0	15	Male	2.07
Female	4	4	6	0	0	1	15	Female	1.4
Total	0	0	2	7	5	1	15	Total	3.47
								F/M Ratio	0.68

1956-1975 marriages only:

	0	1	2	3	4	4+	All	<u>Means:</u>	
Male	0	10	2	0	0	0	12	Male	1.17
Female	3	9	0	0	0	0	12	Female	0.75
Total	0	1	11	0	0	0	12	Total	1.93
								F/M Ratio	0.64

Post 1975 marriages only:

	0	1	2	3	4	4+	All	<u>Means:</u>	
Male	1	8	7	1	0	0	17	Male	1.49
Female	6	9	2	0	0	0	17	Female	0.77
Total	0	1	11	5	0	0	17	Total	2.24
								F/M Ratio	0.52

*Completed families = families with youngest child aged 7 or over, or with wives sterilised.

Table 6a: 1981/2 TF Households: 1981/2 Education and Occupations: 10+ Males

	M.Sc.	BCom/BSc/BA	Dip	TTr	Plus2	Plus1	SSLC	X-VI	V-I	0
Mill supervisor Cbe										
Workshop owner										
Cotton Business										
Textile/yarn business										
Cotton Trader										
Tiruppur Clerk		1								
Millworker Tiruppur										
Trade & agriculture							1	2		1
VM/Agriculture							1			
Milk Soc. Sec.							1			
Khandsari trader										
Groundnut oil crusher										
Trade & business										
Rice trade &										
Agric & cattle trade										
Agriculture/ML										
Agric/Poultry unit										
Agric/Microdairy										
Agriculture							5	17	14	9
Agric.Labourer										
No work	1	1						1		
In School		1						1	1	
All	1	3	0	0	0	0	8	21	15	10
All %	2	5	0	0	0	0	14	36	26	17

1 Input distribution: DK education
Old with no work not included

Table 6b: 1981/2 TF Households: 1996 Education and Occupations: 10+ Males

	M.Sc.	Com/BSc/B	Dip	TTr	Plus2	Plus1	SSLC	IX-VI	V-I	0
Mill supervisor Cbe		1								
Workshop owner		1								
Cotton Business		1								
Textile/yarn business					1					
Cotton Trader		1			1					
Tiruppur Clerk										
Millworker Tiruppur					1					
Trade & agriculture										
VM/Agriculture										
Milk Soc. Sec.							1			
Khandsari trader								1		
Groundnut oil crusher								1		
Trade & business								1		
Rice trade &										1
Agric & cattle trade									1	
Agriculture/ML									1	
Agric/Poultry unit									1	
Agric/Microdairy						1				
Agriculture	1						5	17	10	2
Agric.Labourer										
No work							1	1	2	4
In School			1	1	1		1	8	8	
All	1	4	1	1	4	1	9	29	23	7
All %	1	5	1	1	5	1	11	36	29	9

Table 8a: 1981/2 Thottam Farmers: Daughters' Dowries (pavans) 1960-1996

	<10	10<20	20<30	30<40	40<50	50<60	60+ (75)	All
1960-1981	0	0	8	5	1	1	1	16
1982+	0	0	3	1	1	1	0	6
All	0	0	11	6	2	2	1	22

Table 8b: 1981/2 Thottam Farmers: HH Heads' and Sons' Dowries (pavans) 1960-1996

	<10	10<20	20<30	30<40	40<50	50<60	60+ (80)	All
1960-1981	0	2	9	3	0	0	1	15
1982+	1	4	7	6	0	3	0	21
All	1	6	16	9	0	3	1	36

1981/2:

1 pavan Rs.1,400
 20 pavans Rs.28,000
 30 pavans Rs.42,000
 40 pavans Rs.56,000

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