

THE ATTITUDE OF MALAYSIAN INDIAN
PLANTATION COMMUNITY AS
PORTRAYED IN SELECTED
MALAYSIAN TAMIL
NOVELS

GOVINDASAMY A/L KOLENDAI

SULTAN IDRIS EDUCATION UNIVERSITY

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THE ATTITUDE OF MALAYSIAN INDIAN PLANTATION COMMUNITY
AS PORTRAYED IN SELECTED MALAYSIAN TAMIL NOVELS

GOVINDASAMY A/L KOLENDAI

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this research is to identify the socioeconomic status of Malaysian Indian plantation community, to analyze their attitude and to study the correlation between these two variables as portrayed in Malaysian Tamil novels. The qualitative research method was used and data collection was carried out using description and analysis. The Theory of Reasoned Action was used to analyze the attitude and behavior according to four elements which are intention, belief, reflection and behavior. Six Malaysian Tamil novels with the background of Malaysian Indian plantation community were used for this study. Twenty-nine characters from the selected novels were used to identify their socio-economic status; to analyze their attitude and to study the correlation between these two variables. The findings show that there are twelve characters portray high socioeconomic status with positive attitude while the other seventeen portray low socioeconomic with negative attitude. The findings also reveal that there is a correlation between their socioeconomic status and their attitude. The conclusion of this research is, the socioeconomic status of the Malaysian Indian plantation community is determined by their attitude. The research implies that the Malaysian Indian plantation community has to change their attitude into positive in order to enjoy high socioeconomic status like others.

SIKAP MASYARAKAT LADANG INDIA MALAYSIA DALAM NOVEL-NOVEL TAMIL MALAYSIA TERPILIH

ABSTRAK

Objektif kajian ini ialah untuk mengenal pasti status sosioekonomi, menganalisis sikap dan mengkaji korelasi di antara kedua pembolehubah ini di kalangan masyarakat ladang India seperti yang terpapar dalam novel-novel Tamil Malaysia terpilih. Reka bentuk penyelidikan kualitatif telah dipilih dan pengumpulan data telah dilakukan dengan kaedah deskriptif dan analisis. *Theory of Reasoned Action* telah digunakan untuk menganalisis sikap dan tingkah laku menurut empat elemen iaitu niat, kepercayaan, gambaran dan tingkah laku. Enam buah novel Tamil Malaysia dengan latar belakang masyarakat ladang India Malaysia telah dipilih untuk penyelidikan ini. Dua puluh sembilan orang watak daripada novel-novel terpilih ini telah digunakan untuk mengenal pasti status sosioekonomi, menganalisis sikap dan meninjau korelasi di antara kedua pembolehubah ini. Dapatan kajian menunjukkan bahawa dua belas orang watak menggambarkan status sosioekonomi yang tinggi disertai dengan sikap yang positif manakala tujuh belas orang watak pula menggambarkan status sosioekonomi yang rendah dengan sikap yang negatif. Dapatan kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa terdapat korelasi yang positif di antara status sosioekonomi dan sikap di kalangan masyarakat ladang India Malaysia seperti yang terpapar dalam novel-novel terpilih ini. Kesimpulannya, status sosioekonomi masyarakat ladang India ini ditentukan oleh sikap mereka. Implikasi kajian ini ialah masyarakat ladang India Malaysia perlu mengubah sikap mereka kepada yang positif untuk menikmati status sosioekonomi yang tinggi seperti yang lain.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AMESU	All Malayan Estate Staff Union
BIC	Blue Identity Card
EPF	Employers Provident Fund
FELDA	Federal Land Development Authority
FOB	Fresh Oil Palm Bunches
KPJ	Koperasi Pekerja Jaya
MIPC	Malaysian Indian Plantation Community
MTN	Malaysian Tamil Novels
MTW	Malaysian Tamil Writers
MTWA	Malaysian Tamil Writers Association
NUPW	National Union of Plantation Workers
NLFCS	National Land and Finance Cooperative Society
RIC	Red Identity Card
SES	Socioeconomic Status



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION



1.1 Introduction

The title of the study is ‘The Attitude of Malaysian Indian Plantation Community Portrayed in Malaysian Tamil Novels.’ It focuses on the Malaysian Tamil novels written with Malaysian plantation background. There are many literary works published with the plantation background in Malaysia and this study is limited to only novels published as books which portray the attitude of Malaysian Indian plantation community. 6 novels were selected for this study with the Malaysian plantation background.





This chapter covers the background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, resources of research, operational definitions and summary which are discussed in brief to assist the present study.

1.2 Background of the Study

1.2.1 Literature

The 18th century is considered as the significant century in the development of the modern Tamil literature. This is due to the diffusion of novels and short stories from the West into the local prose literature. This phenomenon has also exerted an influence on the Tamil literature to transform from the classical era into a modern one (Jesuthas, 2010).

The literary works of Indians indicate a progressive stage of Tamil language in the society. The Indian society in Malaysia is using Tamil language as a medium of speaking and also to develop their culture while developing the Tamil literature according to the era (Akilan, 2002). In the earlier era, the Malaysian Indians were traders, political ambassadors and philosophers. However, Tamil literature in Malaysia has an important place and it is termed as Malaysian Tamil Literature which includes poems, short stories, articles, essays, drama and novels.





1.2.2 Novel

The word *novel* is originated from the Italian word '*novella*' which means 'a new story' or 'a new minute thing'. This Italian word is shortened as *novel* which means new. The word *novel* had been used by the English speaking community since the 16th century (Ramalingam, M, 1973).

1.2.3 Novel in Indian Languages

One of the gifts that the Indian sub-continent received through British colonialism was secular education. The novel genre was introduced in India through this education. The novel genre started in India at the end of the nineteenth century. The first Indian novel was written in Bengali language. The second of Indian and the first Tamil novel was *Prthaaba Muthaliyar Sarithiram* composed by Mayooram Vethanayagam Pillai and was published in the year 1876. Akilan (2002), a very prominent literary scholar in the Tamil literary world of Tamil Nadu, India, states that *Cilappatigaram* was the first Tamil novel (V. Sababathy, 1996).

The above information lead to an opinion that the tradition of writing novels was continued by the Malaysian Tamil writers who migrated from Tamil Nadu, India. While migration, the process of carrying the writing culture is very obvious among the Malaysian Tamils.





Apart from Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Mauritius and Singapore are also considered as countries where Tamil language is widely used. These countries pose their own Tamil literary heritage. While discussing about Malaysian Tamil novels, it should be noted that it is combined with Singapore, since both the countries were one under British colonialism for few centuries. These two countries shared the same literary heritage and communication until Singapore got independence in the year 1965. The Tamil literature in Malaysia started growing during the end of the eighteenth century.

1.2.4 The Development of Tamil Novels in Malaysia

The Tamil community, who migrated to Malaysia for survival, carried their culture along with them. Literature is considered to be one of the components of the culture. It is quite natural that the form of literature evolves according to the need of the society then. Due to this, the form of prose literature such as novel, short story and drama emerged in Malaysia. The novel genre in Malaysia is considered to be quite recent compared with short story and poem. It is totally unfair to compare the development of Malaysian Tamil novels with other genres since it is considered to be still at 'infant' stage (Ilakkumy Meenatchi Sundaram, 1991).

There were three situations that favored the emergence of Malaysia Tamil novels in Malaysia:

1. The changes that took place among the Malaysian Tamil community,





2. The role of Tamil newspapers in promoting literature, and
3. The influence of Tamil Nadu.

1.2.4.1 The Changes that Took Place among the Malaysian Indian Community

The educational development, reformatory trend and the influence of English language are considered to be the agents that brought changes among the Malaysian Indian community.

The most prominent benefit the Malaysian Tamils gained from the British colonialism was educational development. The Tamil education was introduced in the country in order to retain the laborers from Tamil Nadu, India in Malaysia. A Tamil school was opened in Penang in the year 1816. Despite many obstacles, somehow or other the Tamil education was sustained in Malaysia. Thus, the Tamils started to think and act positively through their education.

At the beginning of the 19th century there were leaders in India who were criticizing social injustices. In North India, the movement of Rajaram Mohan Roy (1722-1833) was prominent. This effect was also felt in South India especially among Tamils in Tamil Nadu. Ramalinga Swamikal (1823-1873) advocated social equality through his principles of *Samarasa Sanmaarkam*. His movement was considered as a reformatory movement among the Tamils then. Besides these, the Christian missionaries carried out social services among the community. All these groups needed an effective media to disseminate the ideologies among the people and the novel was





deemed to be the most appropriate to fulfill this need. The very first Tamil novel itself portrays this ideology. The author Vethanaayagam Pillay (1826-1889) was considered focusing really on the community and believed that people would understand prose better than poem.

At the end of the 18th century and in the beginning of the 19th century, it was common that the Tamils were driven out of Tamil Nadu by poverty, caste system and untouchability, to possess reformative trend in them. Those who started thinking and acting through education were in the situation of checking these social ills. At the beginning of the 20th century, there were many movements of reformation and wisdom similar to that seen in Tamil Nadu. They needed a suitable media to propagate this ideology. The novel genre emerged as a popular one since it deemed to be suitable to fulfill the need of propagating reformative ideologies. It should be noted that the motive of early Malaysian Tamil novels was propagating reformation.

From the 19th century to the first half of the 20th century, the Tamils experienced significant impact from English language which led to the emergence of Tamil novel genre. The education system introduced by the British enabled the Tamils to master English language and to study the English literature books. They were forced to study the English novels which were compulsory texts. The exposure to English novels inspired Tamils to write novels in Tamil language. This fact is obvious by the fact that the early Tamil novelists were proficient in both English and Tamil languages (Sababathy, 1999).





1.2.4.2 The Role of Tamil Newspapers in Promoting Literature

The sustenance of Tamil Education in Malaysia continuously increased the number of Tamil literates which led to the emergence and to the progress of Tamil newspapers. The role of Tamil newspapers was significant not only in promoting Tamil language but also in promoting Tamil literature. The Tamil newspapers are considered to be the mother of Tamil literature as far as Malaysia is concerned. The development of Tamil newspapers was the key factor promoting the emergence of Tamil novels in Malaysia.

In the initial stage, the Tamil newspapers played a major role in introducing novel genre to the Tamils of Malaysia. The thoughts of novel in Malaysia started with serial stories. S.L. Mathavarao wrote a serial story in the newspaper *Nyaanaasiriyan* published at Penang in the year 1912 entitled *Rattina Maalai* or *Kaanamarpona Kumaaratthi*. This serial was not accomplished due to the change of proprietorship of the newspaper.

One of the Malaysian Tamil novels available today is *Tottakkolai Marmam* or *Battumalaikkalvan* published in *Tamil Nesan* newspaper as a serial which was started in the year 1933. Moreover, many novels were published in *Tamil Murasu* newspaper as a serial in the thirties of the last century. Thus, it is evident that the role played by the Tamil newspapers in introducing novel genre to the Tamils was remarkable (Sababathy, 1999).





1.2.4.3 The Influence of Tamil Nadu

Most of the Tamils in Malaysia are immigrants from Tamil Nadu and their contact with Tamil Nadu is inevitable which could be witnessed in any aspect including literature. It is obvious that before independence, the Malaysian Tamils lived their lives based on Tamil Nadu culture in all the aspects.

The earlier Tamil novels in this country were based on novels from Tamil Nadu for the theme as well as the settings. This is evident in the early days of Malaysian Tamil novels which clearly portrayed propagation as the theme. The elements of investigations and dual titles found in Malaysian Tamil novels at the beginning stage clearly portray the style of Tamil novels from Tamil Nadu.



1.2.5 Malaysian Tamil Novels

The early era Tamil novels in Malaysia were written by the immigrants from Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka. They had their education in their countries and migrated here in search of jobs. They had known the novel genre and its trend in Tamil Nadu or Sri Lanka.

A well-known novelist among them was Ka.Vengadaratinam who produced the very first Malaysian Tamil novel entitled *Karunasaagaran* or *Kaathalin Matchiye*. He already had written two novels *Karunaananthan* and *Gokularamani* in Tamil Nadu while operating a newspaper entitled *Sagalakalavalli*. Thus, it is evident that the





influence from Tamil Nadu had definitely favored the emergence of Tamil novels in Malaysia. Moreover, the novel *Karunasaagaran* written by Ka.Vengadaratinam who migrated for job opportunity is an evidence that the Tamil novels of Malaysia are the continuation of Tamil novels from Tamil Nadu. Moreover, the Malaysian Tamil literature itself emerged after the First World War. Probably it was only in between the period of Indian independence (1947) and Malayan independence (1957), the thought of having a separate Tamil Literature emerged (Sababathy, 1999).

The Tamil novel genre in Malaysia started to sprout during the first twenty years of the 20th century unlike the short stories which were published mostly after the independence. As far as Tamil novels are concerned, there were more than ten published before the independence.



Table 1.1

The Malaysian Tamil Novels published before independence

No	Title of Novel	Year of Publication
1.	<i>Karunasaagaran or KaathalinMatchi</i>	1917
2.	<i>Balasantharam or SanmaarkaJeyam</i>	1918
3.	<i>Thottakkolaimarmam or Battumalaikkalvan</i>	1932
4.	<i>Kanniaseela Kanagapooshanam or ThaaiPashaabimaanaSathipathi</i>	1933
5.	<i>Korakaanthan or ThenmalayaGiriyil Vada IlanggaiTuppaali</i>	1934
6.	<i>Nesamalar or Katrorin Kanaa</i>	1934
7.	<i>Mathanapoorani</i>	1934
8.	<i>Suyambunaathanum Sanniasiyaarum or Arivaali</i>	1935
9.	<i>Azhagaanantha Pushpam</i>	1936
10.	<i>Uttamanaathan or Sattiyapuri Jameenthar</i>	1938
11.	<i>Movaatha Mullai</i>	1949
12.	<i>Neerchuzhal</i>	1958
13.	<i>Malliga</i>	1957





Just by observing the titles of these novels given above, it is obvious that they carry investigation as the theme and imitates the novels from Tamil Nadu. It should be noted that the novels of investigations were popular at that era and most of them were bearing dual titles (Sababathy, 1999).

There are chronological gaps in the development of Malaysian Tamil novel genre. It took place twice in the history:

- i) From 1918 until 1931 - 12 years
- ii) From 1938 until 1948 - 10 years

These gaps were considered to be the dark era of Malaysian Tamil novel world. Similar gaps were also experienced in Tamil Nadu novel. This was due to the historical events of the world. A down fall was experienced by the Malaysian Tamil novel genre after the First World War. A similar trend was experienced after the Second World War. There were few novels published just before independence and after the independence in 1957 and there was rejuvenation after this period.

Malaysia had its first Tamil novel published between the years 1910 and 1920. There were two novels published during this period. One of them was *Karunaasaagan* or *Kaathalin Maatchi* by Vengadarathinam while the other was *Balasuntharam* or *Sanmaarka Jeyam* by Pulolika SubraManian which was published in the year 1918.





Rajantharan (2012) in his studies has pointed out that Tamil community has strong feelings toward the Tamil language, which is often venerated in Tamil literature as *Tamilannai* (Tamil mother). So, it can be deduced that before colonization, Tamils who settled in Malaya brought the Tamil literature with them.

According to Janaki Raman (2011), 85% of the Malaysian Indian population were in plantation until 1980. Thus, the life and struggles of MIPC were the main focus of the Tamil writers including the novelist especially those who are originated from plantations. Many novels were written with plantation background depicting the main issues such as the exploitation by the upper class, injustice to women, alcoholism, drug addiction and others.



1.2.6 The Malaysian Indian Plantation Community

The plantation industry is considered to be one of the earliest economic activities which boosted this country's economy. The Industrial Revolution in Britain highly demanded commodities from the colonial countries like Malaya. Initially they cultivated herbal crops such as pepper followed by sugar cane in 1830's and coffee in 1870's. Finally, rubber was widely cultivated at the beginning of the 20th century as a lucrative commercial crop (Mu. Varatharasu,1993).

Looking back the history, the presence of Indians in this country had already been realized since the second century B.C (Sababathy, 1996). Their earlier presence was for the reasons of maritime exploration, trade and also the expansion of kingdom.





Later, at the end of the nineteenth century, the mass influx of south Indian laborers into this country was engineered by the British government in order to develop the rubber plantation industry here. Initially, the British eyed the laborers from the South Indian state, Tamil Nadu which was the State of Madras then. Upon the progress of this rubber plantation industry, the British also started to import laborers from the neighboring states of Tamil Nadu such as Andhra Pradesh (now divided as Telangana) and Kerala. Thus, the population of the Indian community in this country increased tremendously. Later, the British government brought the Chinese laborers from China to develop the tin mining in this country. Eventually Malaysia emerged as a multi- racial country.

Rubber plantations needed a large number of workers for planting, maintaining, collecting the yield and weeding the unwanted plants that wildly grew. The colonial British government identified that the South Indians to be the most suitable people to develop the rubber plantation in this country since they were easily controllable (docile). The mass poverty in Tamil Nadu was the catalyst for the mass migration (M. Janakey Raman, 2011). Indian immigrants in large number were brought in phases to fulfill their needs. A study was mooted by the Indian government in 1897 in order to study the living condition of these immigrants in plantations. Satisfied with their living condition, it allowed free flow of immigrants into the plantations. An agreement was signed between the Indian and Malayan governments in 1900 to favor this agenda (M. Varatharasu, 1993).





1.2.7 Socioeconomic Status

According to Kannan, A. (2016), socioeconomic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth and place of residence. Sociologists often use socioeconomic status as a means of predicting behavior.

Socioeconomic status (SES) is an economic and a sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. When analyzing a family's SES, the household income, earners' education and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, ventures and individual, when their own attitudes are addressed.



This study not only identifies the attitudes portrayed in the Malaysia Tamil novels, but also it identifies the socioeconomic status of the characters with the positive and negative attitudes. This will open up an opportunity to the researcher to study the significance and the influence of their own attitude toward their progress and wellbeing in this country besides other factors which are frequently being mentioned such as the colonial government, the present government and also the related organizations.

SES is typically divided into three categories, High SES, Middle SES and Low SES to describe the three areas of a family or an individual may fall into. When placing a family or an individual into one of these categories, any or all the variables (income, education, occupation, and place of residence) can be assessed. The fifth variable, wealth can also be examined when determining SES. This research identifies the SES





status of the MIPC to be high or low in order to match with their attitude. In addition, their mobility towards a better SES is also taken into consideration.

There is a common opinion among the Indian community in Malaysia that their present socioeconomic status is much decided by the factors mentioned. Of course, the mass immigration of South Indian laborers in this country was engineered by the British government to develop their rubber plantations in this country. The British government is often being criticized for the present low socioeconomic condition of the Indian community in this country. In addition, the present government, all the Indian organizations and their leaders are also being blamed for their setbacks (Janekey Raman Manikam, 2011).



the other races to progress in life. Moreover, they had a good opportunity to learn all the aspects of life from the other races as well. Unfortunately, till to date the living standard of the Indian community in this country is considered to be in sad state especially in socio economic status. This scenario is well stated by Ponnugam (1997) as:

“Why do we not have economical thoughts; why are we not brave to explore; why do we not have proper own Tamil music; why do we not have own Tamil movies; why do we not have newspapers of good quality; why do we not have a proper Tamil literature; why do we not have proper literary figures; why do we not have proper leaders; why do we not have ambitions and dreams like the other races in this country?”

(Ponnugam, 1997, p.26)





Janeke Raman Manickam, (2011) states that, Malaysian Indians have not progressed remarkably in their socioeconomic status compared with the other ethnic races even after 50 years of independence. Practically, they have failed to achieve their share of wealth and prosperity of this country despite of their effort and hard work by few generations.

The Plantation Indian community comprises a major portion of the whole Indian community of this country. The failure or the set-back is definitely influenced by the failure of the MIPC. There are many factors that contributed to their failure. In this study, the researcher explored how far their own attitude has contributed for such a state. The researcher establishes that the attitude of the Malaysian Indian Plantation community is a significant study in order to gauge their ability, capability and competence to match the other races in this country such as Malays and Chinese.

It should also be noted that, many of the Indian leaders, professionals, business magnets and spiritual leaders are from plantations. They attained high SES by their positive attitudes. The present generation may not be aware of the fact that the successful people had positive attitudes among them.

Earlier researches revealed that the personal attitude of this plantation community is unfavorable for their progress in many ways (Janeke Raman, 2011). The Malaysian Tamil novels portray many significant social problems of this community which had affected their progress in this country very badly. The Malaysian Tamil novels with plantation background vividly portray the attitude of this community in this





regard. The researcher has chosen the topic in order to unveil the attitude of this plantation community which is the reason for their present state of life.

1.2.8 Attitude

The concept of attitude played a major role throughout the history of social psychology. Many early theorists virtually defined the field of social psychology as the scientific study of attitudes (Thomas and Znaniecki, 1918; Watson, 1925). One of the first psychologists to employ the term “attitude” was Herbert Spencer (1862), who argued that “Arriving at correct judgement on disputed questions, much depends on the attitude of the mind we preserve while listening to, or taking part in the controversy”. The mentalistic view of attitude was later supplemented by the concept of motor attitude. In the early 1880s, Lange showed that a person who was consciously prepared to press a telegraph key immediately upon receiving a signal had a quicker reaction time than did a person who was directed to attend to the incoming stimulus. This line of research led to the conclusion that various mental and motor sets. This line of research led to the conclusion that various mental and motor sets, attitude or states of preparedness influence people’s thoughts and actions. By 1901, attitude was defined as “readiness for attention or action of a definite sort” (Baldwin, 1901). The first use of the attitude concept to explain social behavior, however, must be credited to Thomas and Znaniecki (1918) who viewed attitudes as individual mental processes that determine a person’s actual and potential responses (Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein, 1980).



Very early, then, social scientists assumed that attitudes could be used to explain human action since they viewed attitudes as behavioral dispositions. With few exceptions, this assumption went unchallenged until the late 1960s. For example, in their introduction to social psychology, Krech, Crutchfield, and Ballachey (1962) argued that “Man’s social actions-whether the actions involve religious behavior, ways of earning a living, political activity or buying and selling goods-are directed by his attitudes” (p. 139). With the construct’s increasing prominence came the need to develop valid techniques for the measurement of attitudes. While many investigators began constructing various types of instruments to assess attitudes, in particular domain, the major breakthrough came when L.L. Thurstone (1929), 1931; Thurstone and Chave, (1929) applied psychometric methods to the problem. He argued that in all measurement we must restrict ourselves to some specified continuum along with the measurement to take place. When comparing the attitudes of people, we can say that one person opposes abortion, approves of capital punishment, or likes Italian more (or less) than another person. For Thurstone, then, the crucial continuum in attitude measurement ranged from *positive* to *negative* or *favorable* to *unfavorable*. He defined attitude as “the affect for against a psychological object (Icek Ajzen and Martin Fishbein, 1980).

Whereas, Hogg and Vaughan (2005) defined attitude as, a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies toward socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols. Moreover, it is described as, a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993).



Generally, attitude can affect a person's behavior in two ways such as positive attitude and negative attitude. Moreover, people may not always be aware of their own attitude or the effect it has on behavior. People with attitude towards work may likewise affect those around them and behave in a manner that reduces efficiency and effectiveness. Hence, this study focusses on the attitude of Malaysian Indian plantation community towards uplifting their socioeconomic status as portrayed in the Malaysian Tamil novels. Furthermore, their attitudes are classified into positive and negative in order to correlate with their socioeconomic status. This would provide a clear picture whether their own attitude had determined their socioeconomic status.

1.3 Statement of the Problem



The present research mainly discusses the attitude of MIPC toward improving their SES. In the selected 6 MTN *Elachia Payanam* by I.Ilavazhagu, *Thuyarappaathai* by Ka.Perumal, *Chemmannum Nelamalargalum* by M.Kumaran, *Suvadugal* by Ma.Ramaiya, *Mannin Vannam* by Na.Chanthiran and *Selancar Ampat* by Ko.Punniavan, the research focusses on the character and the fictional settings as fictional imitation of the real MIPC. The study of the characters and settings are achieved by applying the concept in the *Theory of Reasoned Action* developed by Martin Fishbein in the year 1967. Therefore, the application of this theory reveals the study analysis of the representation of the attitude of the MIPC toward improving their SES depicted in the selected novels.



Through these novels an in-depth analysis is offered in this study. First, the SES of the MIPC is discussed followed by their attitude towards achieving it and the correlation between these two variables. Additionally, this study explains the reason behind the SES of MIPC and also some of the successful cases among the MIPC.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

This research focusses on the following objectives:

1. To identify the socioeconomic status of Malaysian Indian plantation community as portrayed in the selected Malaysian Tamil novels.
2. To analyze the attitude of the Malaysian Indian plantation community as portrayed in the selected Malaysian Tamil novels.
3. To study the influence and the impact of the attitude of Malaysian Indian plantation community on their socioeconomic status as portrayed in the selected Malaysian Tamil novels.

1.5 Research Questions

This study focusses on the following three questions:

1. What is the socioeconomic status of the Malaysian Indian plantation community as portrayed in the selected Malaysian Tamil novels?

2. What is the attitude of Malaysia Indian plantation community as portrayed in the selected Malaysian Tamil novels?
3. How far has the attitude of Malaysian Indian plantation community had determined their socioeconomic status as portrayed in the selected Malaysian Tamil novels?

1.6 Significance of the Study

The research is a study of the attitude of MIPC towards raising their SES portrayed in selected MTN. First, there is a lack of study on the attitude of MIPC who comprises the major portion of Malaysian Indians in this country. Until 1980, 85% of the Malaysian Indian community were in plantations (Janaki Raman, 1911). Second, there is a general opinion that these groups have always been exploited by the other parties such as the colonial and present government, the employers, community leaders and others for their self-interest. Therefore, the significance of this research lies in its analytical study of the attitude of MIPC which has determined their socioeconomic status to a great extent.

There are many reasons being mentioned for the set-back of Indian community in this country. As far as the Indians are concerned, they hardly changed from their original attitudes which they inherited from their ancestors in India. The true attitude of an ethnic group is very obviously seen where they live together without an interference of other ethnic groups. MIPC is an ideal sample to represent the attitude of the whole Indian community in this country as they make the major portion.



Most of the Indian community in this country are directly or indirectly linked to this plantation community. If not themselves, either their parents or grand-parents lived in plantations once. In other words, most of the Indian community in this country should share the same attitude as the plantation community. Many researched and portrayed the socioeconomic problems of Indians in Malaysia including the ones in plantations in detail but so far no one has researched their own attitude which had significantly determined their well-being in this country. The outcome of the study creates a clear awareness among the Indians to reflect their own attitude which has greatly influenced their wellbeing socially, economically and politically.

1.7 Limitations of the Study



The present research is limited to the Theory of Reasoned Action developed by Martin Fishbein and 6 Malaysian Tamil novels written with Malaysia plantation background. The 6 novels selected for this study are *Lachia Payanam* written by I.Elavazhagu, *Thuyara Paathai* by Ka. Perumal, *Chemmannum Neelamalargalum* by M. Kumaran, *Mannin Vannam* by Na. Chandran, *Suvadugal* by Ma. Ramaiya, and *Selancar Ampat* by Ko.Punniavan. The characters, settings, narrative points of view and fictional discourses are discussed based on the Theory of Reasoned Action. The analysis of these novels is specified to these literary elements and how they convey effect of the attitude of MIPC in improving their SES.





1.8 Resources of Research

This research is based on two types of resources such as primary resources and secondary resources. The primary resources are the novels directly related to the title of the study whereas the secondary resources are printed manuscripts such as thesis, journals, articles, books and proceedings related to the title of the research. Documentaries in the form of electronic multimedia also used to support the discussion.

1.8.1 Primary Resources

The primary resources are the Malaysian Tamil novels written with plantation



background are listed below:



Novels

1. *Elachia Payanam* by I.Elavazhagu
2. *Thuyara Paathai* by Ka.Perumal
3. *Chemmannum Neelamalargalum* by M.Kumaran
4. *Mannin Vannam* by Na.Chandran
5. *Suvadugal* by Ma. Ramaiya
6. *Selancar Ampat* by Ko.Punniavan





1.8.2. Secondary Resources

The secondary resources are taken from thesis, journals, articles, conference proceedings and books related to the topic of the research. Documentaries in the form of multimedia also used to support the discussions.

1.9 Operational Definitions

The researcher emphasized on the definitions used in this study which are socioeconomic status, attitude, Malaysian Indian plantation community and Malaysian Tamil novels.



1.9.1 Socioeconomic Status

Socioeconomic status depends on a combination of variables, including occupation, education, income, wealth and place of residence. It is an economical and sociological combined total measure of a person's work experience and of an individual's or family's economic and social position relative to others, based on income, education, and occupation. When analyzing a family's SES, the household income, earners' education, and occupation are examined, as well as combined income, ventures and individual, when their own attitudes are addressed.



In this research the SES of the characters found in the selected novels is identified in order to match with their attitude towards improving their socioeconomic status. The attitudes are categorized as positive, negative and correlated with their SES.

1.9.2 Attitude

An attitude is an expression of favor or disfavor toward a person, place, things, or event i.e. the attitude object. Gordon Allport (1935) described attitude as the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology. Attitude can be formed from a person's past and present.

An attitude is an evaluation of an attitude object, ranging from extremely negative to extremely positive. Most contemporary perspectives on attitudes also permit that people can also be conflicted or ambivalent toward an object by simultaneously holding both positive and negative attitudes toward the same object. This has led to discussion of whether an individual can hold multiple attitudes toward the same object.

An attitude can also be as a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, events, activities, and ideas. It could be concrete, abstract or just about anything in your environment, but there is a debate about precise definitions. Eagly and Chaiken (1993), defines attitude as 'a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor.' Though it is sometimes common to define an attitude as an effect toward an object, effect i.e., discrete emotions or overall arousal,



is generally understood to be distinct from attitude as a measure of favorability. Attitude may influence the attention to attitude objects, the use of categories for encoding information and the interpretation, judgment and recall of attitude-relevant information. These influences tend to be more powerful for strong attitudes which are easily accessible and based on elaborate knowledge structure. Attitude may guide attention and encoding automatically, even if the individual is pursuing unrelated goals.

1.9.3 Malaysian Indian Plantation Community

The Malaysia plantations were established with multi-racial workers in general. There were Indians, Chinese, Malays and also Japanese communities who lived in the plantations for their livelihood. Among them, the majority were the Indians from south India. The study emphasis on the Indian community which is portrayed in the Malaysian Tamil novels. Moreover, it includes all the workers of Indian origin immaterial of their rank and status. Among the Indians there are labor class and also administrative class found in plantations. This study includes all those Indians lived in plantations as portrayed by the Malaysian Tamil novels.

While studying the novels, there is an obvious element of social stratification among the Indians themselves according to their origin, caste and class. Generally there are classes according to their origin namely Tamils, Telugus and Malayalees. The Tamils originate from Tamil Nadu whereas the Telugus from Andhra Pradesh and the Malayalees from Kerala (all from South India). Among their own origin, there is also further stratification according to their caste which is strongly inherited among





themselves. They are further divided into groups of class namely the labor class, supervisory class (*mandors*), conductor/clerical class and also executive class (managers) (Janakey Raman Manikam, 2011).

The Malaysian Indian Plantation community is a complex identity comprising various critical issues which attracts many leaders, social workers as well as researchers in order to spill some light on them. However, they face many challenges in bringing changes due to those boundaries dividing them. Till to date the tendency to remain within these boundaries without much ambition remains in them. However, the plantation community produced many successful high-level citizens for this country as leaders, academicians, professionals, spiritual masters and others. In this study the researcher is more interested in examining their attitude which is considered to be the basic factor contributing to their social mobility toward betterment.

1.9.4 Malaysian Tamil Novels

Malaysian Tamil novels are the novels written by local (Malaysian) writers. Since this study is focusing on the plantation community, the selected novels are with plantation background. There are also some novels written by the local writers but published abroad. Such novels are also considered to be Malaysian novels since they were written by local writers.





1.10 Summary

This chapter has outlined the main subjects of the research's arguments. It has focused on three interrelated topics, the socioeconomic status of MIPC, their attitude and the correlation between these two variables. The chapter has provided a comprehensive reading of these issues. It has also discussed these concepts to demonstrate the practicality of these concepts and the possibility of utilizing them appropriately in the textual analysis. The background of the study would provide the reader with essential information about MTN and MIPC with their problems. This information provides a thorough scrutiny of MIPC in MTN. The background of the study justifies that the researcher's selection of MTN to identify the socioeconomic status of MIPC, to analyze their attitude and to study how far their attitude has determined their SES. The chapter has stated the research's problem and how it corresponds with the objectives and questions of the research. In essence, the significance of the statement of the problem, objectives and questions have been discussed in the section of significance of the study with specification of the scope and limitation of the study. Moreover, the definitions of the main concepts have been briefly discussed to offer an all-encompassing meaning of the selected critical concepts in the research. As conclusion, the main information provided in this chapter consists of the primary points needed for understanding the research's arguments which are further elaborated in the next chapters.

