

**The Sandar (oil producers and merchants) caste:  
A socio-cultural and linguistic perspective**

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Sandar are the traditional oil extractors and merchants of the Sri Lankan Tamil community who occupy the lower middle stratum of the caste hierarchy of Sri Lankan Tamils. There are about nine hundred families who belong to this caste living in the Jaffna peninsula at present. Even though they are scattered in different parts of the peninsula the community is mainly concentrated in two villages namely Piranpattu and Anaikodai of the Valikamam region. They produce gingili oil and other related products as a cottage industry and market them all over the country. At the same time, they also produce coconut, neem and other types of oils on a small scale. Most caste members are economically sound since their products are in high demand. However, now several of the caste members are moving towards other professions especially in the government sector and in foreign countries in order to change the caste identity. All the caste members are Saivites but still follow the ancient forms of rural worship practices such as animal sacrifice and magic rituals. They also worship rural deities such as Vairavar and Kali. The priests in these temples are non Brahmins since they are non-agamic temples and mostly Saivitepriests (*Lingayutharor Veerasaivites*) or Poosaries from the same caste. Their customs, social practices and rituals are also significantly different from other castes. The spoken language of this caste also contains certain features such as a specific vocabulary and expressions connected to their profession, rituals, religious ceremonies and social customs. The focus of this presentation is specific vocabulary used by the Sandar with reference to the situations in which the specific vocabulary is used and how the caste projects their own identity through unique rituals in the temples and at home.

Key words:-Sandar,Saivite,Lingayuthar,Veerasaivar,Poosari,Vairavar,Kali