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**Title: RE-IMAGINING THE CASTE STRUCTURE IN INDIAN SOCIETY  
WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO NADARS OF SOUTH INDIA(Modern  
India)**

**ABSTRACT**

Caste is the deep rooted social evil crept in Indian society since very ancient period. In the early Vedic period the rough form of caste was created in the society. Each person had identified with his occupation done in the society. Gradually this occupation was transformed into one' caste. Thus those who had done menial works were known as *Sudras*. About fifth century AD the *Brahmins* migrated to India. After that Caste system had its final shape.

The Aryans migrated to South India around ninth century AD. They spread their principles and caste rules in India. Before Aryan immigration there was no caste distinction in South India. Majority of the people in South India were the Dravidians. The Dravidian chieftains were the rulers. The *Brahmins'* came to South India and at first they understand the situation and then they transformed the Dravidian rulers as *Kshathriyas*. Those who had any affiliation to the ruling dynasty were deliberately marginalized from the main stream. The native rulers carefully followed the Brahmin principles. Thus caste system firmly established and planted a beautiful edifice in the superstructure of South India.

The *Nadars* were the Dravidians settled in very ancient period. They were the sons of the soil and had some affinity towards the native rulers. They were the chieftains and possessed some privileged position in society. Their earlier name of this caste was *Shannar*. Some of the *Nadars* were known as '*Nadan*' '*Gramani*' '*Pandyan*' '*Perumal*' '*Sanror*' etc. But later the *Nayaka* conquest and subsequent suppression deprived the *Nadars* into a lower position. Gradually they migrated to Travancore because of fear of *Nayakas*. The rulers and *Brahmins* and *Nairs* again degraded the *Nadars* and considered them as untouchables. They imposed about 317 taxes upon the *Nadars*. Thus majority of the *Nadars* in Travancore converted to Christianity. After the formation of Kerala in 1956 numerous cruel rules were abolished and now their position is improved. Now they are the advanced community in South India.