

[https://repository.nls.ac.in/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1104&context=nls\\_articles](https://repository.nls.ac.in/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1104&context=nls_articles)



National Law School of India University  
**Scholarship Repository**

---

Articles

Faculty Publications

---

1-8-2025

## From Land Reform to Landfare: Land Claims and the Welfare State in Kerala, India

Sudheesh R.C

*National Law School of India University, Bengaluru, [sudheesh.rc@nls.ac.in](mailto:sudheesh.rc@nls.ac.in)*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://repository.nls.ac.in/nls\\_articles](https://repository.nls.ac.in/nls_articles)



Part of the [Agricultural and Resource Economics Commons](#), [Development Studies Commons](#), [Human Geography Commons](#), and the [Sociology Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

RC Sudheesh, 'From Land Reform to Landfare: Land Claims and the Welfare State in Kerala, India' (2025) Antipode

This Research Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Faculty Publications at Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Articles by an authorized administrator of Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact [editor@nls.ac.in](mailto:editor@nls.ac.in).

From Land Reform to Landfare: Land Claims and the Welfare State in Kerala, India

R.C. Sudheesh

Assistant Professor of Social Sciences, National Law School of India University, Bangalore,  
India

sudheesh.rc@nls.ac.in

ORCID: 0000-0001-7468-4175

This is the accepted version without final proofs of the following article: Sudheesh, R.C. (2025). "From Land Reform to Landfare: Land Claims and the Welfare State in Kerala, India". *Antipode: A Radical Journal of Geography* 57(2): 670-690. The article has been published in final form at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/anti.13123>. This article may be used for non-commercial purposes in accordance with the Wiley Self-Archiving Policy [<http://www.wileyauthors.com/selfarchiving>].

**Abstract**

While large-scale land reform may still be underway in many countries, other contexts have states responding to land claims through scattered land provision measures. This article puts forward 'landfare' as a lens to capture such measures and unpacks its features in one location. The article first explains this term, outlining its location in and departure from the land reform scholarship. It next shows how Kerala, India, widely cited in the scholarship for its twentieth-century land reform, addresses the land claims of its Adivasi citizens in the twenty-first century through landfare. Through an exploration of Adivasi land claims and an examination of state responses in Kerala, the article argues that landfare can work through four key modes—obfuscation, withholding available land, projectisation and welfare fix. Unlike the 'land-to-the-tiller' goals of twentieth-century land reform, twenty-first-century landfare can be aimed at extinguishing land struggles.

ലോകത്തിൽ പലയിടങ്ങളിലും വിസ്തൃതമായ ഭൂപരിഷ്കരണം ഇന്നും നടപ്പിലാക്കപ്പെടുന്നുണ്ടെങ്കിലും മറ്റു പലയിടങ്ങളിലും ഭൂമിക്ക് വേണ്ടിയുള്ള അവകാശവാദങ്ങളോട് സ്റ്റേറ്റ് പ്രതികരിക്കുന്നത് ചിതറിയ ഭൂമി വിതരണ പദ്ധതികൾ വഴിയാണ്. ഇവയെ മനസ്സിലാക്കാൻ ഈ ലേഖനം 'ലാൻഡ്ഫെയർ' എന്ന ആശയം മുന്നോട്ടുവയ്ക്കുകയും കേരളത്തിൽ ഇതിന്റെ പ്രത്യേകതകൾ എന്തൊക്കെയാണെന്ന് അന്വേഷിക്കുകയും ചെയ്യുന്നു. ഈ ആശയത്തെ ഭൂപരിഷ്കരണവുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട പഠനങ്ങളുടെ വെളിച്ചത്തിൽ വിശദീകരിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് ലേഖനം തുടങ്ങുന്നു. ഭൂപരിഷ്കരണത്തിന് പേരുകേട്ട കേരളം ഇന്ന് ആദിവാസി ഭൂസമരങ്ങളോട്

ലാൻഡ്ഫെയർ വഴി എങ്ങനെ പ്രതികരിക്കുന്നു എന്ന് അന്വേഷിച്ചുകൊണ്ട് ലേഖനം തുടരുന്നു. ഭൂമിയുമായി ബന്ധപ്പെട്ട വിവരങ്ങളിൽ അവ്യക്തത പാലിക്കുക, സ്റ്റേറ്റ് നിയന്ത്രണത്തിൽ വരാവുന്ന ഭൂമി നൽകാതിരിക്കുക, ഭൂമിവിതരണത്തെ പദ്ധതിവൽക്കരിക്കുക, ക്ഷേമപദ്ധതികൾ കൊണ്ട് പ്രശ്നപരിഹാരം കണ്ടെത്തുക എന്നീ നാലു രീതികളിലാണ് ലാൻഡ്ഫെയർ ഇവിടെ പ്രധാനമായും പ്രവർത്തിക്കുന്നത് എന്ന് കാണിക്കുന്നു. അടിസ്ഥാനവർഗത്തിന് ഭൂമി എന്ന ആശയത്തിൽ നിന്നു മാറി ഭൂസമരങ്ങളെ തടയാനുള്ള ഉപാധിയായി ലാൻഡ്ഫെയർ പ്രവർത്തിക്കാം എന്ന് ലേഖനം വാദിക്കുന്നു.

Keywords: land, welfare, the state, land struggles, Kerala

## Introduction

Land reform has waxed and waned in the attention received in the scholarship. Large-scale, state-led land reform may still be afoot in many countries, such as Zimbabwe, South Africa and Indonesia (Aliber and Cousins 2013; Li 2021; Moyo 2011; Scoones 2018), but in several other contexts, such reform has disappeared from political agendas. At the same time, under compulsion from land struggles, the latter states are forced to distribute land. Such measures are often scattered in time and space. This article brings these measures under one analytical framework called ‘landfare’ and examines their patterns and logic in a developing-country context—the Adivasi land struggles in the State of Kerala in India.<sup>1</sup> By landfare, I mean the myriad, dispersed strategies that the welfare state uses to respond to land demands. Thus, landfare contrasts with comprehensive, radical land reform that aims at sweeping changes in land relations by shaking up the underlying power equations. The article contends that landfare may appear scattered, but it develops certain location-specific logic and technologies over time that govern the lives of target populations. The article illustrates how, in Kerala, this occurs in the form of the obfuscation of land data, the withholding of available land, the reduction of the land distribution agenda to projects, and the use of welfare programmes as substitutes for land redistribution. The article shows that these measures fail to provide people with substantive social and political control over land and can end up exacerbating landlessness.

The article is located against the backdrop of the provocation by Bernstein (2006) in critical agrarian studies, wherein he argues that in most of the rural world the ‘classic agrarian questions of capital’ have been bypassed and the relevant agrarian question now is that of labour. The classic agrarian questions refer to how capital takes over the countryside, how agriculture produces surplus to drive economic growth, and how class differentiation unfolds

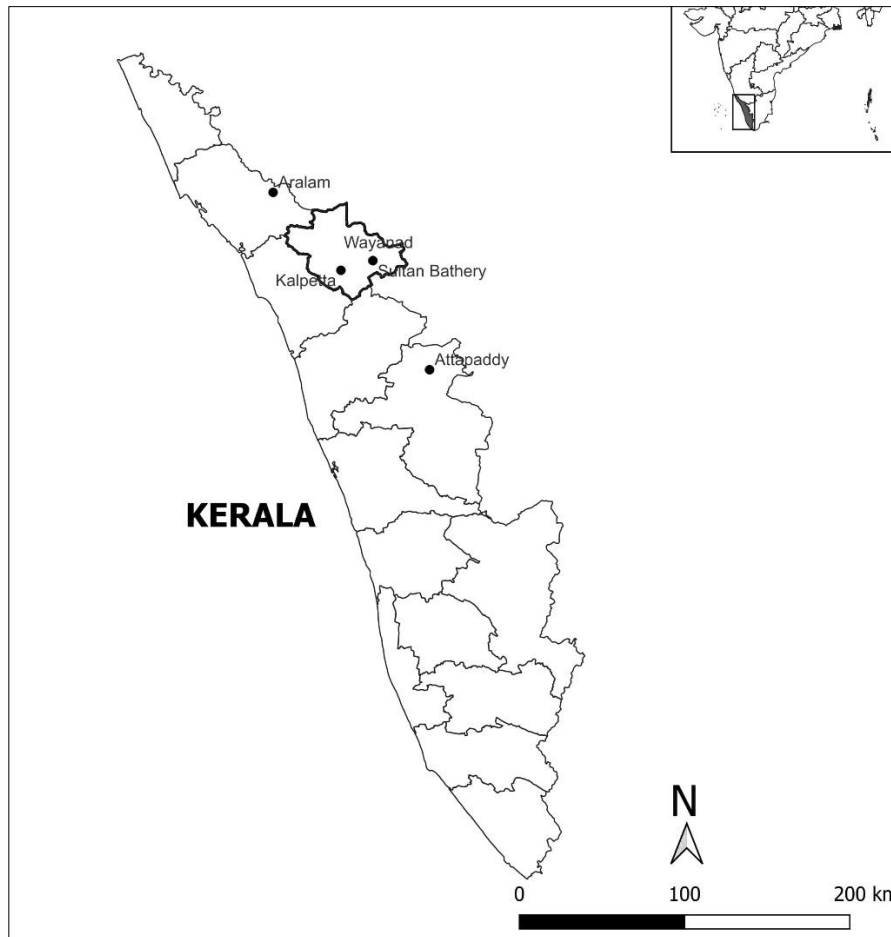
(see Akram-Lodhi and Kay 2010a; 2010b for an exhaustive review). Bernstein argues that in the current times when capital has taken over most parts of the world and agriculture is no longer expected to finance economic growth, the pending agrarian question is how the labouring classes string together a livelihood from scattered sources. One form in which this ‘agrarian question of labour’ manifests is through land demands (*ibid.*). Land is seen by many as a solid entity that would provide a stable foundation for life. Land is not just a productive resource; it may also be history, memory, identity, sacrality and dignity. In the current times, the precariousness wrought by neoliberal growth paths has further strengthened land demands in many contexts. This scenario warrants an enquiry into how states respond to land demands—a question that this article probes.

The data for the article was collected as part of a larger ethnographic project that involved fieldwork over nine continuous months in 2017-18 and repeat visits in 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2024. Fieldwork was done primarily in Wayanad, the district with the largest Adivasi population, and Kannur, the district where the Aralam resettlement site is situated (figure 1). The methods involved observation, interviews with landless Adivasi households, state officials and activists, and participation in the demonstrations of the social movement Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha. In Wayanad, interactions were done mainly with the Paniya, Adiya and Kattunaikka community members. Additional fieldwork in the Attappady block of Palakkad district involved interactions with the Muduga, Kurumba and Irula community members. I use the term ‘landless Adivasis’ here to refer to those communities belonging to the administrative category of Scheduled Tribes that lost free access to land and forests historically; I do not focus on the few communities that have held/owned land.<sup>2</sup> Interactions with the bureaucrats of the Scheduled Tribe Development Department were done in Thiruvananthapuram (the State capital), Kalpetta and Sulthan Bathery in Wayanad, and Aralam. While I spoke to activists of many organisations representing the Adivasis, extended interactions were done with the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha. Since this article focuses on state strategies, it specifically focuses on a critical reading of a range of policy documents, replies to Right to Information applications, archives of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, archives of the colonial Malabar administration and archives of the Malayalam newspaper *Mathrubhumi*. I use ethnographic material at crucial junctures to support these observations.

The following sections examine landfare in Kerala. The next section explains the use of the term landfare, locating it in the extant scholarship on land politics. Following this, the article provides an overview of land distribution and welfare regimes in Kerala. The article

then examines Adivasi land struggles, noting the heterogeneity within these movements, and proceeds to explore the state's landfare strategies by analysing key legislation and policy documents.

Figure 1: Field sites in Kerala



Source: Created by Aditya Sharma

### Unpacking landfare

In this section, I lay out the utility of delineating an analytic of landfare. Understanding the varied state responses to land demands helps to parse measures that often get subsumed under the sweeping category of 'land reform'. As Wolford (2007) instructively shows in the case of the Landless Workers Movement (MST) in Brazil, neoliberal ideas tend to seep into the logic of land reform, producing a variety of ways in which land is demanded and distributed. This creates a necessity to scrutinise mechanisms of land provision that are designed as quick-fix responses. Further, in the case of land reform, Li (2021) points out that while the twentieth-

century reforms involved the landlord-tiller-state triad, the twenty-first-century reforms involve a more complex assemblage of actors, technologies, discourses and institutions that are made to cohere through iterations. The lens of landfare helps us understand what the assemblage looks like in contexts where comprehensive land reform is not actively pursued.

Landfare also provides a useful path forward to take stock of the diverse *effects* of providing land. Scattered land distribution can be tracked in the literature as directed towards multifarious ends such as poverty alleviation, urban expansion and rehabilitation of the displaced, among others (see, e.g., Jayne et al. 2003; Maitra 2009; Neef, Touch, and Chiengthong 2013). This scholarship has carefully documented their failure to ensure sustainable livelihoods and human rights (see, e.g., Sangvai 1995). As Smyth et al. (2015) point out, many of these projects fail to ensure the inclusion of the most marginalised within the target group. Poor post-settlement support repeatedly comes up as a theme in this literature, whether in Latin America, South Asia or Sub-Saharan Africa (Asiama, Lengoiboni, and Van der Molen 2017; Shrestha and Conway 1985; H. M. Mathur 2013).

Borras and Franco (2010) assess land reform by classifying country-level experiments around the world into redistribution, distribution, non-distribution and reconcentration, representing a gradient from radical disruption in power relations to an increase in the land ownership of the land-rich. In contrast with this typology, landfare helps us analyse those contexts, such as Kerala's, where the state manages specific 'trouble-making' populations by using a diverse mix of measures, which may simultaneously involve more than one of the above four types. For instance, Kerala has distributed to Adivasis parcels of land that the state has been willing to let go of while not distributing swathes of plantation land that is illegally held by corporations.

State-led provision of land, if we go by the logic of land reform, aims to provide a means of production as well as social justice (El Ghonemy 2009; Herring 1983). Further, as Goodwin (2017) demonstrates in the case of Ecuador, drawing on Polanyi (1944), land struggles by indigenous peoples can be seen as an effort to gain social and political control over land in light of increasing commodification. Commodification refers to the conversion of such elements as land and labour into goods governed by the market, although these were originally not meant for such a purpose. In the case of Kerala's Adivasis, the immediate reason for their land struggles in the late 1980s was the increasing commodification of their labour. Adopting a lens of landfare allows us to see that the state's response, in the form of dispersed land

provision projects, has been a far cry from providing social and political control over land. They at best allow survival. In this regard, landfare does the work of welfare.

This brings us to a theoretical enquiry into welfare. As Marshall (1950) pointed out, the idea of ‘social rights’ developed along with capitalism. Welfare measures, as instruments to realise social rights, can be seen as having evolved along with capitalist markets. This article understands welfare as social transfers that subsidise the cost of reproduction of labour power and prepare the labourer for the sale of her labour the next day (Gough 1979). Welfare can also maintain the non-working population—a step that may be required for the fulfilment of ideological commitments or social harmony. However, it may not provide people with social and political control over resources, an aspiration that many land movements place before the state.

When land is treated like a welfare programme—under landfare—it is reduced to a measure that merely subsidises the cost of reproduction of labour power. This may occur through land’s use as a dwelling ground and/or as a productive resource that partially supports the food requirements. This may resonate with the notion of ‘semi-proletarians’, wherein labourers are not fully extricated from their lands, thereby reducing the cost of reproducing labour power and serving capitalism. However, a closer scrutiny of these labourers’ position in contemporary economic relations presents a more complex picture. As Li (2009) points out, many of these labourers do not see the prospects of getting absorbed into formal sectors of capitalism for a long time; welfare here serves the crucial function of ‘making live’ these populations, rather than ‘letting them die’. Elsewhere, I have tracked the life of Adivasis *after* receiving plots from the state and show that the welfare fix approach to land provision barely manages to ‘make live’ the Adivasis (Sudheesh 2023b). Devoid of social and political control over land, recipient Adivasis fail to build a stable life, leading to the abandonment of these lands and a return to landlessness.

### **The Kerala context**

Kerala has been cited widely in the literature as a fairly successful case of land reform, initiated by Communist parties in the 1970s (Franke 1992; Herring 1983; Ramakumar 2006). Coupled with a generous welfare regime, land reform has been argued to have resulted in high standards of living, in contrast with the other Indian States. These achievements are often discussed under the rubric of the ‘Kerala model’ (Drèze and Sen 1989; Jeffrey 1992; Veron 2001). The ‘model’ has produced a vast literature, ranging from celebration and condemnation to more measured

criticism (see, e.g. Parayil 2000; Tharamangalam 2006; Oommen 2010; 1993; Devika 2010; Steur 2014b; Raman 2010; Franke and Chasin 1992; Heller 1999; Herring 1980; George 1993; Kodoth 2001). Several works have already pointed out that Kerala's land reform, though a better-implemented one in the Third World, focused on conferring permanent ownership to tenants and was less successful in its two other goals—redistribution of ceiling-surplus land and distribution of housing plots to landless labourers (Herring 1983; Scaria 2010; Radhakrishnan 1981). This article does not attempt a comprehensive review of this literature and instead focuses on the Adivasi experience.

Adivasis constitute less than 1.5 per cent of Kerala's population, raising the question of why their landlessness cannot be resolved sooner. Except for a few land-holding communities, other Adivasis have experienced loss of free access to land and forests or land alienation to settlers. Scholars have interpreted their landlessness as an outlier from the 'Kerala model' (Kurien 1995) or as the failure of the Communist parties to understand their specific experiences in a society shaped by intersecting class-caste-tribe hierarchies (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 2015; Steur 2014a). Adivasis were ignored when one of the elements of the reform—that of distributing 10 cents (a cent is a hundredth of an acre) of dwelling ground to agricultural labourers—was not paid attention. Moreover, the large plantation sector was kept out of the purview of redistribution, citing its importance to the economy. Ever since the issue of land has been kept alive by the Adivasi (and Dalit) land struggles. Kerala's landfare developed precisely in response to these struggles.

The welfare state in Kerala boasts of spending two per cent of its annual budget on welfare programmes for Adivasis, higher than their share in the State's population (GoK 2019). Despite this welfare generosity, landless Adivasis have presented cultivable land as their main demand. At least since the late 1980s, landless Adivasis have erupted in persistent land struggles, causing embarrassment to the two coalitions that have alternated in power in the State—the Left Democratic Front (LDF) led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by the Indian National Congress. This article focuses on the nature and tools of landfare as seen in state practices, and does not aim to explain why the two coalitions are reluctant to resolve the Adivasi land question. The latter would require a close examination of the changing political dynamics within the two leading parties that goes beyond the scope of this paper.

As Abrams (1988) notes, the state might be a difficult entity to locate and define, producing various ‘state ideas’ that different societies believe in differently. Scrutinising practices of the state, as Mitchell (1991) points out, can help us understand how the amorphous entity of the state comes together as a whole. I follow this line of argument in this article. Historically, the postcolonial state in Kerala evolved through the alternation in power of the two coalitions. Through its social development efforts and decentralisation of power, the state has become entrenched in the daily lives of the people here (Veron 2001; Williams et al. 2011) and posits itself as the main source of ‘egalitarianism’ (Devika 2013). Considering this, the present article brings together the work done by both coalitions while discussing the state.

### **Adivasi land struggles**

This section provides a quick overview of Adivasi land movements in Kerala, drawing on previous scholarship as well as interviews with movement leaders. It is important to note here that neither the Adivasis nor the social movements representing them are a homogenous category.<sup>3</sup> Recent scholarship has richly documented how the exclusions from Kerala’s development story have resulted in deep fissures in civil society and produced a heterogeneous array of social movements (Sreekumar and Parayil 2010; Satheesh 2020; 2021). This observation falls in line with what scholars have noted about social movements worldwide (see, e.g., Steinfort, Hendrikx, and Pijpers 2017; Lier and Stokke 2006). In the case of land demands by landless Adivasis, Kjosavik (2010) notes how specific community identities were foregrounded when the overarching Adivasi identity could not gain land.

Nevertheless, the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGMS), one of the most prominent voices in this space, has sought to bring the landless Adivasi communities under that identity (Steur 2017). Even within the AGMS, as Steur points out, the vision of an autonomous Adivasi territory by the leaders clashes with the practical need for a productive resource. Several land struggles that I documented indicate that people see the two ends as more coinciding than clashing. In 2017, the AGMS split when C.K. Janu, founder-leader, allied with the National Democratic Alliance, led by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).<sup>4</sup> Mostly in response to the rise of Adivasi social movements, the mainstream political parties also consolidated their own Adivasi wings—the Adivasi Kshema Samithi of the CPI(M), the Adivasi Congress of the Congress party, and the newly energised State unit of the Scheduled Tribe Morcha of the BJP.

As Steur (2017) points out, ‘Adivasi’ turned into a political identity in Kerala around the land struggles that began to erupt in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Historically, Adivasi landlessness has largely been a product of the settlement of more affluent communities in Adivasi areas along the Western Ghats, the establishment of plantations and the closure of forests through the Indian Forest Act 1865 by British colonisers. The earliest Adivasi land uprising in the postcolonial period was led by the Naxals in the 1970s in Wayanad against the continuing bondage of landless Adivasis. After getting crushed, these rebellions slowly gave way to democratic, civil-society mobilisations. The AGMS rose in this space through a land struggle in 2001. The struggle concluded when the UDF government guaranteed the provision of land to all landless Adivasi households, the creation of livelihoods on the distributed land, and the inclusion of all Adivasi land in the Fifth Schedule of the Indian constitution.<sup>5</sup> When the guarantees were not implemented, AGMS occupied a stretch of unused land in the Muthanga forests in Wayanad in January 2003. On 19 February that year, the UDF government ordered a violent police crackdown on the struggle, but the incident etched land as a strong demand of the landless Adivasis. Landlessness pushes the Adivasis to a complex web of expulsions from various livelihood sources, as I track elsewhere (Sudheesh 2023a).

In 2014, Janu and her followers returned to the State capital and demanded the implementation of the 2001 agreement. After 162 days of Nilpusamaram (protest by standing up until demands were met), the UDF government came to a compromise again. The agreement stated that land would be distributed to all landless Adivasi households, the Forest Rights Act (FRA) would be implemented, and Adivasi settlements (locally called ‘colonies’, often with a pejorative connotation) would be declared as Fifth Schedule areas.<sup>6</sup> This agreement too remained on paper. Land struggles continue to occur all over Kerala, led by several different groups, some including the Dalits, as exemplified by the Chengara struggle that began in 2007 (led prominently by the Sadhujana Vimochana Samyuktha Vedi), the Arippa struggle that began in 2012 (led by the Adivasi Dalit Munnetta Samthi), the Thovarimala struggle of 2019 (people-led, with the prominent presence of the Community Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Red Star) and the Nilambur struggle of 2023 (people-led).

It is also important to see how landfare has impacted movement strategies. As Johnston (2012) notes in the case of denotified tribes in western India, social movements may tend to perform ‘accommodation politics’, wherein they attempt to serve as a link between the state and marginalised communities. Social movements like the AGMS do this by balancing their oppositional politics. However, as Borrás (2019) notes, political pressures may force

movements to calibrate their demands to what is agreeable to the state. This has happened with many Adivasi social movements in Kerala, as seen in the shift in their agenda from the complete restoration of alienated lands to the acceptance of alternative plots of land after the passage of the Kerala Restriction on Transfer by and Restoration of Land to Scheduled Tribes Act 1999 (explained below).

### **Managing land claims**

The next few sections unpack the four principal features of landfare in Kerala—obfuscation, withholding of available land, projectisation and welfare fix—through an examination of the state’s legislative and policy responses to Adivasi land claims.

#### ***Obfuscation***

In the case of Kerala’s landfare, the obfuscation of land-related data exists in stark contrast with the profuse detail the state provides on welfare. I got a microscopic picture of how this worked during my fieldwork in the Kannur district. I was in a Tribal Extension Office close to the Aralam land distribution project to seek the help of ‘tribal promoters’ to locate those Adivasi households that had abandoned the land they received in the project.<sup>7</sup> The promoters were field-level agents of the state, selected from among the Adivasis to take the state’s landfare and welfare measures to Adivasi colonies. The tribal extension officer had not come yet, so I struck up a conversation with the promoters. They were in a hurry. The officer was going to the State capital the next day to attend a meeting at the Directorate of Scheduled Tribe Development. The promoters had been asked to submit statistics on the colonies under them, including on landlessness. They had all been given tablets. There was panic. No one was sure how to collect the data in such a short interval. One of them remarked, “This job is a joke.” They expected a long night with the tablets, filling in numbers from memory. Reminiscent of lower-level bureaucrats perpetuating ‘structural violence’ through arbitrary decision-making (Gupta 2012), the promoters were about to exclude many a household from the listing.

The Scheduled Tribe Development Ministers have been reporting varying figures on Adivasi landlessness in the State Legislative Assembly, indicating that obfuscation is a continuous affair. In 2008, a ‘socio-economic study’ of the Adivasis conducted by the state put the number of landless households at a low 5,158 (STDD, 2008). The number of landless Paniyas, the largest landless Adivasi community, was given as 1,689 households or a mere seven per cent of all Paniya households. The same report on another page noted that “10,517

landless families are yet to be allotted land” (*ibid.*, p.168). This internal contradiction between the figures begins to show the problems with the state data. Further, it is not even clear whether the 2008 effort was a census or a sample survey, or as the vignette above shows, last-minute form filling by field-level workers of the state. Probably in the realisation that the figure of 5,158 is absurdly low, ministers have been reporting figures of around 10,000 thereafter in the Legislative Assembly (KLA 2013; 2015; 2016; 2018a).

The actual numbers are hard to determine. Using the Employment and Unemployment Survey 2011-12 of the National Sample Survey Organisation, Yadu (2015) estimates the number of landless Adivasi households in Kerala as 21.2% of all Adivasi households or close to 20,000 households. This sample survey was not disaggregated by specific Adivasi communities and hence did not ensure representation of various communities. If Paniyas, the largest landless community, were underrepresented in the sample, the survey results would be an underestimation. Moreover, households that have abandoned the land distributed to them because of uninhabitable conditions are not counted. This means that the state is working with questionable data on Adivasi landlessness.

The obfuscation of data coexists with the elaborate paperwork that is produced on Adivasi affairs. As noted in the scholarship (N. Mathur 2015; Hull 2012), the obsession with paperwork sometimes comes to replace the actual development work by state agents. This was revealed to me during my visits to one of the zonal offices of the Integrated Tribal Development Plan (ITDP) in Wayanad district. This office took care of Adivasi welfare in one-third of the district. After allowing me to copy reams of data from the office, a clerk told me, “There is no real work going on here; land distribution stopped a while ago”. The office now focused on printing documents of the few land titles awarded here and there.

The consequence of obfuscation is the intergenerational reproduction of landlessness. Several landless Adivasi households have been applying for land for over three generations. My respondents told me that if their land struggles did not receive media coverage and create a ruckus, their likelihood of getting into the *pattaya melas* (‘land title fairs’) that the state organised was slim. Kerala is dotted by several such minor land struggles. In one such struggle that I followed in Wayanad, the Paniyas had been living in a settlement on the fringes of a canal that flooded every year during the monsoon showers. The residents had appealed for land over generations but to no avail. When the colony was flooded in 2017, they occupied a patch of the state-owned forest land and started a struggle. As soon as they entered the forest, forest officials

and Members of the Legislative Assembly came down to strike a compromise. The Paniyas were offered alternative land several kilometres away, which they refused because the original (upper-caste) Syrian Christian owners had chopped and sold off the rubber trees for timber, leaving the Adivasis with land where they would take years to grow anything. They came back to live a life of landlessness. Landfare thus worked here only as a quick-fix solution of providing immediate and cheap land to calm down the land struggle. This is symptomatic of the Kerala state's responses to Adivasi land struggles in general.

### ***Withholding available land***

The Paniyas in the settlement above had sat in land struggles for generations, showing that in the case of many households, land struggles have become a periodic life event. Ravi from the settlement above explained that they could not benefit from the several 'farm experiments' (elaborated on in the next section) that were initiated by the state; relatives who had gone over to these projects had to leave when the projects failed. Ravi's settlement is not far from tea plantations held by the company Harrison's Malayalam in Thovarimala. When landlessness made survival difficult, the residents occupied this land in 2019, claiming that the land was available for distribution. In this sub-section, I probe what this claim means. Three instances of this scenario are elaborated below: non-distribution of forests classified as 'vested', non-distribution of plantation lands, and non-declaration of Fifth Schedule areas.

In 1971, the Kerala Private Forest (Vesting and Assignment) Act came into effect, 'vesting' the state with the ownership of isolated forest patches that were either under private ownership or wastelands. The law further specified that these lands could be distributed to "agriculturalists, agricultural labourers and members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes". Following the 2001 struggle, the UDF government sought and received permission from the central government to distribute 19,000 acres of these forests to Adivasis. However, only 3,500 acres have been distributed so far. Of these, 2,200 acres belonged to the two 'farm experiments' of Sugandhagiri and Pookode that had already failed. This meant that only 1,300 acres that were transferred for distribution were non-farm vested forests. 15,500 acres of land (more than what is required to provide an acre each to the official figure of 10,000 landless households) remain undistributed.

Further, plantation lands remain undistributed. Plantations, mostly of tea, were set up in Kerala during the colonial times by private British companies on lands leased from princely states or the British administration. When the country became independent, these companies

ceased to exist under the Foreign Exchange Regulations Act 1947. Many of them transferred control of the plantations to private Indian companies. However, the lease periods of these plantations have currently expired and, therefore, the land belongs to the state by law. As many as nine different commissions set up by various governments in the State had indicated that the plantations must be taken over, including the Rajamanickam Commission constituted in 2013. The commission estimated that such land was equivalent to almost one-seventh of the non-forest land currently in the state's possession, totalling around 500,000 acres (for perspective, the total number of all Adivasi households in the State is only around 140,000).<sup>8</sup> One of the major encroachers has been Harrisons Malayalam Limited, which squats on 73,000 acres of land (KLA 2017).<sup>9</sup> Rather than implement the Rajamanickam Commission's recommendations, the LDF government currently in power removed the head of the commission, after whom it was named, from the responsibility of taking over these lands.

The non-distribution of the vested forests and the undermining of the process of taking over plantation lands amount to the withholding of available land. On many occasions, the governments have cited 'land scarcity' in the State as a reason for the slow progress in the provision of land (KLA 2019). However, the availability of 15,500 acres of vested forests and 500,000 acres of plantation land exposes the weak foundations of the scarcity narrative.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, the agreement that the state government had reached with the protesters in 2001 has still not been implemented in full. The government appointed one commission after another to study the possibilities of bringing the geographically scattered colonies and resettlement sites under the purview of the Fifth Schedule. The Fifth Schedule would facilitate the implementation of the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act 1998, thereby paving the way for the setting up of Adivasi village assemblies with extensive powers over development planning and resource use. The delays in implementing these provisions meant that a crucial opportunity for wiping out Adivasi landlessness was lost. The delay appears deliberate. The government of Kerala had told the Dhebar Commission of 1961 and the Bhuria Commission of 2004, both set up by the central government, that Fifth Schedule areas could be established. It further submitted a report in 2015 to the Indian President, identifying 2,445 Adivasi settlements for the purpose. In 2017, the government reported in the Kerala Legislative Assembly that there was no clarity on the boundaries of these units (KLA 2018b). Setting up its commissions repeatedly to 'study the possibilities' of declaring Fifth Schedule areas has been an ingenious way found by the state to withhold available land.

For the Adivasis, the state's withholding of available land means that the current provision of land at best serves as a palliative. Shantha, one of my Paniya respondents who had received land in the Aralam project, expressed her dismay thus: "Who knows where the government will dump us? It would have been better if no land was given." Despite receiving an acre in Aralam, she continues to work as a daily wage labourer and lives in her old settlement, as she was not able to find wage work from the remote location that she was put in. She held on to the land initially as it provided a place to stay and look for work, but when this became increasingly difficult, she abandoned the land. I met several such respondents; half the 3,000 households that received land in Aralam have abandoned their plots. Landfare thus merely subsidises the cost of reproduction of labour power by providing a place to stay at best and ends up reproducing landlessness at worst.

### ***Projectisation***

When compelled by social movements, the Kerala state has attempted to reduce the state-enumerated figure of landless households to zero. This target-bound reduction of Adivasi landlessness through projects run with dedicated funds and functionaries but blind to power imbalances embedded therein is referred to as 'projectisation' here. It comes close to what Li (2007) calls 'rendering technical' the complex problems of development. Most of the projects are implemented through an elaborate bureaucracy, stretching from the State capital to the colonies. The Directorate of Scheduled Tribes Development at the top watches over 10 Tribal Development Offices and seven Integrated Tribal Development Plan offices spread across the State. These offices have their arms further spread out through 53 Tribal Extension Offices. Each extension office hires around 20 tribal promoters on two-year contracts.

One of the earliest experiments for the resettlement of landless Adivasis was undertaken in Cheengeri, Wayanad, in 1957, soon after the formation of the State of Kerala. The State government, led by the undivided Communist Party of India, bought about 500 acres of land from the central government using funds under the heads of Scheduled Tribe development and set up a farm.<sup>11</sup> The Cheengeri Tribal Project established thereafter brought in 100-odd landless Adivasi households, who would work as employees on the farm. Bureaucrats occupied administrative positions and were hardly interested in making the project work for the Adivasis. The farm started to make losses and salary payments got stalled. As a result, the resident households were forced to abandon the site and go back to live in the colonies they came from, outside the farm. Settlers from southern Kerala subsequently set up houses on these lands. In

1995, 250 landless Adivasi households occupied the farm. The movement was crushed by the police, then under a UDF government.

The script of this ‘farm experiment’ was repeated over and over in other projects. Most of them ended up in failure due to bureaucratic mismanagement. In the 1970s, Wayanad saw the setting up of several farms that were to be run as cooperative societies and gave a share of the profits to rehabilitated households. The Sugandhagiri cardamom project (1976), the Pookode dairy project (the late 1970s), the Priyadarshini tea estate (1994) and many minor plantations were set up this way. The Sugandhagiri project, spread across 5,000 acres, stands as an illustration of the failure of such a project. The project came up by rehabilitating 750 Adivasi households freed from bondage. By 1999, only 350 households remained on the project site as the enterprise ran on losses (Mathrubhumi 1999a). Finding livelihood became so difficult that an Adivasi resident died of starvation in 1992 (Mathrubhumi 1999b; 1999c).

Besides the farm experiments, the second set of efforts undertaken to end Adivasi landlessness was through legislation. The Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act was passed in 1975 under the United Front government, which consisted of the Communist Party of India (CPI) and the Congress.<sup>12</sup> The law stipulated the restoration of alienated land in full to the original Adivasi owner. The law further prohibited any transfer of land from an Adivasi to a non-Adivasi person after the commencement of the act (Bijoy and Raman 2003). The transferees were settlers from other parts of Kerala; they lobbied hard with the governments to do away with the law. In 1999, buckling under settler pressure, the LDF government repealed and replaced it with a new law—the Kerala Restriction on Transfer by and Restoration of Land to Scheduled Tribes Act. The new law changed the narrative of the Adivasi land question in the state from the restoration of alienated lands to the distribution of plots of 1-5 acres. It further legalised all land alienated below five acres, thereby letting a large number of Adivasis remain landless (Parmar 2018). The law was disputed in the Supreme Court, but the court upheld it in 2009 (*State of Kerala and Another v. People’s Union for Civil Liberties* 2009).

The largest of the land distribution sites set up after the 2001 struggle was the Aralam farm, which was bought by the state government from the central government using funds meant for Adivasis. The script of the ‘farm experiment’ was repeated here but with a major tweak: of the 5,500 acres of Aralam, 2,500 acres were converted into a commercial farm in the form of a public limited company under the ownership of the Kerala government (and not a

cooperative society that would have included residents in the governance and shared profits with them). The rest of the land was distributed to Adivasis households—an acre each. Any commitment to provide sustained income to the resettled households was thus erased. Large-scale land abandonments have been reported here and in 23 other sites of land distribution (Paravath 2015).

Kerala was already experimenting with these landfare measures when the Forest Rights Act or FRA came into effect at the national level in 2006, after prolonged agitations by various Adivasi organisations. In the Kerala context, the documents distributed do not guarantee complete ownership over the land. The law recognises existing habitation in forestland and issues a ‘Record of Rights’. In Malayalam, this is called a *kaivasharekha* or ‘document of having in hand’ land, which, in practice, falls far short of the guarantees provided in the act. My reading of the Legislative Assembly archives showed that the accepted number of applications was subtracted from the government-enumerated figure of landless households (around 10,000) to show that landlessness was consistently coming down. Further, the latest data on the implementation of the FRA shows that the average size of land approved for distribution to households is 1.3 acres (MoTA 2019)—far less than the 9.9 acres that are allowed in the FRA but very much in line with the 1-5 acres stipulated in the 1999 Act (in practice, only one acre is ever given). This demonstrates how the FRA is being used to fulfil the requirements of the 1999 Act.

In 2013, the UDF government initiated the project titled Aashikkum Bhoomi Adivasikku Swantham (‘land desired by the Adivasis will be theirs’) that followed the market-led willing-buyer-willing-seller model. It provided for Rs 1 million (roughly £10,000) per Adivasi household to purchase a minimum of 25 cents and a maximum of an acre. The burden of finding a willing seller was placed on the Adivasis. Seven hundred and seventy-seven households were given an average of 38 cents under this project (KLA 2018c). The project soon ran into controversies of mismanagement. The Public Accounts Standing Committee of the Legislative Assembly found discrepancies in the utilisation of funds by the project. Only 39 per cent of the allotted Rs 1.75 billion (roughly £17.5 million) was spent. The LDF government that came to power in 2016 terminated this project and shifted the burden of finding land to the district collector, through a ‘land bank’ of identified plots, allotted to landless households through a lottery system. No land has been distributed under this scheme so far as per the latest data available (STDD 2018).

In sum, the projectisation of ending landlessness ends up reproducing landlessness by forcing households to abandon the land received. Far from granting substantive control over land that the land struggles demanded, these projects hardly helped the households get out of poverty, reminiscent of the failed projects that Ferguson (1990) captured in Lesotho. At best, they provide a dwelling ground and help sustain the Adivasi labourer from one day to another to work for wages. The voice of Rajeevan, one of the recipients of land in Aralam, is instructive in this regard: “This land just helps us be. We are not starving, that is it. But if I do not get *coolie pani* (wage labour) continuously for a few days, we do not know how we will survive. We are all in this situation.” The scattered land provision might help the Adivasis live, but it remains a far cry from the goal of providing them with a stable life.

A further ethnographic vignette presents starkly the impact of the farm experiments cited above. On 22 February 2019, Madhu, a young man from the Kurumba Adivasi community in Attappady, was beaten to death by neighbours from more affluent communities on the allegation of stealing food from an eatery nearby. Madhu had been estranged from home and lived in the forest. While going door-to-door along with Adivasis activists to invite community members for a remembrance ceremony scheduled for a couple of days later, I noticed that the Kurumba settlements had been reduced to ghettos, although they had received land. The government had pooled the land into a cooperative society in a typical farm experiment. The experiment failed to take off, reducing them to “tenants on their own land”, as many respondents noted. At the remembrance ceremony, Madhu’s mother demanded justice—not in terms of punishment for the perpetrators but in terms of distributing the land among the households. In addition to the failure of the farm experiments, this episode also brings out how landfare shapes the very nature of land demands: although the alienation of land from Kurumbas to settlers can be traced, the community is led to demand *distribution* of plots rather than the restoration of original lands lost.

### ***Welfare Fix***

When the landfare projects fail to take off, the state in Kerala has responded with what it does best—welfare—with an amplified effort of social transfers that go beyond the usual allocations. The aim is to entice the Adivasis to come back and take up the plots in resettlement sites and make the projects work. The case of Aralam illustrates this. During my fieldwork, I found rubber-sheeting machines waiting to be redistributed in the TRDM office, although most Adivasis who came there were uninterested in rubber work. A range of infrastructure projects

was sanctioned with the sponsorship of the National Bank for Agricultural and Rural Development, estimated at Rs 607.50 million (£6 million) (KLA 2018b). The sponsorship was to bring in new roads, bridges, training in farming techniques and women's self-help groups. Food parcels also went far beyond the usual provision through fair-price shops—Aralam residents were given 15 kg of extra rice every month, along with sugar, lentils and kerosene. The primary health centre on the campus has also been beefed up with an ambulance service and palliative care.

Here we begin to see how the state in Kerala uses the injection of welfare to keep land distribution sites like Aralam going, despite their shaky foundations. Currently, the Scheduled Tribes Development Department (STDD) is in charge of the welfare schemes, just as the landfare measures, and covers every stage of the lifecycle. Welfare programmes are taken to the settlements through tribal promoters. With one promoter for approximately every 115 households, this is quite an extensive state machinery.<sup>13</sup>

There are projects for the colonies as well. The Ambedkar Settlement Scheme aims to renovate the colonies by providing amenities like water, housing, sanitation and roads. The Community Kitchen programme appoints the promoters to physically go to the allotted colonies and cook food for children, pregnant and breastfeeding women and the elderly. There are special packages to pump funds into schemes meant solely for the Paniyas, Adiyas and Kattunaikkas, three of the most marginalised Adivasi communities in Wayanad. The crux here is that the Adivasi settlements, which are products of historical landlessness and markers of the low position accorded to landless Adivasis in the intersecting caste-tribe hierarchy, have been turned into units of welfare governance and renovation, rather than targets of elimination through comprehensive land redistribution, and are kept alive and running through the welfare fix.

The implications of the welfare fix for the land struggles are demonstrated by the Livelihood Inclusion and Financial Empowerment Programme Mission (LIFE Mission). The LDF government that came to power in 2016 brought out this mission-mode project for the entire State, aimed at providing housing to all landless-homeless in the state in five years (LIFE Mission 2016). Of the 8,060 households identified in the first phase of the project in Wayanad, 6,430 were Adivasi households (Kerala Kaumudi 2019). When I visited Aralam, I found the promoters in a last-minute hurry to get the number of applications under the LIFE Mission right. A promoter confided in me: "They are simply rebuilding existing houses. These houses

were abandoned. We had to wade through tall grasses to find some of them!” The inhabitants of these plots/houses had abandoned the site unable to make a stable living possible in the distributed land. Houses were being rebuilt for no Adivasi households to live in them.

In the case of the Adivasis, the welfare fix under the LIFE Mission does the work of erasing the demands for land by the landless households by giving houses, many in cramped apartment complexes, and thereby bringing them out of their communities. Critics of the mission point out that the flats built under the LIFE Mission were the new “colonies”: vertical ones, departing from the old horizontal ones (Dhanya 2019). Thus, welfare fix further brings out how the state’s response to Adivasi land claims in the form of accelerated welfare measures simply does the work of providing palliative in the wake of rising precariousness.

## **Conclusion**

This article demonstrated the analytical utility of bringing the dispersed land provision measures used by states to land demands in contemporary times under the rubric of ‘landfare’. The article illustrated that distinct from comprehensive land reform, landfare helps us probe the technologies of state responses to land demands as well as their effects. In terms of the instruments used, the article showed in the case of Kerala that they work through the obfuscation of landlessness data, the withholding of available land, projectisation and welfare fix. In terms of the effects, this inquiry brought out how such measures either reduce land to a welfare programme that does the bare minimum task of allowing survival or entraps the Adivasis into a cycle of demanding land, receiving land, being forced to abandon the land, and struggling for land again. It also noted how landfare has the effect of shaping the demands of land movements, as seen in the instance of the shift from restoration to distribution of land in the case of Kerala’s land struggles.

The case of landfare in Kerala has lessons with wider relevance. It shows how states can create a semblance of responding to land demands without requiring comprehensive land reform. It answers Bernstein’s original provocation to empirically determine how the agrarian questions of labour manifest on the ground: When the labouring classes struggle to survive, land demands become pronounced; for the state, landfare becomes the chosen mechanism of response. Such an inquiry helps us go beyond the apocalyptic images that have been presented to picture people being pushed out of capitalism having nowhere to go (Davis 2006): this article shows that land demands and state responses are both very much alive. As scholars have noted, agrarian transition is not a linear process everywhere, following the same pattern (Cowan 2018;

Hall 2012). Against this backdrop, the enquiry undertaken here brings nuance into the current discussions on re-imagining land reform, particularly in the wake of global debates on food sovereignty, just transition and affirmation of Indigenous land rights, and the intersection between these themes. Understanding that the welfare state can ostensibly present a picture of responsiveness to each of these ideals and yet surreptitiously reproduce landlessness is a lesson that deserves attention.

### **Acknowledgements**

The author is grateful to Prof. Nikita Sud, Dr Rakib Akhtar and Dr Samira Afzal for advice and support. Thanks to Aditya Sharma for the map.

### **Declaration**

This research benefitted from a doctoral scholarship from the Clarendon Fund at the University of Oxford. The research received ethics approval from the University of Oxford. The author reports no conflict of interest. Data used in this article is available upon request.

### **Endnotes**

---

<sup>1</sup> The article uses ‘State’ to refer to the subnational entities of India and ‘the state’ to refer to the institutional and theoretical governing apparatus. Adivasis (literally, first inhabitants) are often referred to as the indigenous peoples of India. For the historical shaping of the Adivasi identity and its contentious relationship with the terms ‘tribe’ and ‘indigenous’, see Radhakrishna (2016). This paper uses ‘Adivasis’ in most places and ‘Scheduled Tribes’ to refer to the governmental category.

<sup>2</sup> The experiences of these communities can be extended to a fair extent to the other landless Adivasi communities. There are a handful of communities that own land to a fair extent. These communities are not considered in this study. In Wayanad, these are the Kurichyas and Kurumas who considered themselves to be higher in the hierarchy among Adivasis in the district.

<sup>3</sup> I am grateful to the anonymous reform for emphasising this point.

<sup>4</sup> Janu’s move was prompted by the continuous marginalisation she faced in the two major alliances and her conviction that she had to get into electoral politics to get land. My interactions were mainly with the other group.

<sup>5</sup> The Fifth Schedule is a section of the constitution that provides special safeguards, including village assemblies and extensive decision-making rights over land use and minerals. Kerala has never had any Fifth Schedule area.

<sup>6</sup> The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, commonly known as the Forest Rights Act, was passed by the Indian parliament in 2006 to provide user rights documents (known as Records of Rights) to Scheduled Tribes as well as some other communities that had lived in the forests for generations. The law grants ‘individual rights’ to households and ‘community rights’ to communities. The latter includes the right to access forest resources and build infrastructure within the restrictions mentioned.

<sup>7</sup> The Tribal Extension Office is a local arm of the Scheduled Tribe Development Department of the Government of Kerala. The headquarters of the department is called the Directorate of Scheduled Tribe Development. See the section ‘Projectisation’ for an elaboration.

<sup>8</sup> The Revenue Department manages all non-forest state land.

<sup>9</sup> The company with colonial origins is currently owned by the R.P. Goenka Group, headquartered in Mumbai.

---

<sup>10</sup> See Scoones et al. (2019) for a discussion of the scarcity narrative in global land deals.

<sup>11</sup> The Communist Party of India split in 1964 at the national level into the two parties, the Communist Party of India (CPI) and Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI(M).

<sup>12</sup> The CPI(M) was in the opposition at the time.

<sup>13</sup> The tribal promoters exist in addition to the elected members of the local governments.

## References

- Abrams, Philip. 1988. 'Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State'. *Journal of Historical Sociology* 1 (1): 58–89. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6443.1988.tb00004.x>.
- Akram-Lodhi, A. Haroon, and Cristóbal Kay. 2010a. 'Surveying the Agrarian Question (Part 1): Unearthing Foundations, Exploring Diversity'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 37 (1): 177–202. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150903498838>.
- . 2010b. 'Surveying the Agrarian Question (Part 2): Current Debates and Beyond'. *The Journal of Peasant Studies* 37 (2): 255–84. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066151003594906>.
- Aliber, Michael, and Ben Cousins. 2013. 'Livelihoods after Land Reform in South Africa'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 13 (1): 140–65. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12012>.
- Asiama, Kwabena, Monica Lengoiboni, and Paul Van der Molen. 2017. 'In the Land of the Dammed: Assessing Governance in Resettlement of Ghana's Bui Dam Project'. *Land* 6 (4): 80. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land6040080>.
- Bernstein, Henry. 2006. 'Is There an Agrarian Question in the 21st Century?' *Canadian Journal of Development Studies* 27 (4): 449–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02255189.2006.9669166>.
- Bijoy, C. R., and K. Ravi Raman. 2003. 'Muthanga: The Real Story'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 38 (20): 1975–82.
- Borras, Saturnino M. 2019. 'Agrarian Social Movements: The Absurdly Difficult but Not Impossible Agenda of Defeating Right-wing Populism and Explo'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 30 (1): 3–36.
- Borras, Saturnino M., and Jennifer C. Franco. 2010. 'Contemporary Discourses and Contestations around Pro-poor Land Policies and Land Governance'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 10 (1): 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0366.2009.00243.x>.
- Cowan, Thomas. 2018. 'The Urban Village, Agrarian Transformation, and Rentier Capitalism in Gurgaon, India'. *Antipode* 50 (5): 1244–66. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12404>.
- Davis, Mike. 2006. *Planet of Slums*. London and New York: Verso.
- Devika, J. 2010. 'Egalitarian Developmentalism, Communist Mobilisation, and the Question of Caste in Kerala State, India'. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 69 (3): 799–820. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0021911810001506>.
- . 2013. 'Contemporary Dalit Assertions in Kerala: Governmental Categories versus Identity Politics?' *History and Sociology of South Asia* 7 (1): 1–17.
- Dhanya, K.R. 2019. 'Life Mission Flatukal: Vaayuvum Velichavumillaatha Puthiya Jaathicolonykal [Malayalam: Life Mission Flats: New Caste Colonies without Air or Light]'. *Azhimukham*, 28 April 2019. <https://www.azhimukham.com/keralam-life-mission-flats-becomes-new-caste-colonies-kr-dhanya/>.
- Drèze, Jean, and Amartya Sen. 1989. *Hunger and Public Action*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- El Ghonemy, Mohamad Riad. 2009. *Anti-Poverty Land Reform Issues Never Die : Collected Essays on Development Economics in Practice*. London: Routledge.
- Ferguson, James. 1990. *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development', Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Franke, Richard W. 1992. 'Land Reform versus Inequality in Nadur Village, Kerala'. *Journal of Anthropological Research* 48 (2): 81–116.
- Franke, Richard W., and Barbara H. Chasin. 1992. *Kerala: Development through Radical Reform*. New Delhi: Promilla in collaboration with the Institute for Food and Development Policy, San Francisco.

- George, K. K. 1993. *Limits to Kerala Model of Development : An Analysis of Fiscal Crisis and Its Implications*. Trivandrum: Centre for Development Studies.
- GoK. 2019. 'Budget Speech 2019-20'. Thiruvananthapuram: Government of Kerala. [http://www.keralacm.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/BudgetSpeech2019-20-English\\_12.pdf](http://www.keralacm.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/BudgetSpeech2019-20-English_12.pdf).
- Goodwin, Geoff. 2017. 'The Quest to Bring Land under Social and Political Control: Land Reform Struggles of the Past and Present in Ecuador'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 17 (3): 571–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12181>.
- Gough, Ian. 1979. *The Political Economy of the Welfare State*. London: Macmillan.
- Gupta, Akhil. 2012. *Red Tape: Bureaucracy, Structural Violence, and Poverty in India*. Durham, N.C. ; London: Duke University Press.
- Hall, Derek. 2012. 'Rethinking Primitive Accumulation: Theoretical Tensions and Rural Southeast Asian Complexities'. *Antipode* 44 (4): 1188–1208. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00978.x>.
- Heller, Patrick. 1999. *The Labour of Development: Workers and the Transformation of Capitalism in Kerala, India*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.
- Herring, Ronald J. 1980. 'Abolition of Landlordism in Kerala: A Redistribution of Privilege'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 15 (26): A59–69.
- . 1983. *Land to the Tiller: The Political Economy of Agrarian Reform in South Asia*. New Haven ; London: Yale University Press.
- Hull, Matthew S. 2012. *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Jayne, T. S., Takashi Yamano, Michael T. Weber, David Tschirley, Rui Benfica, Antony Chapoto, and Ballard Zulu. 2003. 'Smallholder Income and Land Distribution in Africa: Implications for Poverty Reduction Strategies'. *Food Policy* 28 (3): 253–75. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192\(03\)00046-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0306-9192(03)00046-0).
- Jeffrey, Robin. 1992. *Politics, Women and Well-Being: How Kerala Became 'a Model'*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Johnston, Caleb. 2012. 'The Political Art of Patience: Adivasi Resistance in India'. *Antipode* 44 (4): 1268–86. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2011.00967.x>.
- Kerala Kaumudi. 2019. 'Life Mission Paddhati: Wayanattil Poorthiyaayathu 9081 Veedukal [Malayalam: Life Mission Project: 9081 Completed in Wayanad]', 28 July 2019. <https://keralakaumudi.com/news/news.php?id=134466&u=my-home-life-mission>.
- Kjosavik, Darley Jose. 2010. 'Politicising Development: Re-imagining Land Rights and Identities in Highland Kerala, India'. *Forum for Development Studies* 37 (2): 243–68. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08039410.2010.481448>.
- Kjosavik, Darley Jose, and N. Shanmugaratnam. 2015. *Political Economy of Development in India: Indigeneity in Transition in the State of Kerala*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- KLA. 2013. '13th Legislative Assembly Question and Answers: Question No.249'. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Legislative Assembly.
- . 2015. '13th Legislative Assembly, 15th Session: Unstarred Question 2441'. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Legislative Assembly.
- . 2016. '14th Legislative Assembly, 1st Session: Unstarred Question 503'. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Legislative Assembly.
- . 2017. '14th KLA, Session 9: Unstarred Question 1348: Harrison Company Kayyeriya Bhoomi [Malayalam: Land Encroached by Harrisons Malayalam]'. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Legislative Assembly.
- . 2018a. '14th Legislative Assembly, 11th Session: Unstarred Question 873'. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Legislative Assembly.
- . 2018b. 'Aram Mekhalayile Bhoomi Vitharanam (Malayalam: Land Distribution in Aralam Area)'. Vol. 13th Session, 30 November. Kerala Legislative Assembly.

- . 2018c. 'Bhoorahitharaaya Pattika Varga Kudumbangal (Malayalam: Landless Scheduled Tribe Households)'. Vol. 11th Session. Kerala Legislative Assembly.
- . 2019. '14th KLA, 14th Session: Unstarred Question 2562: Vanaavakaasha Niyamam'. Thiruvananthapuram: Kerala Legislative Assembly.
- Kodoth, Praveena. 2001. 'Gender, Family and Property Rights: Questions from Kerala's Land Reforms'. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* 8 (2): 291–306. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097152150100800209>.
- Kurien, John. 1995. 'The Kerala Model: Its Central Tendency and the Outlier'. *Social Scientist* 23 (1/3): 70–90.
- Li, Tania Murray. 2007. *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics*. Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press.
- . 2009. 'To Make Live or Let Die? Rural Dispossession and the Protection of Surplus Populations'. *Antipode* 41:66–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00717.x>.
- . 2021. 'Commons, Co-Ops and Corporations: Assembling Indonesia's Twenty-First Century Land Reform'. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 48 (3): 613–39. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2021.1890718>.
- Lier, David Christoffer, and Kristian Stokke. 2006. 'Maximum Working Class Unity? Challenges to Local Social Movement Unionism in Cape Town'. *Antipode* 38 (4): 802–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2006.00477.x>.
- LIFE Mission. 2016. 'Aim'. Government of Kerala. 2016. <https://lifemission.kerala.gov.in/ml/aim>.
- Maitra, Sreya. 2009. 'Development Induced Displacement: Issues of Compensation and Resettlement: Experiences from the Narmada Valley and Sardar Sarovar Project'. *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 10 (2): 191–211.
- Marshall, T. H. 1950. *Citizenship and Social Class : And Other Essays*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Mathrubhumi. 1999a. 'Thengunna Sugandhagiri 1: Sugandhagiri Dainyathayudeyum Avagananayudeyum Mukham (Sugandhagiri Sobs: Sugandhagiri Has a Face of Misery and Neglect)'. *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 31 October 1999.
- . 1999b. 'Thengunna Sugandhagiri 4: Sugandhagiriyude Adhapananam (Malayalam: Sugandhagiri Sobs 4: Sugandhagiri's Fall)'. *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 3 November 1999.
- . 1999c. 'Thengunna Sugandhagiri 5: Ivide Narakikkunnu Jeevithangal (Malayalam: Sugandhagiri Sobs 5: Lives Suffer Here)'. *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 4 November 1999.
- Mathur, H.M. 2013. *Displacement and Resettlement in India: The Human Cost of Development*. New Delhi: Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Displacement-and-Resettlement-in-India-The-Human-Cost-of-Development/Mathur/p/book/9781138086982>.
- Mathur, Nayanika. 2015. "'It's a Conspiracy Theory and Climate Change": Of Beastly Encounters and Cervine Disappearances in Himalayan India'. *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 5 (1): 87. <https://doi.org/10.14318/hau5.1.005>.
- Mitchell, Timothy. 1991. 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics'. *The American Political Science Review* 85 (1): 77–96. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1962879>.
- MoTA. 2019. 'Monthly Update on Status of Implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006'. New Delhi: Ministry of Tribal Affairs. [http://fra.org.in/document/Statewise%20FRA%20Implementation%20Status%20upto%2031st%20July%202019\\_India.pdf](http://fra.org.in/document/Statewise%20FRA%20Implementation%20Status%20upto%2031st%20July%202019_India.pdf).
- Moyo, Sam. 2011. 'Changing Agrarian Relations after Redistributive Land Reform in Zimbabwe'. *Journal of Peasant Studies* 38 (5): 939–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03066150.2011.634971>.
- Neef, Andreas, Siphath Touch, and Jamaree Chiengthong. 2013. 'The Politics and Ethics of Land Concessions in Rural Cambodia'. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics* 26 (6): 1085–1103. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-013-9446-y>.
- Oommen, M. A. 1993. 'Land Reforms and Economic Change: Experience and Lessons from Kerala'. In *Essays on Kerala Economy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press and India Book House.

- 
- Oommen, M.A. 2010. 'Freedom, Economic Reform and the Kerala "Model"'. In *Development, Democracy and the State : Critiquing the Kerala Model of Development*. London ; New York: Routledge.
- Paravath, Biju. 2015. 'Neethikittatha Adivasi Jeevitham (Malayalam: Adivasi Lives That Do Not Get Justice)'. *Mathrubhumi Daily*, 11 November 2015.  
<https://www.mathrubhumi.com/features/social-issues/adivasi-life-sans-justice-malayalam-news-1.662567>.
- Parayil, Govindan. 2000. *Kerala : The Development Experience : Reflections on Sustainability and Replicability*. London: Zed.
- Parmar, Pooja. 2018. *Indigeneity and Legal Pluralism in India: Claims, Histories, Meanings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Polanyi, Karl. 1944. *The Great Transformation*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Radhakrishna, Meena. 2016. 'Introduction'. In *First Citizens: Studies on Adivasis, Tribals, and Indigenous Peoples in India*, edited by Meena Radhakrishna. New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Radhakrishnan, P. 1981. 'Land Reforms in Theory and Practice: The Kerala Experience'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 16 (52): A129-137.
- Ramakumar, R. 2006. 'Public Action, Agrarian Change and the Standard of Living of Agricultural Workers: A Study of a Village in Kerala'. *Journal of Agrarian Change* 6 (3): 306–45.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0366.2006.00124.x>.
- Raman, K. Ravi. 2010. *Development, Democracy and the State: Critiquing the Kerala Model of Development*. London: Routledge.
- Sangvai, Sanjay. 1995. 'Re-Opening Sardar Sarovar Issue: Significant Gain of Narmada Struggle'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 30 (11): 542–44.
- Satheesh, Silpa. 2020. 'Moving beyond Class: A Critical Review of Labor-Environmental Conflicts from the Global South'. *Sociology Compass* 14 (7): e12797. <https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12797>.
- . 2021. 'Fighting in the Name of Workers: Exploring the Dynamics of Labour-Environmental Conflicts in Kerala'. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Environmental Labour Studies*, edited by Nora Räthzel, Dimitris Stevis, and David Uzzell, 199–223. Cham: Springer International Publishing. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-71909-8\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-71909-8_9).
- Scaria, Suma. 2010. 'Changes in Land Relations: The Political Economy of Land Reforms in a Kerala Village'. *Economic and Political Weekly* 45 (26/27): 191–98.
- Scoones, Ian. 2018. *Land Reform in Zimbabwe : Challenges for Policy*. Brighton: Create Space.
- Scoones, Ian, Rebecca Smalley, Ruth Hall, and Dzodzi Tsikata. 2019. 'Narratives of Scarcity: Framing the Global Land Rush'. *Geoforum* 101:231–41.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.06.006>.
- Shrestha, N. R., and D. Conway. 1985. 'Issues in Population Pressure, Land Resettlement, and Development: The Case of Nepal'. *Studies in Comparative International Development* 20 (1): 55–82. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02718318>.
- Smyth, Eddie, Michael Steyn, Ana Maria Esteves, Daniel M. Franks, and Kemal Vaz. 2015. 'Five "Big" Issues for Land Access, Resettlement and Livelihood Restoration Practice: Findings of an International Symposium'. *Impact Assessment and Project Appraisal* 33 (3): 220–25.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14615517.2015.1037665>.
- Sreekumar, T. T., and Govindan Parayil. 2010. 'Social Space, Civil Society and Transformative Politics of New Social Movements in Kerala'. In *Development, Democracy, and the State : Critiquing the Kerala Model of Development*. Development, Democracy, and the State : Critiquing the Kerala Model of Development. - London : Routledge, ISBN 978-0-203-85643-7. - 2010, p. 237-253. New York and London: Routledge.
- State of Kerala and Another v. People's Union for Civil Liberties. 2009. Supreme Court of India.
- STDD. 2008. 'Report on Socio Economic Status'. Thiruvananthapuram: Scheduled Tribes Development Department.

- 
- . 2018. 'Government Order G.O.(M.S.) No.21/2018/SCSTDD'. Thiruvananthapuram: Government of Kerala.
- Steinfort, Lavinia, Bas Hendriks, and Roos Pijpers. 2017. 'Communal Performativity—A Seed for Change? The Solidarity of Thessaloniki's Social Movements in the Diverse Fights Against Neoliberalism'. *Antipode* 49 (5): 1446–63. <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12351>.
- Steur, Luisa. 2014a. 'Adivasis and Communists in Post-Reform Kerala: Neoliberalism, Political Disillusionment, and the Indigenist Challenge.' In *Savage Attack : Tribal Insurgency in India*, edited by Crispin Bates and Alpa Shah. New Delhi: Social Science Press.
- . 2014b. 'An "Expanded" Class Perspective: Bringing Capitalism down to Earth in the Changing Political Lives of Adivasi Workers in Kerala'. *Modern Asian Studies* 48 (5): 1334–57. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0026749X14000407>.
- . 2017. *Indigenist Mobilization: Confronting Electoral Communism and Precarious Livelihoods in Post-Reform Kerala*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Sudheesh, R.C. 2023a. 'Adivasi Migrant Labour and Agrarian Capitalism in Southern India'. *Journal of Agrarian Change*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12540>.
- . 2023b. 'State Life: Land, Welfare and Management of the Landless in Kerala, India'. *Development and Change* 54 (4): 870–91. <https://doi.org/10.1111/dech.12789>.
- Tharamangalam, Joseph. 2006. *Kerala : The Paradoxes of Public Action and Development*. New Delhi: Orient Longman.
- Veron, Rene. 2001. 'The "New" Kerala Model: Lessons for Sustainable Development'. *World Development* 29 (4): 601–17. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X\(00\)00119-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0305-750X(00)00119-4).
- Williams, Glyn, Binitha V. Thampi, D. Narayana, Sailaja Nandigama, and Dwaipayana Bhattacharyya. 2011. 'Performing Participatory Citizenship: Politics and Power in Kerala's Kudumbashree Programme'. *The Journal of Development Studies* 47 (8): 1261–80. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220388.2010.527949>.
- Wolford, Wendy. 2007. 'Land Reform in the Time of Neoliberalism: A Many-Splendored Thing'. *Antipode* 39 (3): 550–70. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2007.00539.x>.
- Yadu, C. R. 2015. 'The Land Question and the Mobility of the Marginalized: A Study of Land Inequality in Kerala'. *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy* 4 (3): 327–70. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2277976016637990>.