PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF DEVELOPMENT:

A Study of Two Tribal Communities in Wayanad District, Kerala

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DECLARATION

I, **Susamma Isac,** hereby declare that this dissertation entitled '**Perceptions and Experiences of Development: A Study of Two Tribal Communities in Wayanad District, Kerala'** is the outcome of my own study undertaken under the guidance of **Dr. Leena Abraham, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai**. It has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of this Institute or of any other institute or university. I have duly acknowledged all the sources used by me in the preparation of this dissertation.

November 30, 2012



Susamma Isac

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled '**Perceptions and Experiences of Development: A Study of Two Tribal Communities in Wayanad District, Kerala'** is the record of the original work done by **Susamma Isac** under my guidance and supervision. The results of the research presented in this dissertation have not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, or certificate of this Institute or any other institute or university.

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ABSTRACT

Perceptions and Experiences of Development: A Study of Two Tribal Communities in Wayanad District, Kerala

The development discourse, critiqued by scholars and peoples' movements, continues to expand and encompass all aspects of Adivasi life. Studies show that the development projects exclude and alienate Adivasi communities in India and they describe the history of Adivasi development in India in terms of material deprivation and cultural marginalisation. While the socio-political and cultural 'exclusion' is acknowledged as a universal feature of Adivasi life, the everyday experience of their 'exclusion' differs among different Adivasi communities. This is reflected in their development status and the socio-economic stratification among them. Existing research attributes the differential development outcomes to certain historical advantages and disadvantages. By exploring the experiences of development of two different Adivasi communities in Wayanad in Kerala, this study attempts to understand the differential development outcomes, the processes of marginalisation and the reproduction of historical advantages and disadvantages. Two Adivasi communities with contrasting development status and historical features have been selected: the Paniyas with a history of slavery and landlessness and currently with a low educational and health status, and the Kurichias who were matrilineal and landed, with relatively better educational and health status.

Specific Objectives

1. To understand the Paniyas' and Kurichias' access to land, forest and other material resources.
2. To analyze how the two select Adivasi communities perceive and utilise development programmes for education, health and employment.
3. To understand and analyze the Adivasis' perception of the idea of development vis-à-vis that of the state.
4. To analyze the Paniyas' and Kurichias' everyday experience of the development process and their individual and collective struggles.
5. To examine the position of women in the two communities and to analyze the consequences of development on gender relations.
6. To explain the differential development trajectories of two Adivasi groups within a region.

The ecological Marxist framework that accommodates the Adivasis' intimate relationship with land and nature for their survival analyzes the material deprivation and marginalisation of Adivasis under the capitalist development process. However, this framework is inadequate to explain the subjective experiences of Adivasis' alienation and exclusion adequately. Insights from James Scott's analysis that gives importance to the conscious human being who is an active participant in the construction of reality, and from the writings of Veena Das and others who show how violence shapes subjectivity and affects the capacity to engage in everyday life and argue that the collective experience of violence can alter individual subjectivity and patterns of sociality are used to understand the responses of the Paniyas and the Kurichias to the violence inherent in their development processes. Bourdieu's social and cultural reproduction theory offers a framework to understand the reproduction of inequality and symbolic violence exerted in subtle ways to perpetuate the inequality and discrimination among Adivasis especially in their educational experiences. However, in Bourdieu's thinking, structure or the objective condition has detrimental power on one's agency and thus cannot explain adequately the creative interventions and resistance of the subjects for social change. Escobar, Karlsson, Dietrich and Smith show how agency and social movements break through the systematic discrimination and marginalisation and thus help understand how the Paniyas and the Kurichias offer a critique of development through enormous suffering and resistance to build their life as well as to bring forth a different vision of the world.

As reflected in the objectives, this study aspires to delineate and explain the perceptions and experiences of the Adivasis on development/marginalisation and thus follows an interpretive paradigm giving importance to the subjective experiences of the people. Qualitative methodology and ethnographic methods are adopted for the study as it is intensive, in-depth in nature and allows immersion into the culture and everyday life experiences of the Adivasi communities. Multiple tools such as, participant and non- participant observation, in-depth unstructured interviews (for individuals and groups), interviews of key informants (elders, leaders, educated members etc. among Adivasis), group discussions, case narratives and informal conversations were used for data collection.

The thesis contains nine chapters. Chapter I provides an introduction, while Chapter II reviews the literature on tribal development. Chapter III discusses the methodological context to understand the epistemological positions and the methods used to understand the process of 'development' among the Kurichias and the Paniyas. Chapter IV introduces the historical context and the specific socio-cultural and political contexts of the two communities selected for the study. Chapter V discusses how schooling reproduces social inequalities and cultural asymmetries by examining the experiences of the Paniyas and Kurichias. Chapter VI explores the perceptions of the Paniyas and the Kurichias regarding health and illness and their experiences of traditional

as well as modern health care services. The chapter discusses how the Adivasi conceptualisations and practices are different from the biomedical development notions of health and illness and how the health system marginalises them. Chapter VII explores the wage labour, employment opportunities and livelihood issues of Paniyas and Kurichias. This chapter analyses the present forms of bondage and the new tools such as advance money, debt, dependence, religion, alcohol etc. as socio-cultural, economic and political strategies to perpetuate the bondedness of Adivasis. Chapter VIII aims to understand the landholding patterns and land relations of Adivasis. This study attempts to understand how state policies and programmes ignore the land question of Adivasis as well as their relation to land and how landlessness leads to denial of their material and symbolic worlds. It also discusses the gap between Adivasi perceptions and state perceptions of the significance of land and the epistemic violence in negating Adivasi world views and by not seeing the relationship between landlessness and their inability to participate in the development programmes. Chapter IX summarises the main conclusions of the research study and stresses the importance of incorporating Adivasi epistemologies in development policies and practices not only for their well being but also for that of a society enriched by plural epistemologies and cultural diversities.

Some of the key findings that emerge from the study include the continued significance and centrality of land in the Adivasis' world views, epistemologies and the idea of development, and their access to land as a significant factor that determines the extent and ability to participate in the development process. However, state initiated development programmes fail to acknowledge the meaning and significance that Adivasis attach to their land. It emerges that, the historical and social status enjoyed by Kurichia community on account of their collective land ownership and their ability to prevent its alienation to an extent gives them a sense of superior cultural identity which acts as a form of cultural capital in negotiating the process of development. Adivasis especially Paniyas' inability to participate in the state initiated development programmes should be considered as a form of cognitive violence inherent in the very programmes and policies that negate their world views and epistemologies. Their material marginalisation is compounded by the delegitimisation of their knowledge in education, health and employment as state and the non-Adivasi communities continue treat them as devoid of any cognitive and epistemic understanding. However, while experiencing extreme marginalisation and cognitive injustice, the Adivasis continue to offer a critique of development and portray the importance of development that accommodates plural cultures, knowledge and world views.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADS	Area Development Society
ADSS	Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti
AGMS	Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha
AKS	Adivasi Kshema Samithi
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CDS	Centre for Development Studies
CDS	Community Development Society
CPI (M)	Communist Party of India (Marxist)
CPR	Common Property Resources
CTM	Centre for Tribal Medicine
DDT	Dichlorodiphenyl-Trichloroethane
DIET	District Institute of Education and Training
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
DMO	District Medical Officer
DOT	Directly Observed Treatment
FD	Forest Department
FRA	Forest Rights Act
FRC	Forest Rights Committee
GO	Government Order
HML	Harrison Malayalam Limited
ICSE	Indian Certificate of Secondary Education
IIPSS	Indian Indigenous People Service Society
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
JSY	Janani Suraksha Yojana
KILA	Kerala Institute of Local Administration
KIRTADS	Kerala Institute for Research and Training and Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes

KREGS	Kerala Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
KST	Keral Sceduled Tribes
KSKTU	Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union
LMP	Last Menstrual Period
MFA	Malabar Forest Act
MGLC	Multi Grade Learning Centres
MRS	Model Residential Schools
MTPC	Mananthavady Tribal Plantation Cooperative
NREGS	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
OPD	Out Patient Department
PHC	Public Health Centre
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PDS	Public Distribution System
RTI	Right to Information
RDO	Revenue Department Office
ROR	Record of Right
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
SRF	Swaminathan Research Fund
SC	Scheduled Caste
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TLB	Taluk Land Board
TRDM	Tribal Rehabilitation and Development Mission
TBGRI	Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute
VKA	Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram
VVK	Vanvasi Vikas Kendra
WPSS	Wayanad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samiti
WASSS	Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sevak Sangh

CHAPTER I

Introduction

As a nine year old when I reached Wayanad from the southern part of Kerala in 1974, I was very happy to see a set of women wearing colourful *chelas* (single strip of unstitched cloth, used by Adivasi women folk to cover their bodies), hands full of bangles and layers of *malai* (chain) on their neck. I interacted with them when they came to our fields to transplant paddy. While transplanting, they sang songs and chatted with each other in their language and I used to stand on the *Varambu* (small bund to separate plots of paddy fields) and watch them work. Even though I did not understand their language, I could enjoy their company and they invited me to work with them. I had an intense desire to plant the paddy with them, but at home children were not encouraged to do such work. The Adivasi children were trying their lot by observing their mothers planting. Standard VIII, I was sent to boarding school and since the school reopened before paddy cultivation, I waited till my degree college holidays to try my hand at planting paddy saplings. With great enthusiasm I went to work, my Adivasi friends encouraged me and completed my row when I lagged behind. By afternoon, I came to know the pain….understood the back breaking nature of the work and could not continue. However, the image of an Adivasi woman has remained with me, colourful, lively and hard working.

During my holidays, I used to visit the paddy fields near my house that extended from our garden and stretched towards the river for about one and half miles. During each yearly visit, especially after the 1990s, I witnessed the quick conversion of paddy to banana, ginger and arecanut plantations. I saw the 'development' of the area and the people… concrete houses came in place of small thatched or tiled houses… every patch of land was occupied by people…the gardens which were filled with trees and multi crops were changed to mono culture plantations like rubber, pepper and coffee.

Majority of the non-Adivasis had stopped paddy cultivation since it was not profitable. The Kurichias said that they continued because it was part of their culture which kept their community spirit alive. They said that they had not saved money for ten generations, but saved the soil without poisoning it and destroying it for the future generations. Their *tharavad* (Kurichia joint family) land extended as huge tracts (even

though technically partitioned among members) devoid of barbed wire fencing unlike the state forests and non-Adivasi property. To me they proclaimed a different world view through their customs and every day practices while experiencing the brunt, loss and pain of modern development. The Paniyas who were experts in paddy cultivation still did not own a piece of paddy field after the much acclaimed land reforms and the widely known Kerala model of development and its political mobilisation. They pay rent for cultivating another's paddy field and have no chance to cultivate paddy themselves.

I entered the field with my multiple identities of a migrant, a teacher, a woman who worked among the Adivasis in Madhya Pradesh and a student doing research on Adivasis in Mumbai city. With the people I closely interacted, I shared my identity as a religious nun, who was disenchanted with the rigid rules and blind obedience in choosing one's mission, and the consequent decision to quit. When I saw the Adivasis during my field work, they were not healthy, lively and cheerful like those etched in my childhood memory. The paradox is that in my childhood, they were bonded labourers (even though slavery was banned, the transition was very slow) and now they are free! The sound of the *thudi* (small drum of Paniyas) echoing from their huts was not frequent like it was before. One empathiser of the Paniyas told me they would be extinct within a few decades due to malnutrition and ill health. At the same time, there were common comments by non-Adivasis such as, 'the government heaps huge amounts of money for their 'development', 'they are becoming lazy and not even coming for our work nowadays', 'they go for wage labour only to those who provide liquor as part of the wages', 'sometimes they promise their labour and escape to their colonies without the notice of the employer'. These comments were not limited to the land owners. While I was working in Wayanad as a teacher, some of my colleagues used to say that the Adivasis are not 'cultured' and we used to debate on the meaning of 'culture'. The loving and sharing attitude among the Adivasis, their eco-friendly lifestyle, their satisfaction with the bare minimum was not considered 'cultured behaviour'. Again Adivasi gods were depicted as lifeless gods and their belief system as superstition. In contrast, I experienced that their rituals and religious festivals are the simplest and liveliest ones and they celebrate it through dance and music or lively rituals with spontaneity. Many of them go into a trance and ecstasy during the rituals; we cannot deny the bad effects of alcoholism

and the trends of imitating Hindu rituals, which partially spoil the spirit of celebrating the meeting point of gods and human beings at times.

The philosophy of Adivasis living for the present moment without accumulating wealth really challenged me. I felt Adivasis pose the most effective challenge to capitalist development by living for the day and by living an eco-friendly life, using minimum resources from the earth and saving it for future generations. My work experience with the Adivasis in Madhya Pradesh and Wayanad affirmed the same. However, I realised that their subsistence economy in the midst of a profit oriented economy is withering away without enough support. While working in Kerala, I came to realise that the general situation of Adivasis is no better in Kerala despite the fact that Kerala is a state which has received international acclaim for its socio-political development. I also noticed important differences in the land ownership, education and health status among different Adivasi groups in Kerala. These experiences triggered interest in me for further inquiry into their everyday life, the government initiated development programmes and their perceptions and experiences of development. How do they experience development in their everyday encounters with the State, its policies and institutions? How different are the experiences of different Adivasi groups? How does the context of Kerala, a highly literate and politically conscious population, and decentralised governance, influence the Adivasi experience?

Against a colonial backdrop, the Adivasis are still seen as 'backward' by the dominant Kerala culture and modern development discourses and the huge administrative machinery set up in the name of 'developing' Adivasis. Development has strong colonial roots and some scholars argue that the transition from colonialism to the concept of 'development' is a shift in emphasis rather than changing from one project to the other (Gordon and Sylvester 2004). The colonial culture still persists in our education system, health system and land laws and it affects the Adivasis more as they hold on to their world views and traditional systems. Although the renaissance and the enlightenment movement formed the ground for modernity, the concept of modernity came to be defined as the process of change towards western types of economic, social and political systems which believe in the superiority of rational and scientific control of the physical and social environment and the application of technology for development.

Development perceived as national economic growth and modernisation is a post second world war phenomena and western industrialisation became the core of development as tradition was perceived as an obstacle to development and the third world countries were encouraged to abandon their traditional lifestyle. After the Second World War and the decolonisation process, the direct responsibility of maintaining colonial administrations was changed to aid programmes and policies and programmes for international cooperation. When both economic and political interests were at risk due to decolonisation, development aid was arranged as a means in the struggle for world hegemony by the western powers. From early 1970s, however, several theorists had turned to the dependency theory and the world system theory to challenge the modern development paradigm and its western hegemonic interventions (Frank 1979, Amin 1997, Wallerstein 1979).

In the move towards modernity, tradition and cultures of colonial societies were equated with underdevelopment. As Marglin (1990) argues, tradition is actively constructed and is dynamic and seeing it as backward and attributing underdevelopment to traditionalism is a historical and political mistake. Many Indian scholars such as Nandy, Alvares, Viswanathan, Shiva, Das and Kothari and Mehta explore the link between science and violence and the mediatory role played by the modern nation state to project scientific knowledge as superior and traditional knowledge as inferior. Nandy (1988) points out the cultural mobilisation around modern science which extends to state power and legitimises scientific knowledge to remain outside the democratic process and indulge in institutionalised as well as personal face to face violence to dehumanise traditional knowledge. Alvares (1988) shows how power and knowledge intersect and explores the connection between science, colonialism and violence. Shiva (1988) criticises the monopoly and the reductionist view of science as ‘epistemological violence’ and the root cause of the ecological crisis. Visvanathan (1988) shows how world views and epistemologies and practices of tribal and peasant life are ignored in modern scientific knowledge and the violence associated with modern science. He points out that imperialism is not only the logic of capitalism but also of science. He criticises modernity and its empire which believes in uniform and homogenous space and a single law of temporality. He argues that in modern rationality, progress is a linear movement as described in the evolutionary approach and thus tribal cultures become the past, which the

west has already lived out and thus confront the violence inherent in anthropological notions of the 'tribal ancestor' and how they become the objects of experiment of the programme called modernisation.

The homogenisation process in the approach of development depicts the 'other' as inferior and deficient and in need of assistance. As a result, communities with distinct histories and diverse cultures became homogenised masses seeking assistance to develop and the discourse on development became a discourse on knowledge and power. Thus, to understand the marginalisation of the Adivasis and the attribution of backwardness to their culture, it is important to understand how local knowledge is challenged and discarded in the dominant development discourse. The superiority assigned to Western scientific and technological notions based on progress attribute backwardness to Adivasi communities and their local knowledge systems and indigenous development initiatives. The modern discourse on development misrepresents Adivasis and thus the subjectivity of the people is central to represent their response to modern, top down, exclusive development policies and programmes. Thus, this study gives importance to Adivasi voices, their self development concepts and their indigenous knowledge systems and delineates their specific subjective experiences of development/lack of development in the areas of education, health, land, employment and livelihood.

Theoretical Explorations

Studies shows that the Adivasis' subjective experience is shaped by the dominant development discourses and the material condition produced by these discourses. At the same time, they do assert their identity and subjectivity in their daily experiences through their individual and collective struggles. How do the development discourses construct their subjectivity and how do Adivasis conceive and assert their identities and subjectivities are central themes in this study. These are explored through the way government institutions engage or disengage with Adivasis and the various ways in which Adivasis respond to these situations in their everyday interactions in these institutions. The Adivasi reality today may be conceptualised as that of material deprivation and cultural marginalisation. Further, their marginality is socially and culturally reproduced through societal and state institutions. However, even in their subordination they are found to resist individually and collectively. Since no single theoretical framework can

capture the multiple structures and processes that dominate their knowledge and world views, their material resources and their subjectivities, theoretical discussion on four thematic areas are explored to form a conceptual grid to understand the subjective experiences and perceptions of development of the Adivasis: material deprivation and cultural marginalisation, social and cultural reproduction of marginality, subordination and resistance, and agency and social movement.

Material Deprivation and Cultural Marginalisation

These two conditions in the context of modern development have been theorised by several Marxist and neo Marxist scholars. Marx's materialist conception of history and the critique of capitalist development highlight alienation of labour and oppression of subordinate classes in the process of surplus extraction. While highlighting Marx's materialist conception of history, Morrison (2006) highlights Marx's division of history into three main economic stages characterised in the form of ancient, feudal and capitalist societies and the central tendencies of class domination, conferring of privileges to the dominant classes, perpetuation of economic political and social inequality and the support extended to unequal class relations by religious, legal and political institutions during each of these economic stages of history. By examining Marx's concepts of forces of production and relations of production, Morrison (2006) observes that when one class in society has the monopoly of the means of production, they develop authority over the non-possessors or working class and subordinate them through certain restrictions and as a result, a dominant dependent relationship is established.

Marx (1992) talks about subjectivity while discussing the concept of alienation of the individual from the external world. According to him, alienation arises only under specific social conditions and it brings one's human essence into conflict with one's existence. Marx's theory of alienation was based mainly on the externalising process during labouring activity. According to Marx, alienation which is founded on capitalism has four main aspects. Man experiences - alienation from the products of his labouring activity as it belongs to the capitalist; alienation from his productive activity itself as it is not an affirmation but a negation of his essential nature; alienation from his own essential nature, his humanity; and alienation from other man, from his community (Marx, 1992). And in order to overcome this alienation he suggests abolishing the basic economic

relation that creates it. Marx thus stresses on the primacy of economic relations over other aspects of social structure. In the Adivasi world view, nature and culture are not separate entities as asserted by authors such as Baviskar (1995), Pathy (1998), Xaxa (2003), Fernandes (2004) and Roy Burman (2010). Alienation and exclusion from forests and lands are the everyday reality of Adivasis till date. Thus, as far as Adivasis are concerned, alienation was not limited to economic relations or labour activity.

According to Baviskar (1997), India's development policies had failed because they had not changed the patterns of control over the means of production. The concentration of means of production is in the hands of the industrial elite, the rich peasants and the state bureaucracy. They determine the technological choices, production decisions and income distribution. The impoverishment of the environment caused by this development leads to the impoverishment of the tribal people. The ecological crisis and the struggle of tribal people result out of the inequities of control over industry, land and other productive resources such as water, forests and pastures (Baviskar 1997). The Marxian theorisation of capitalist society is limited by class analysis and a scope for subsistence production practices, and a critique to technology is missing as his vision on post capitalist society is based on the existence of material abundance realised through technology, industrialisation and exploitation of natural resources.

The Marxist approach perceives tribal agriculture as primitive and backward and believes in the power of science and technology to produce surplus and emancipate the tribal people from the clutches of feudalism (Prasad 2004). The reality is that tribal communities are marginalised within the oppressed groups and science and technology have become tools of exploitation and cultural alienation. Appadurai (1990) opposes any technical knowledge for welfare which operates on criteria that are wholly external to the moral and cultural values of the community whose future is at risk. He looks into particular technological changes in agriculture and the erosion of social embeddedness and core cultural values. He criticizes the transformation of practical knowledge into agronomy and the process of commercialisation. He notes that through different discourses, a gap is created between the official agronomic knowledge and the traditional knowledge of farmers and the farmers' knowledge is simply absorbed into a larger and more rationalised discourse without giving due credit to them. Without essentialising

indigenous knowledge, he stresses that their wisdom also has to be made historical, made known to the entire world and incorporated wherever possible.

O'Connor (1998) points out that Marxist theorists view human history and natural history as 'dialectically interconnected' and believes that Marx's analysis of materialist conception of history is central to the structural understanding of the current environmental crisis. O'Connor (1998) argues that Marx had a vision of society in which humankind ceases to be alienated from nature and appropriation of nature should not be based on capitalist accumulation but on individual and social need. He highlights that Marx failed to problematise capitalist productive forces believing that it has the potential to free humanity from the bondage of nature. By critically examining Marxism, O' Connor (1998) points out that the earth-centered ethics, the survival of the indigenous people and the peasantry of the south which are central concerns of political ecology are missing in Marxist theory and practice. O'Connor (1998) thus incorporates in his theories the ways in which capitalist production relations degrade or destroy the conditions of production including the environment which is an asset for subsistent producers and introduces the modern crisis in capitalist societies. According to Wielenga, (1999:131), 'any vision of an alternative socialist society has to address not only the question of the exploitation and exclusion of workers, but also that of the ecological and social conditions under which the satisfaction of human needs can be achieved in a just way'. In this regard, Eric Darier (1998) observes that ecological rationality is not something fixed by natural science, independent of human society. It depends on the social and economic relationship of people to each other and to the earth. O' Connor (1998) notes that in Marxist terms, the statement that land and labour are commodified means that they are treated as if they are a product of labour and can be exchanged by fixing an abstract value. And in this process, man under the name of labour and nature under the name of land were made available for sale and it lead to alienation of social values and exploitation of nature. Thus, with the early development of capitalism the concept of nature as an organic whole changed into the concept of a combination of things or a mechanistic structure that can be taken apart and rebuilt again. It is noted that the original accumulation – seizure of common lands by the rich as the beginning of this separation of human and non human nature. Thus, the primitive accumulation and later the competitive

accumulation removed traditional socio-economic and cultural restrictions on land and promoted an ecologically destructive production method (O'Connor 1998).

Even though O'Connor (1998) agrees that Marx had a latent ecological socialist vision, he notes that the conventional Marxist theorisation however does not take into account the ecological question in development. The Ecological Marxist perspective incorporates the ecological crisis and destruction of subsistence oriented economies in the context of modern capitalist development. Ecological Marxist theory introduces the contradiction between unending capitalist accumulation by appropriation of nature and the 'diminishing natural environment-the conditions of production' as the second contradiction in capitalism. According to O'Connor, the forces of production and relations of production are together facing the challenge of conditions of production and to meet the crisis, he suggests ecologically viable projects. Within the Marxist tradition, O'Connor (1998), Foster (1999) and Weilenga (1999) are unique in their critique of the capitalist mode of production that treats nature as a free good to be appropriated and manipulated for human progress. Formerly, nature was treated as an exploitable commodity for profit but in this new vision, it is redefined as a stock of capital. So the reproduction of capital becomes synonymous with saving nature and accumulation gives way to self management and conservation (Foster 2003). With an Ecological Marxist perspective, organising local resources to meet local needs and self governance to take decisions regarding their day to day life issues and development policies and programmes is promising. Further, control and management of their resources by themselves will lead to genuine participation and development that emerges from within tribal communities (Wielenga 1999). Even though O' Connor includes natural and cultural environmental factors in his conceptualisation of forces of production and relations of production, he does not engage with the cultural critique of superiority assigned to modern development. He sees development mainly as material prosperity and sustainability of nature compared to the progress of human values and quality of life.

Before the age of primitive accumulation, the economy was embedded in the rest of society through values of reciprocity, redistribution and symmetry (Polanyi 1964). Primitive accumulation through enclosures of common lands and common property by the well to do was followed by the competitive accumulation in the capitalist factories

and the subordination of society itself to the laws of market. Polanyi's analysis of the development of capitalism and the cultural roots of disembeddedness or instrumentality in the modern meaning of work which he attributes to the separation of economic from social, political and moral contexts. According to him, the impersonal self regulating market destroyed human beings, their natural environment and cultural institutions. Polanyi (1964) criticises the modern concept of seeing land and labour as commodities and the erosion of social relations behind it when it is bought and sold in the market. He points out that land and labour were turned into fictitious commodities by the market conception and 'disembedded' (or the social relations behind it is getting covered up) from the broader social context. According to Polanyi, land and labour are not produced as commodities in accordance with market forces or the law of value.

Thus, although mainstream Marxism has not taken up the ecological question in development, a re-reading and re-thinking in the light of eco-crisis is taking place today that offers a new vision to tribal mobilisation. The resistance of people's movement in the early phases of industrialisation aims at the defence of 'pre-modern' ways of life and the demand for adequate compensation. In the neo-colonial phase of individualism, commodification and rationalisation, tribal movements preferably take an eco-Marxist approach and by addressing the cultural issues, move beyond it (Baviskar, 1995). Instead of romanticising the Adivasi struggle, as Baviskar suggests, it is advisable to give priority for a need based economy for re-orienting natural resource management. Eco feminists like Vandana Shiva, Mies and Agarwal support this need based economy by pointing out that nature's resources are not limitless to satisfy the greed of a few by exploiting it. However, Baviskar (1995) criticises the eco-feminist stand of seeing Adivasis as environmentalists with an unquenchable reverence for nature and points out that their present resource use can be called sustainable only if we compare it with the vastly more destructive practices of the State and the market. She argues that it is necessary to take alternate measures to deal with the degradation of land and forest with the support of financial, technical and organisational resources and encourages the collaboration among local communities, activists and intellectuals instead of totally abandoning capitalism and sticking to the traditional ways. She sees that Adivasi history – their being and ideology as evolving in connection with their consciousness and everyday life and argues with Marx that people make their own history, not of their free will but under circumstances

with which they are confronted. The people who lived a life of self sufficiency and cultural richness are now pushed to the margins due to the degradation and loss of vast areas of forest and other productive land resources. However, as ecological Marxism suggests, the deprived can also be critical agents of change. The various tribal movements and other struggles of the marginalised people contribute to the ecological Marxist stream of thought. Challenging the capitalist notion, they are prioritising the use value of natural resources for survival over the exchange value. Baviskar (1995) suggests that a search for alternatives and a critical analysis of the impact of capitalism by the Marxists can merge and form a green-red alliance to answer the livelihood issues of tribal people.

Ecological Marxism however fails to take into account the alienation from culture and nature and the adverse gender effects due to the processes of environmental degradation and appropriation of natural resources by a few and the erosion of both the livelihood system and the knowledge system of tribal women. The contribution of tribal women to the subsistence economy and the challenges they face today due to modern science and technology and its superior rationality projected by the patriarchal state and its bureaucratic development policies are highlighted in feminist environmentalist and structural feminist frameworks (Mies 1981, Agarwal 1994). These feminist theoretical articulations may be useful to understand the feminisation of poverty and the deterioration of women's status due to environmental deterioration among tribal people. Women are the worst victims of ecological degradation. Their traditional skills and occupations have been affected adversely by new agricultural technology and their struggle for survival has increased due to the scarcity of water, fuel and fodder (Shiva1988). However, the eco feminist analysis remains a critique without threat to the established order as it fails to confront the political economy issues (Agarwal 1992). The introduction of private ownership of land by the colonial state had far reaching implications in gender relations especially in tribal societies. As Agarwal (1994) argues, in a tribal situation, the social and cultural understanding of deprivation and marginalisation is strongly connected to the deprivation of material resources. Agarwal (1992) traces the causes of environmental degradation in rural India, its class and gender implications and responses from the grassroots level. Further, she maps out an alternate transformational approach to development in which the gender relations and the relation

between people and the non-human world are conceptualised and concretely dealt with in terms of distribution of property, power and knowledge and the formulation of development policies and programmes. For instance, she proposes a broad based democratic participation of women and marginalised sections in decision making instead of a top down approach and also a widening of the definition of scientific approaches to include plural sources of knowledge and innovations of the people, rather than the knowledge generated in universities. In forestry, a shift from monocultural and commercial tree species to mixed species, critical for local subsistence is suggested. Such transformational shifts in approaches and practices are similar to the perceptions of development of tribal people, especially their women folk.

Historically, the idea of development has been couched mostly in materialistic terms but today there is an emerging paradigm shift which emphasises that the development issues of tribal communities need to address the cultural aspects besides the material gains and losses and the wider connection between power and knowledge in the field of development. The critique of development put forward by Escobar (1995), Banuri (1990), Marglin (1990) Fernandes (2004) and Xaxa (2003) converges when they argue for a cultural 'space' for the marginalised people and describe culture as a political tool to marginalise them by describing them as backward, uncivilised and underdeveloped. These authors affirm tribal assertion movements and their alternate value systems as the path of tribal development. They criticise the superiority attached to the modern development discourse and practices and highlight traditional people's autonomous constructions of their own development and value systems and alternate ways of living as a valid model. In the above theories on material and cultural deprivation, the affected people are not treated adequately as subjects of their own history. Though, ecological Marxism explains the material and cultural deprivations, the subjective experiences of the people are not given due importance. On the contrary, the reproduction theories attempt to understand the relationship between subjective experience and objective reality and the production and reproduction to which it contributes, and attempt to develop a sociology that can transcend the subjective objective dichotomy.

Social and Cultural Reproduction of Marginality

The theories of social and cultural reproduction provide a conceptual ground for examining the themes of power, domination and inequality, and they challenge the dominant structural functionalist approaches and the development paradigms**.** The development discourse sees education as offering the most legitimate and decisive means of social mobility in order to transcend structural inequalities. Placing emphasis on equal educational opportunities and individual motivation, the human capital theory has been the driving force behind a series of educational reforms. The social reproduction theories in education, however, refute these assumptions with the argument that educational institutions and processes reproduce social inequalities in society. They point out that cultural and social factors serve to reproduce the ruling relationships, and legitimise the ideologies of power and control through educational practices. While Althusser (1971) provides a sketch of how school is the most effective ideological apparatus that reproduces capitalist relations of production, Bourdieu elaborates the social and cultural processes of schooling that transmit dominant culture and ideologies through a series of interrelated concepts such as cultural and social capital, habitus and symbolic violence (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977).

Bourdieu's analysis of the forms of capital, namely, economic, cultural and social capital and their transformation into symbolic capital helps understand how conversion of capital results in hierarchy in social class, status, privilege and domination. According to Bourdieu (1997), cultural capital can exist in three forms: first in the embodied state (that is, in the form of long standing dispositions of the mind and body), second in the objectified state (in the form of cultural goods such as pictures, books and monuments), and third in the institutionalised state (in the form of academic qualification or legitimate knowledge of one kind or the other). To locate the relationship between schooling and the larger cultural setting, Bourdieu (1977: 95) uses the concept of 'habitus' which is 'an acquired system of generative schemes objectively adjusted to the particular conditions in which it is constituted'. Habitus engenders all the thoughts, perceptions and actions consistent with those conditions, and they are socially constructed in the school sites. Social capital mainly refers to the various kinds of valued relations with significant others and symbolic capital refers to prestige and social honour (Bourdieu 1997). Further,

Bourdieu argues that violence is exerted on social groups through the imposition of cultural and social symbolism in everyday life to shape their social worlds in such a way that it is experienced as legitimate and normal. Every pedagogic action is objectively symbolic violence as the dominant culture is imposed by an arbitrary power (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Arnowitz and Giroux (1986) however criticise Bourdieu's view of power and domination as mechanistic, neglecting reflexivity and critical self consciousness of the agents. As they argue Bourdieu's negation of critical self consciousness of the agents, independent of the historical continuity of their objective reality, reduces possibilities of resistance and social change and therefore results in the mechanical reproduction of social inequalities.

Analysing the role of content of the texts and methodologies of teaching practices in social reproduction, Apple (1979) explains how the de-politicisation of schooling processes works to produce social differentiation in the guise of neutrality. He scrutinises not only the prevailing practices of education for unequal achievement, unequal returns and selective curricular incorporation, but the very social arrangement of political, social, ethical and economic interests and commitments that are uncritically accepted in the day to day life of educators. He criticises the notion of knowledge as neutral and views knowledge as power, and explains how social interests are embodied in the curriculum that generates inequality. However, for understanding how larger discourses shape the context of learners, teachers and the schooling processes, these theories do not detail out the everyday, subjective experience of the learners in the context of the historical exploitation and social subjugation experienced by their families and communities. Some of these concepts and frameworks are employed to understand the ability and inability of different tribal groups to participate in the state sponsored development programmes. However, the educational system is viewed as recreating the relationships of domination by legitimising the ideologies of power and control over tribal people and thereby perpetuating the historical violence against them. Further, the social and cultural factors which are interwoven in the day to day lived experience of the people is important in analysing the development experiences of tribal people and educational and health care experiences offers specific context to explore the subjective experiences of the tribal people.

Freire (1972) unravels the contradiction between the oppressors and oppressed and points out the importance of awakening critical consciousness to overcome oppression. He challenges the 'banking concept' of education in which teacher deposits knowledge in students who are considered as passive listeners and objects of learning. According to him in a liberating class room, teacher and student pose questions and become participants in solving the problems faced by the students in their daily life and other social issues. Instead of transferring information from teacher to students, he proposes the 'problem posing' concept of education which enable the students to think critically and understand marginalisation, cultural alienation and the process of its reproduction in the field of tribal education. Arnowitz and Giroux (1986) point out the reflexivity and critical self consciousness of the agents and how it helps them to resist or accommodate and change gradually. They stress that culture is both a structuring and transforming process. According to Giroux (2001), notions of critique and conflict must be at the centre of pedagogic practice to break through the structures of inequality which is reproduced through the hidden curriculum. He stresses the role of human agency leading to cultural intervention and social action instead of overemphasising the mechanical reproduction of culture. Thus, according to him, school has to become an important site of counter hegemonic practices. However, the critical pedagogy introduced by Freire and Giroux is not only confined to school but seen as a cultural and political process that takes place in all cultural spheres and opens up spaces for negotiation of subjectivity and resistance.

Subordination and Resistance

Along with a critical understanding of social structures as well as their ideological reproduction through different institutions, understanding the subjective experience of subordination and marginalisation is very important to explain differential development among tribal communities. The refusal of subjective experience and the meaning creation of subordinate classes in the Marxist theories are criticised by theorists such as Scott (1985). According to Scott (1985) social agents are not passive bearers of ideology but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures. He gives due credit to the weak and subordinate class and their ideological weapons of every day resistance, to penetrate, neutralise and negate the hegemony. He criticises the concept of 'false consciousness' of

the subordinate classes and the ideological consensus secured by dominant groups and its legitimisation using culture as an instrument of power. According to him, the subordinate classes are more radical at the level of ideology than behaviour, where they are more effectively constrained by the daily exercise of power. Penetrating the superfluous conception of the existing structures as inevitable and just, he identifies the presence of hidden scripts and the subcultures alive among the weak where their consciousness is in continuous conflict with the dominant capitalist culture. He criticises the objective structural determinations which find little echo in the consciousness and meaningful activity of flesh and blood human beings and their apprehension of these structures. According to Scott, any hegemonic ideology provides within itself the raw material for contradictions and conflict as the hegemonic social order fails to fulfil its promises. He points out that capitalist development continuously requires the violation of the previous social relations, which in most cases it had earlier helped to create and sustain. So the demystification of an existing hegemony is thus accomplished by the inevitable disregard for customs inherent in capitalism by the subordinate classes themselves.

However, systematic violence can cripple the individual's and community's ability to resist power. Das et al (2001) explore how violence shapes subjectivity and affects the capacity to engage in everyday life and argue that collective experience of violence can alter individual subjectivity and patterns of sociality. The subjectivities are formed differently according to the degree of violence they are faced with and the degree of resilience they hold as communities or as individuals in their situated lived realities and the reactions to this violence varies tremendously. They also highlight the heterogeneity of these local structures of feeling and the potential for different stance towards violence contained in them. Das et al (2001) highlight the experience of communities contesting the history of exclusion and violence using the sensory memory of individuals to challenge the official memory created through official records. They criticise the structured violence of the State through its policies and programmes as well as the collective violence and its shadows and reverberations years later in the communities and explain how everyday life becomes the site of many buried memories and experiences and affects their subjectivities. Thus, any understanding of contemporary tribal reality must take into consideration the question of subjective experience of systematic violence of extreme situations as well as subtle forms of symbolic violence and their responses to

it in their day to day life. Even though, violence affects the Adivasis' capacity for resistance, their agency makes an attempt to break violence and marginalisation through the rare voices of dissent and resistance emerging from their reflexivity as well as through collective struggle and social movements.

Agency and Social Movements

The present model of development which does not take into consideration, indigenous knowledge, wisdom and technology leads to deprivation for the majority. As today's capitalist model of development has not succeeded either in providing sustenance or in ensuring sustainability, ecological Marxists suggest that the affected people become critical agents of change. They affirm that the Adivasis need to confront political economy issues through resistance and look for alternative decentralised plans for development like watershed programs, organic farming, developing common property resources, alternative energy policies and so on. According to them, the alternate model can embrace a new ecological rationality and a new ideal for social progress, integrating tribal's knowledge and practises in protecting and preserving nature's resources. Baviskar (1995) points out that new social movements challenge the ideology of development centered around the political economy of profit and reshape people's ideas about what is good and desirable. Instead of denying the heritage of traditional skills and life sustaining values, there is a need for cultural reappropriation and renewal of values and skills oriented towards the production and sustenance of life, which is still alive among tribal communities.

In a similar line, Escobar (1992) points out that the new social movement provides an interesting rethinking of collective agency. He focuses on social movements as cultural struggles, not only as political struggles for material gain. Critically analysing the categorisation of material vs. culture, Escobar (1995) argues that there is no materiality that is not mediated by discourse, as there is no discourse that is unrelated to materialities. For him, the making of food and labour and the making of narratives about them must be seen in the same light. The attempt at articulating a political economy of food and health must start with the construction of objects such as nature, peasants, food and the body as an epistemological, cultural and political process and move to criticising the unequal power relations in the production of discourses (ibid). So their cultural struggles are not

only for goods and services but also for the very definitions of life, economy, nature and society and its legitimacy in the 'colonial' modern world. Thus, emerges the need for a reconceptualisation of development which provides space for alternatives, which make visible the local frameworks of production of cultures and identities, and their economic, political and ecological practices (ibid).

Tribal people cannot be viewed as mechanical agents of history, ignoring the critique and resistance they offer through their collective and individual responses to the dominant forces. Karlsson (2000) in his study on indigenous people's struggle for forest and identity in Sub Himalayan Bengal discusses the question of agency and the extent to which they are producers, at least partly conscious agents of forming their identities. According to Karlsson, the modern welfare state forces people to construct fixed ethnic or national identities in order to achieve political recognition but while discussing the Rabhas of West Bengal, the author affirms that their identity is not fixed but change according to different constructions in different contexts. Also Karlsson challenges the positions that identity construction is for material gain or for the political gain of elite in their own tribal communities and give more importance to the process which leads to ethnic mobilisation. The author asserts that for the Rabhas, their assertion of identity was related to their struggle for survival in the forest when they face the threat of losing their forest or depletion of forest or the establishment of protected areas where their entry is restricted. According to the author, the Adivasis' assertion of identity in most cases is directly related to their survival or struggle for land, forest or other basic resources. The author maintains that the process of identity construction has to be understood in the context of domination, subordination and resistance and discusses the construction of identity in the invisible networks of everyday life as well as the formation of a collective agency through social movements.

Similarly, there are feminists' articulations that stress the need for social movements and alternate development models. According to Dietrich (1992), social movements are vital for an alternate development which assures the quality of life and production of life and its maintenance as supreme goals. She suggests developing a mode of production which is in harmony with nature and ensures the survival of all humanity. The development model which is neo-colonial, capitalist and patriarchal, attack the base for

human material and spiritual survival, destructive of both nature and culture lead to fragmentation and disintegration (ibid). The participation of Adivasis, Dalits and women in the movement to build a counter culture is suggested as historically they all hold an ecologically viable development concept that negates the production of profit but involves the production and sustenance of life. As some of the feminist scholars point out, the feminist standpoint epistemologies help to see the reality from the side of the subjugated. According to standpoint theorists, the subjugated are in a better position to analyze their reality as they undergo the experience of subjugation.

Smith (2005) points out the significance of indigenous perspectives and their agency for their development and describes how knowledge was used to discipline the colonised, and highlights that the most obvious forms of discipline were through exclusion, marginalisation and denial. She challenges the current research tendencies of excluding indigenous ways of knowing and problematising indigenous individual or community rather than the social and structural issues underlying the marginalisation process. The indigenous communities are blamed for the problem of their poor health and under achievement in education among them and further conveyed that these communities have no solution to their problems. Smith further argues that the spaces of marginalisation have become the spaces of resistance and hope (ibid). For instance, Smith notes that the Australian aborigines have consistently challenged the colonial notion of *terra nullius* which is used to deny their claims to their territory. Thus, to understand the Adivasi reality, we have to employ the 'decolonising methodologies' explored by Smith (2005).

Thesis Layout

Chapter II reviews the literature in the area of tribal development and states the rationale and the objectives of the study. Exploration of the concepts of tribe, development and tribal development is attempted considering the broader context of development and Adivasi situated realities in their specific contexts. Review of the concepts relevant to the specific areas of investigation is delineated to formulate and systematise their experiences on development/lack of development.

Chapter III discusses the methodology and the various methods used to understand the epistemological positions, and the process of 'development' among Kurichias and

Paniyas. The research sites, processes of data collection, field work experience and data analysis are also described in detail.

Chapter IV introduces the historical context and the two communities, the Paniyas and Kurichias in Wayanad, Kerala selected for the study. The socio-cultural and political context of Paniyas and Kurichias and the development initiatives by the state and Adivasi response to these state initiated programmes are delineated in this chapter which prepares the background for the discussions and analysis in the subsequent chapters based on field data.

Chapter V discusses how schooling reproduces social inequalities and cultural asymmetries by examining the experiences of Paniyas and Kurichias. The first section of this chapter briefly discusses the educational scenario in Wayanad and the State's commitment to Adivasi education. The second section elaborately explores the differential educational experiences of Paniyas and Kurichias and the social exclusion and marginalisation they experience in the structure and culture of schooling and through the curriculum and pedagogy that constructs their world views and epistemologies as illegitimate and inferior.

Chapter VI explores the perceptions of Paniyas and Kurichias on health and illness and their experiences of traditional as well as modern health care services. The chapter focuses on how the Adivasi conceptualisations and practices are different from the biomedical development notions of health and illnesses and how the health system marginalises them. Their critique of the biomedical approach and their pluriform approach in health practices are also discussed.

Chapter VII explores the wage labour, employment opportunities and livelihood issues of Paniyas and Kurichias. This chapter analyzes the present forms of bondage and new tools such as advance money, debt, dependence, religion, alcohol etc. to perpetuate the socio cultural, economic and political bondedness of the Adivasis. The material and cultural alienation faced by Paniyas and Kurichias are also delineated. This chapter also analyzes how subsistence agriculture has given Kurichias a better position and comparatively a better chance to accrue state benefits and to respond to state initiated development programmes.

Chapter VIII aims to understand the land holding patterns and land relations of Adivasis, how state policies and programmes neglect the land question of Adivasis and how landlessness leads to denial of their material and symbolic worlds. It also discusses the gap between Adivasi perceptions and state perceptions of land and the epistemic violence in negating Adivasi world views by not seeing the relationship between landlessness and lack of development of the Adivasis.

Chapter IX provides the summary and conclusion of the research study and stresses the importance of incorporating Adivasi epistemologies in development policies and practices for their well being. It underlines the importance of understanding their marginalisation in the light of not only the historical injustice of plundering their resource base, but also by addressing the cognitive violence and subjugation of their knowledge and epistemologies.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

This chapter attempts to review the related literature and to present the rationale and objectives of the research study. The scope of this chapter is limited and the attempt is not to review the vast literature on tribal development but to elaborate on particular themes that help understand and explain the research problem. Different perspectives on core concepts such as tribe, development and tribal development are explored and an attempt is made to understand the tribal reality in the specific social context of Wayanad.

In the development discourse in India, tribes continue to be viewed as a monolithic category despite significant differences among different tribal groups. There is evidence of increasing socio-cultural historical and political differentiation among different tribal groups and there are regional variations in the development indicators of Scheduled Tribes across the country. For instance, literacy among tribal populations in the North Eastern region that have a predominantly large tribal population is relatively higher than that among other regions. The tribal development policies and programmes are centered on the homogeneity of tribal people and assume that they will develop and integrate into the 'mainstream'.

There is a growing body of literature on the development of tribal communities in India. The various critiques of the current development model rooted in the modernisation paradigm have shown the contradictions inherent in the model including the state-initiated development for marginalised people such as tribal communities (Fernandes 1992; Pathy 1998; Roy Burman 2004). They argue that the state's welfare policies for tribal communities and the oppressive and coercive measures against them operate in a manner that leads to not only the economic and political marginalisation of the tribal communities but also their social and cultural exclusion. Some of these discussions have been revisited recently in the context of the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005, the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 and the Draft National Policy

for Tribal Communities, 2006. The bill and the policy are purported at undoing the historical injustice done to the tribal people in the name of development.

However, the definition of tribe itself is riddled with ambiguity; there is no homogenous community with special characteristics called tribes. To understand the concept of tribe and the way it is evolving, different views of anthropologists and sociologists are explored in the following section.

Conceptualising Tribes

The term 'tribe' is defined in numerous ways by different western and eastern anthropologists and sociologists but the different definitions may not capture the reality of the people that they represent. The different definitions have emerged with different purposes such as encyclopedic definitions, administrative definitions for surveillance and control, anthropological definitions for classification and analytical purposes and self-definitions for emphasising diversity and asserting identity.

The term 'tribe' originated around the time of the Greek city–states and the early formation of the Roman Empire. The term and concept, 'tribe' is derived from a Latin root 'tribuz' meaning the three divisions into which the early Romans were grouped: any one of three divisions of the people representing the Latin, Sabine and Etruscan settlements or any of the later political divisions of the people (*Oxford English Dictionary*, p.1530; Roy Burman, 1994). Roy Burman observes that with the Romans, the tribe was a political division, while the Greeks seem to have equated it with their 'fraternities' at times, with geographical divisions at others. In Irish history, however, the term meant families or communities of persons having the same surname. Most of the anthropologists and sociologists of western origin use the term 'tribe' as in the latest edition of Oxford dictionary, a race of people, now applied specially to a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbarous condition, under a headman or chief. According to the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 'tribe, in anthropology, a notional form of human social organisation based on a set of smaller groups, having temporary or permanent political integration, and defined by traditions of common descent, language, culture and ideology.'1 Winick's dictionary of anthropology has defined tribe as a 'social

1 Source: www.britanica.com/EBchecked/topic/604711/tribe (accessed on 23rd, April 2012).

group usually with a definite area, dialect, cultural homogeneity and unifying social organisation' (Roy Burman, 1994:22). However, Roy Burman acknowledges that there is hardly any tribal community following these criteria (ibid).

The Term 'Tribe' – a Colonial Construction

The review of the various definitions of 'tribe' in the Indian context reveals that there is not much consensus on the definition but some anthropologists and sociologists trace their origin to the rise of colonialism. They viewed the term tribe as a colonial construction coined for administrative purposes. Ghurye (1959) elaborates on this by highlighting the census data on the tribes and various names that the British administrators gave to the tribes like 'forest tribes', 'primitive tribes' and 'hill tribes'. According to Pathy (1992), before colonisation there was no equivalent indigenous word for the English term, 'tribe' and it was during the colonial expansion into the non-Aryan areas, that the tribe as a social category got crystallized as animist in India. Joshi (1998) too observes that the tribal, non-tribal categorisation did not exist in the pre-British era. Sharma and Oommen (2000) point out that several tribes were considered nations, peoples and kingdoms by the colonisers when they wanted to establish commercial and diplomatic relations with them. But the colonial subjugation transformed nations, countries, kingdoms and people into so called tribes. So it merely reflects the vocabulary of the colonial powers and prior to colonisation the term had no equivalent in Africa, Asia, Australia or America (Sharma and Oommen 2000). Xaxa (2005) too agrees that the term, 'tribe' is a colonial construction and before the colonial era, the use of a generic term to describe tribal people was absent. At the same time, Xaxa reiterates that tribe as a category and a point of reference may be treated as a colonial construction, but the image and meaning underlying the category did exist earlier (Xaxa, 2005). For instance, he points out that from the 16th century the term, 'tribe' was used to refer to communities that lived in primitive and barbarous conditions and the Sanskritic and Hindu religious texts and traditions described them in a similar fashion. Further, he notes that the precolonial portrayals like 'dasyus', 'rakshakas' and 'nishadas' conveyed the brutality attached to the concept tribe and their religion was described as animistic.

The term, 'Scheduled Tribe' is used as an administrative category of tribe and evolved from the British administrative system in India. According to this categorization, tribes

are only those who are included in the Scheduled Tribes list of the Constitution and it is drawn from the colonial administration who prepared it through imagination and local stereotypes (Pathy 1982). The Constitution has not specifically taken care to define a Scheduled Tribe. The criteria followed in the Constitution for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe are 'indications of primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation, shyness of contact with the community at large and backwardness' (Hooja 2004:19). However, in the modern development discourse, 'tribes' are only those who are included in the Scheduled Tribe's list of the Constitution of India. And one remains a tribe only in the state where she or he is enlisted as a Scheduled Tribe. No community is scheduled for the entire country. Therefore, a tribal community migrating to another state where it is not scheduled loses its status and is not enumerated as such in the census. India maintains a list of 'Scheduled Tribes' for constitutional protection of its tribal people. A state-wise list of tribes was drawn and it was left to the Parliament to determine the official list of the Scheduled Tribes from time to time. The constitutional definition based on enumeration is quite different from the anthropological notions of a tribe. Though it does not have much scientific basis, the term Scheduled Tribe 'is linked to the extension of administrative and political concessions and the exclusion and inclusion of a particular group reflects political mobilization rather than a neutral application of criteria' (Xaxa 2003:376).

The Social Science Perspective

The social scientists of today have moved away from the British Anthropologists' notion of a tribe as an isolate, homogenous, autonomous social unit. The relation between tribes and caste is one area of interest in tribal studies and research in social anthropology. Surveying different literature, Chaudhuri (1982), highlights that in India there is a process of gradual conversion of tribal people into caste. At the same time, he highlights the reverse processes and various boundary maintaining mechanisms of tribes within the dominant culture for retaining self identity. According to Menon (2003) there is mutual influence of religion between the Hindus and tribal people in Kerala. For instance, there is tribalisation of Hinduism by the adoption of deities and worship from the folk forms. Menon points out that in India those who do not declare any notable religion is considered legally a Hindu. But he stresses that the similarities in rituals and practices of

tribals and Hindus is because of their influence on each other. He also challenges the concept of Sanskritisation by indicating that there is tribalisation of Hinduism as there is also the indication of Hinduisation of tribals in the name of cultural enhancement. In an earlier study, Nathan (1997) highlights that in India, ethnocentrism denies the history of caste which is based on deep inequality in access to knowledge, productive resources and social status. In contrast, Nathan insists on the features of a tribal society that emphasise the relation of all members to production unlike the hierarchic exploitative production relations like the non producing professional priests and warriors in caste formations. While admitting some similar features of caste and tribe like endogamy, Nathan differentiates its function in the two communities, as endogamy is about maintaining a tribal identity in a tribal community but this notion of identity get transformed to purity, a hierarchical notion by relating it to the impurity of others in caste society. He notes that in sexual relations, while tribes forbade all relations from outside their specific group, caste purity permits taking women from more pure castes, but not giving women to less pure castes.

According to Pathy (1988), the state policies of assimilation and national integration contributed to the destruction of tribal identities and the tribal people were made subservient to the dominant sanskritic culture and a caste ridden social system began to get imposed on tribal people. As Xaxa (2005) points out, the view that tribes are Hindus has become popular among the right wing Hindu social and political activists. The Hindu organisations are trying to spread the belief that Adivasis are part of the Hindu religion by claiming that Hindus also worship nature (Sundar 2009). Sundar points out that the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) of RSS in Jharkhand resists the terminology of ‘indigenous people’ and even ‘Adivasi’ and prefers to call them *vanvasis* to include them in the lowest rung of Hindu religion by describing the distinction between tribes and castes as a colonial product as stressed by many post colonial critiques. Even in Kerala, the VKA brand Adivasis as *vanvasis* and place them in the lowest rung of Hindu religion. In the eighteenth century writings on India, the term, ‘caste’ have often been used synonymously with tribe and later, for a long time, not synonymously but in a similar manner as in the phrase, ‘castes and tribes’, as if they were similar social groups. However, the recent movements for self-assertion and self-rule due to the threat posed to

tribal ways of living are a sign that there is not much base for including tribes in the caste structure.

Further, Bailey (1960) has taken a structural position in the definition of tribe. As he argues, caste society is predominantly hierarchical and tribal society is basically segmentary. He argues that the segmentary political system of the tribes represent a structure of a definite type. While emphasising the segmentary system of political relations among tribal people, he does not rejecting the process of integration and gradual conversion. He further points out that tribes are those who have direct command over resources, and their access to the product of the economy is not derived through the dependent status on others. However, Rao (1988) observes that Bailey gives importance to economy and power and he argues that it is not economic and political change alone but the total structure that needs to be taken into consideration while defining tribal people. Even though there is no consensus in seeing 'tribe' as 'caste', social scientists of today view tribal people in relation with non-tribal people. As Xaxa (2005) points out, majority of the social scientists see the difference between tribal and non-tribal people as one of structure. That is, tribes were seen as lying outside the structure of the larger Indian society and its civilisation but in constant interaction with them. In the social science perspective, the difference between tribes and other Indian population is accepted according to their distinct language, culture, custom, tradition and social organisation. They argue that these characteristics undergo change in the process of acculturation arising from their contact and interaction with non tribal people. Xaxa (2005) criticises this stand of social scientists pointing out the possibility of the tribes losing a distinct identity and space due to the process of social transformation. He maintains that the only option left to them is to maintain their identity as a caste within the hierarchical structure of the caste system.

There are comparisons of tribal and *jati* (caste) characteristics. Mandelbaum (1970) differentiates 'tribal' and '*jati*' and observes that in tribal life, the societal links are based on kinship. Individual equality as kinsman is assumed in tribal societies. Lineage or clans are considered the chief corporate units for land ownership, defence, economic production and consumption. Each one enjoys equal rights even though there is some subordination by age and sex. But the age dependency and women's dependency on men

is relatively less compared to *jati* society. In *jati*, members, especially of the higher rank hold different assumptions about kinship and society. There the higher *jatis* subordinate the lower *jatis* of labourers, artisans and sweepers and they assume inequality in society. For *jati* members, kinship is not important and they assume inequality in society insisting on non-kinship relations and hierarchical ordering. *Jati* people expect their village society to be culturally heterogeneous, each *jati* following a unique combination of customary practices, but tribes expect their society to be homogeneous, not necessarily heterogeneous. However, today tribal groups are heterogenous. For example, Meenas in Rajasthan is a highly developed group in terms of development indicators. The three large tribal communities in Kerala - Paniya, Kurichia and Malai Arayan report literacy rates of 48.5 per cent, 78.2 per cent and 94.5 per cent respectively. As Roy Burman (2003) points out the identity boundaries of tribal people are not always fixed but adjust to new needs and challenges.

According to Roy Burman (1994), in Indian languages including Sanskrit and Prakrit, '*Jana*' was the term for tribe. He also mentions that there were '*Janas*' or communities of people like the Savaras, the Kullatas, the Kollas, the Bhallas, the Khasis, the Kinnars and countless number of others whom today we designate as tribes, bearing almost the same recognizable names. Ray (1972) analyzes contextually the long list of *janas* in the epic Buddhist, Puranic and secular literature in early medieval times and points out that hardly any distinction was made between 'what we know today as 'tribes' and such communities of people who were known as Gandharas and Kambojas, Khasas and Kosalas, Angas and Magdhas, Kurus and Panchalas' (cited in Roy Burman, 1994: 27). However, there are also cautions against such identification by scholars, arguing that the notion of *jana* was more fluid, overlapping in many instances with other categories that would today be classified as non-tribes (Xaxa 2003, see also Roy Burman 1994). Further, Roy notes that *janas* with an egalitarian system were different from other communities only in the sense that they continued to remain outside the control of *jati* with a hierarchical system of social organisation.

It is a tradition among anthropologists to classify human societies according to their occupation and they classified tribes as hunting, gathering, pastoral nomads, settled agriculturists and so on, assuming that the most common occupations generate specific

forms of social relations and its ideological underpinnings (Roy Burman nd). But this kind of classification does not take care of the relationship of tribes with nature and of the total socio-political milieu in which the particular predominant occupation exists and so it becomes irrelevant (Roy Burman nd). Tribes have been seen not only in opposition to caste but also in opposition to peasants in several studies. However, Xaxa (2003) argues that many tribal groups in India have practised settled agriculture for generations and thus there is overlap between the category of tribe and peasant. This is true in the case of Kurichias and Mullukurumas in Kerala. They are traditional agricultural communities and can be categorised as peasant communities among tribes. Xaxa further points out that unlike the tribes in America, Australia and the Pacific islands, tribes in India lived in close interaction with larger society and civilisation. Even though the distinction between tribe and civilisation is maintained in the post colonial period, sociologists and social anthropologists have emphasised the mutual interaction and the political, economic and social linkages between tribal and non tribal groups. Thus, instead of the tribe-caste tribe-peasant dichotomy, the tribe-caste, tribe-peasant continuum is stressed to understand the dynamics of tribal society. However, Nathan (1997) points out that features such as cohesiveness, habitat, stress on clan structures, ethnicity bonds, higher position of women and strong sense of identity still exist and distinguish tribes from caste. He agrees that in the process of transition some qualities such as position of women has eroded, but still it is better than castes.

The Marxist theory views ethnicity in the evolutionary framework and argues that the world's ethnic groups will ultimately merge into a greater working class brotherhood. In the same tradition, Lenin argued that with the economic development, ethnic resistance to assimilation or voluntary integration tends to disappear (Pathy 1988). However, Pathy (1988) points out that it is more reasonable to classify tribal people as ethnic groups rather than group them on the basis of religion, language, region or caste. For this argument, he highlights the fact that nearly half of the ethnic movements in India are led by tribal people. Dube (1977) also prefers to view tribe as an ethnic category characterised by common descent, corporate self-identity and a wide range of commonly shared traits and culture. Narang (1995) opines that whether the ethnic group be called a nation, nationality, a minority, a tribe, a community, a culture, a society or a people has become more of a political issue than a process of scientific enquiry. Chaudury and

Srivastava (2009) too corroborate that there is a decline in the studies of the tribe- caste continuum and there is an increase in the studies of tribal ethnicity during the last fifteen years. In the North East, they prefer the identity of an ethnic group and the term, 'Adivasi' is used to denote the migrants from Chota Nagpur. Other terms used for tribes were fourth world (Sengupta 1982) and tribes in transition (Desai 1969) etc. Another important discourse on tribal studies in international institutions is the concept of tribe as indigenous people.

Indigenous People

In the case of tribal people, there is a strong demand for self-definition and self-identification. The World Council of Indigenous Peoples has impressed upon the United Nations (UN) to recognise the right of the indigenous peoples to define themselves both in terms of an individual's self identification as an indigenous person and the right of the community to define its members. The indigenous organisations today reject the artificial definitions put forward by national legislations in which they have not been directly involved. The International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA) gives a more meaningful definition in today's context: 'As Adivasis, we are people with distinct historical, political and cultural identities. We are united by our histories as distinct societies, by our languages, laws, traditions and unique spiritual and economic relationships with our lands and territories' (IWGIA, 2000:395 as cited in Mundu, 2004). The Indian representatives in the UN working groups meeting in its 11th Session in 1993 argued that the term, 'indigenous' was not adequate for India. State Governments also refused to identify the existence of indigenous peoples in their states. The operational definition of the UN working group on indigenous populations, definition contained in the World Bank's operational directive and the definitions of ILO are basically juridical and protective in nature. But the complexity and limitations in defining a 'people' in the changing context with few words leaves loopholes. According to Singh (1993), the definition of the term, 'indigenous people' is too restrictive as it does not reflect the specificities of many countries' historical situations. So he is of the opinion that any new enlarged and universal definition of indigenous people should take into account the specialities of each country's historical experience, its current ethno-social situation, its political system and so on. He points out that the term, 'indigenous' in the dictionary

ranges from ‘people originating from a country’ to ‘those people who are born in a particular region’ and then there are hardly any indigenous people in the world.

However, the term, ‘indigenous’ is controversial today as many groups such as Dalits, Chakma refugees and Mizos claim that they are also indigenous people. According to Shah (2011), ethnicity and indigeneity are political concepts and she notes that an essential notion of indigenous people is philosophically, anthropologically and historically problematic. However, instead of raising this contentious issue, India can call its tribal people, indigenous for achieving national and international rights and the term is more political than anthropological. Thus, instead of essentialising the term, ‘indigenous’ to denote tribal people, its relevance in their right’s context has to be emphasised.

Adivasis: Tribal’s View of Themselves

The term, ‘tribe’ in India was developed mainly for administrative and political purposes of surveillance and control and it was shaped and reshaped by the colonial and post colonial power structures. Even now the definition of tribe is controversial due to the socio-political consequences more than the existence of diverse theoretical perspectives and ideologies. Xaxa (2005) points out that the articulation of tribal identity is becoming a process directed from within the tribal community with the help of education and because of the threat posed to tribal ways of living by the dominant groups and demands imposed by development. As he points out instead of adopting the identity imposed on them by dominant groups, tribal people commence to reinforce their own tribal image and distinctiveness. In relation to non-tribal fellow human beings, tribal communities call themselves ‘Adivasis’ meaning the first or aboriginal dwellers.

Many Adivasi groups, however, hold their group names which basically mean ‘man’ (including both female and male) or ‘human being’ or ‘people’. For example, the Mikirs use Arleng, the Garos Mande, Bodos Kacharias and Koayens Singpho, Mundas use Horo, the Santhals Hor and Hos Ho. Also each Naga group still continues to have its own endonym. The Angami call themselves Tenjimia, Ao as Mezama, Sema as Semi and so on. Suffixes such as ‘mi’, ‘me’, ‘ma’ or ‘mia’ mean ‘men’ in their respective dialects. ‘Sopomi’ refers to men belonging to the Sopo ethnic group. The Oraon refer to themselves as Kurukh which etymologically means a man. The Koya call themselves

Koitor meaning people in their own tongue. Similarly, Ho and Juang mean human being in contrast to the other inhabitants of the area, which surrounds them (Pathy 1998, Mundu 2004). All these names can be perceived as implications to their broader vision of an enlarged identity as 'human beings' which extends the social scientists efforts of categorising them according to external characteristics or geographical and historical factors.

The first political party that the tribal people formed in 1939 with a national perspective was called Adivasi Mahasabha. Nihar Ranjan Ray's observation on the historical evolution of tribal identity is relevant; he maintains that every social organisation tends to create and evolve terms and concepts in its own language to explain and interpret itself in given times and situations, to suit its own aims and purposes, functions and exercises, ideas and aspirations (cited in Roy Burman 1994). Singh (1993) points out that the term, 'Adivasi' is more appropriate as it refers to the old settlers in the hills, forest and remote areas, of which tribal people form a significant part. The term, 'Adivasis' has widespread acceptance among the members of the tribal communities all over India, except in the North Eastern part of India.2 However, in the Indian context, their self identification as Adivasis is what they use to regain their lost identity and right over land and forest resources. It points to their distinct identity, history and culture in general and is useful for their mobilisation as a group. However, according to Shah (2011), being indigenous or Adivasi is a part of cultural politics as it is a powerful tool for the marginalised and dispossessed people to fight for their rights. She points out that we need to move beyond the sterile debate of whether the concept is relevant or not to a step forward to investigate how this new kind of cultural politics emerges and what are the process and shifts by treating it as an object of ethnographic and historiographic study.

Tribes in Wayanad

In Kerala, the highest concentration of tribal population is found in the northern district of Wayanad. It constitutes 37 per cent of the tribal population of the state and 17 per cent of the district population. Wayanad district is the abode of socio-economically and culturally different tribal communities like Paniya, Adiya, Kattunaikka, Kurichia, Mullukuruma and

2 For example, in Arunachal Pradesh, tea plantation labourers from Chotanagpur call themselves Adivasis.

Uralikuruma. All these groups are included in the Scheduled Tribe category. Their development status in terms of land and livelihood, education and health vary significantly. The terms, Scheduled Tribe, tribal and tribal development remain as administrative categories and these terms are used by the tribal people in Wayanad in descriptions related to administrative purposes and accessing benefits from government institutions. In this study, the term, 'Adivasi' is used contextually and interchangeably. Their specific group names like Paniyas and Kurichias are used as a means to differentiate while describing their specific development experiences and outcomes even though they do not assert these group names always. The fluidity in using different terms actually represents the fluidity in their identity while they face multiple realities in their development experience and the confusion the researcher as well as people go through.

The word, 'Paniya' means worker and 'Adiya' means slave. They believe that these names are attributed to them by their feudal landlords who made them slaves. The word, 'Kurichia' they connect with their historical fight with Pazhassi and the authorship is attributed to Pazhassi by Kurichias. The inferiority they find in accepting names like Paniya and Adiya shows that these names have not emerged from their self definition. As Kunhaman (nd) notes, even the category names conveyed their inferior status in society and as he argues the etymology of names in India gives insight into the traditional social structure. However, in the study, if the State is the protagonist, the term used is tribe or tribal people and when the people become the central character, the term used is Adivasis, and when used to explain the different views, their category names like Paniyas and Kurichias are used.

In the Wayanad context, it is observed that a clear demarcation of 'us' and 'they' emerges when Adivasis describe non-Adivasis especially when they describe their marginality and exploitation from the dominant non-Adivasi society. This does not mean that they are isolated from the dominant society. They continuously interact with the non-Adivasi society in their day to day living. However, in India for years Adivasis lived in the forest and no authority can deny their right over forest and land on the basis of written documents. As elsewhere in India, in Wayanad too the Adivasi land where they buried their ancestors and the land they protected as sacred groves became the private property of non-Adivasi people. Their territories are also claimed by the State in the name of wild life sanctuaries, reserved forests or development projects such as plantations. Today, their

most crucial need is a collective as well as individual identity to achieve their lost culture, land, forest and power to self determination.

In Wayanad, with a historical and political consciousness tribal communities call themselves Adivasis in contrast to non-Adivasi fellow human beings who migrated into their homelands. At the same time each Adivasi group considers their *gothram* (clan) special and tries to maintain the purity of the clan through customary practices integral to their clan. For instance, Paniyas have their own ritual practices different from those of Kurichias. When Janu, the Adivasi leader in Wayanad formed '*Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha'* an organisation engaged in fighting for land rights, she recognised this diversity as a distinct *gothram* alongside their assertive unity to fight against the forces that marginalise them. Even though each group has its own customs and rituals, Janu asserts: 'All our songs, customs and medical practices were born from the system of life that we adopted as intimately related to the earth' (Bhaskaran 2004: 49). In the book, *Mother Forest*, Janu says that the very existence and lifecycle of the Adivasis are bound to the earth more than those of non-Adivasi communities and she perceives the forest to be more than a mother who will never abandon them. Thus, separating Adivasis from their land and environment means separating them from their identity and culture.

However, in day to day life, Adivasis in the study area were not found asserting their collective Adivasi identity, or their specific Paniya and Kurichia identities. But they asserted the uniqueness of each group as united together with a special set of rituals and customary practices centered around land and environment. K.J Baby (1999) in his novel *Maveli Mantam* captures the Adivasi dream of a free existence devoid of *thamburakkanmar* (Adivasis call their jenmis *thampurakkanmar*) where they can freely enjoy the fruits of the earth. Thus, regaining their *Ippimala* (original representation of their territory) and getting rid of the clutches of exploitation is regaining their identity as Adivasis. K.J Baby's (1993) play *Nadugaddhika* depicts Adivasi youth searching for 'modern' styles and identity when hunger, discrimination and desperate questions about their identity haunt them. As Bindu and Bindulakshmi (2004) points out Kurichias and their trend of Brahmanisation is also a claim of modernity and more power with the outside world but they do not disown their tradition and culture. For instance, Bindu and Bindulakshmi (2004) point out that *Malakkari* (Kurichia god) or other Adivasi gods are

not rejected outright but they are redefined by them. For instance, Kurichias describe *Malakkari* as *Upadevata*, or sub god who is worshipped as an incarnation of Shiva who is given the credit of 'original' god (ibid). Bindu sees this as a redefining of tradition rather than a rejection of tradition. However, reclaiming and asserting identity is part of their real development and the following section reviews some definitions and alternative articulations of 'development' before plunging into the concept of tribal development.

Development

Development has been defined in different ways ranging from a narrow focus on economic growth to expansion of human capabilities. There were various attempts to deconstruct the western concept of 'development' giving importance to local knowledge systems and world views of the marginalised groups. The definitions and different meanings attached to the term 'development' in different contexts are discussed in this section.

In independent India, the concept of development has a major thrust on economic growth, indicating an increase in per capita gross national product. The importance of social development and the interlinkage between social and economic development is stressed in different development discourses. Today, the development concept is applied to all fields of human endeavor and it is seen as an expansion of choice, an expansion of human capabilities, an expansion of freedom, participation and quality of life. It is closely linked with environment, poverty, equality, and the notion of the state and governance. There are different theoretical approaches to development such as evolutionary approach, modernisation approach, dependency approach and mode of production approach based on different disciplines.

Development is a term we use with different meanings in different contexts. The term, 'development' In biology, development combines two aspects, elaboration and unveiling to suggest a process from inherent potential to achieving the present state. Development is a stage of growth or maturation or advancement (Oxford English Reference Dictionary as cited in Gasper 2005). Quoting the evolutionary approach of Wolff and Darwin, Esteva (1992:8) observes: 'Development describes a process through which the potentialities of an object or organism are released, until it reaches its natural, complete full fledged

form'. Thus, it meant a process of revealing or bringing out what is inherent in reality and it is a process of qualitative growth. The transfer of the biological metaphor to the social sphere occurred in the last quarter of the 18th Century.

In a historical sense, development is the unfolding of a necessary path of progress. Its usage has often combined ideas of necessity, influential change and fundamental improvement. With specific historic reference, development is described as a concept that emerged at the end of the Second World War. In this era, northern economic growth is projected as a model and the countries of the south and east tried to catch up with this model. There was a decline of colonialism and an intensified conflict between the capitalist and socialist versions of the economic growth model, but the flourishing of industrial economies prepared a base for neo colonialism (Gasper, 2005). Gasper highlights the hidden agenda of development, in the description of the southern hemisphere as underdeveloped areas and the neo-colonial concept of westernisation of the entire world. In this neo-colonial project, the cultural diversity of the people in the south is threatened and they ceased being what they were all in its diversity (ibid). Here development meant the movement from an inferior form or state to a superior form of state and it was used it in a transitive way. An attitude of 'we develop you' entered into the development scenario and the biological meaning started fading (ibid). Thus, as colonialism threatened the backbone of Indian cultural heritage and development, the westernisation development model succeeded in attacking the heterogeneous and culturally diverse economies of India.

In the 1950s there was an intense debate in India regarding the strategy of economic development in general and on how to break the vicious circle of poverty in particular. There were several view points to reach the goal. The Gandhian view favoured small scale industries and self reliance. Nationalist industrialists preferred rapid industrialisation through capital goods industries under the public sector, with supporting provisions for the small scale and cottage sector. The aim was rapid economic growth by increasing national per capita income, removal of poverty and misery, and raising the standard of living of the masses. Historically, the idea of development was mostly materialistic and objective and however, the onslaught of the fast paced, industrial model exploited nature and alienated different sections like the Adivasis from their natural habitat.

Economic Development

Peet and Hartwick (2005) build the connection between economics and development by highlighting economics as knowledge about the effective use of resources in producing the material basis of life, and development as the means for improving the conditions of life. They highlight the general idea that 'development is fundamentally an economic process, economics has an abiding interest in development, and all theories of development have significant economic dimensions' (Peet and Hartwick 2005:17). The emphasis on economic growth achieved a universal standard to national development. The United Nations Charter of 1945 proclaimed 'a rising standard of living' as the global objective. And the commercial outputs of goods and services within a country became the indicator for measuring the material well being. The per capita Gross National Product (GNP) as a national average became the indicator for measuring development. Thus, 'Per capita GNP increasing annually at the rate of about 6 per cent (assuming a lower rate of population growth) became the measure of successful development in the post war era, in conjunction with increased industrialisation' (Mc Michael 2000:27). Though per capita income is not the only indicator, it is the most significant single measure of comparison with other economies.

In the economic growth model, the general assumption is that if growth occurs, then human development will automatically follow. Peet and Hartwick (2005) observe skeptically that this view of development means more of everything for everyone in the context of a lot more for a few. He also points out that when development basically means economic growth led by the elite, there still remains a progressive notion of improving the material life condition for many people through 'trickle down' from the rich to the poor and criticises the blind belief that the elite will push the engine of growth and development.

Adam Smith's theory based on supply and demand and the notion of the invisible hand of the market which leads to the common good of all is now seen as a myth (Basu 2011). Basu argues that the economy must be viewed as embedded in society and politics and to actualise this, he suggests breaking away from the shackles of methodological individualism. Critiquing the economic rationality which is devoid of morality and ignores the role of culture and custom, he aspires for a world that is not merely efficient

as the free market economies aim, but is also fair and radically democratic. According to him, the form of capitalism that the world aspires to is a grossly unfair system and the vision of perfecting this system is a myth perpetuated in the interests of those who gain from the persistence of this unjust system. In this system, people perceive that redistributing wealth is wrong because the current distribution is the right one, forgetting the fact that it is an outcome of grabbing, lobbying and unfair accumulation. Challenging economic determinism, a new paradigm of development called human development, which puts people at the centre of development has emerged. In this paradigm, economic growth is treated only as a means and the quality of human life as the end.

Human Development

The term, 'social development' means development of society in its totality including its economic, political, cultural and other aspects. The UN General Assembly Declaration on the Right to Development in 1986, defined development as 'a comprehensive economic social, cultural and political process, which aims at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals on the basis of their active free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting from it' (Cheria, Petcharamesree and Edwin, 2004:33). This definition emphasises the interconnections between economic, social, cultural and political aspects of development. Social justice and basic needs are also emphasised. Thus, here human rights and development are not seen as distinct but one enhances the other and in this approach, non-discrimination to disadvantaged groups is given special attention.

Further, the global view of human development using demographic indices of the quality of life in different societies is presented by international organisations. In this global view, human development is measured by the Human Development Index (HDI) calculated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The HDI measures development in terms of longevity (life expectancy at birth), knowledge (adult literacy and mean years of schooling) and income sufficiency (the proportion of people with sufficient resources to live a decent life) (Human Development Report 1994). However, the promoters of HDI themselves found it deficient as it cannot assess the deprivation of access to resources for material needs. Further, it is evident from the definition that using HDI for measuring development leads to a capitalist notion of development centered on

material progress, where the local knowledge systems, cultures and world views are not considered important in the definition of human development indicators. Existence of some material condition is conveniently defined as human development using a set of indices. Longevity of life is stressed but quality of life cannot be measured using these indices.

Further, human development is rendered a process and a level of achievement and in India, the Kerala Model of development is appreciated on this basis. Sen (1999) highlights 'the eastern strategy' of human development and argues that it has extraordinary social and demographic reach, in addition to its contribution to economic development and directly into the quality of life. Human development is presented by Sen through an internationally comparative level of deprivation, which determines how far from the most successful national case are the other countries.

The importance of education in economic growth and human development is not a new discovery; right from the classical economists, theorists have emphasised the role of skills in increasing production and specifically identified education not only as a target but also as an instrument of economic development. However, Rao (1966) points out that the relationship between education and economic growth received more attention during the post war period when economic historians and statisticians started exploring economic growth and perceived education both as a condition and stimulant for economic development. The 'self discovering' and 'self fulfilling' aspects of education were to enrich human development. This view is reflected in the Report of the Education Commission (1964 – 66) as it emphasises the link between education, national development and prosperity and the commission recommended a well defined, bold and imaginative educational policy for accelerating development. Education was expected to promote all types of human development outcomes. In this view education, health, nutrition, and water and sanitation complement each other so that investment in any one contributes to better outcome in others. More than just a source of knowledge, education promotes better hygiene and increases the use of health services. This is reflected in the observation of J.P Naik that 'Education and development are not two different things but merely two sides of the same coin: education should lead to development and

development should create the motivation for education as well as provide the tools for it' (cited in Joshi 1979:5).

The Human Development Report (HDR) 1990 affirms that 'Human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. In principle these choices can be infinite and change over time. But at all levels of development, the three essential ones are for people to lead a long and healthy life, to acquire knowledge and to have access to resources needed for a decent standard of living' (HDR 1990: 27). It extends its scope into additional choices ranging from political, economic and social freedom to opportunities for being creative and productive and enjoying personal self respect and guarantee of human rights. The Millennium Development Goals of UN stress a vital commitment to promote human well being that entails dignity, freedom and equality for all people (HDR 2003). The goals also reflect rights to food, education, health care and decent living standards, as enumerated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, the report acknowledges the fact that the expansion of people's participation in the decisions that affect their lives or increasing their civil and political freedom which is an important component in human development is not included in the Millennium Development Goals even though participation, democracy and human rights are projected as important elements of the Millenium Declaration. It is evident that the human development becomes functional only if people can participate in the decisions affecting their life. For instance, even though the international laws accepts the intrinsic connection between Adivasis and their territory, their lands have been taken away for development projects, their cultures are disregarded, their language, customs and local knowledge systems are overlooked. As long as they have not been given power for self determination in these areas, the Millennium Goals and human development plans remain a myth.

Development as Expansion of Human Capabilities and Freedom

Development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedom that people enjoy to attain the objective that they have reason to value. And in this sense, the expansion of human capability can be broadly seen as the central feature of the process of development (Dreze and Sen 1995). Dreze and Sen perceived poverty as 'capability deprivation' related to economic, social and political issues, that is, lack of opportunity due to social constraints as well as personal circumstances. They criticise modern development

literature which places more emphasis on economic growth than expansion of human capabilities. According to Sen, a person's capability is her or his set of attainable life-paths. So it extends from the economic sphere to the alternate combinations of functioning a person could attain, such as longevity of life, of what health quality, with what mobility and so on. Then the concept of capability cannot be limited to a skill, aptitude, strength or ability. It includes one's options or opportunities. And the interactions of one's capacities with the possibilities provided in a person's environment generate a person's capability (Gasper 2005).

Expansion of freedom is viewed by Sen (1999), as a primary end as well as principle means of development. According to Sen, freedom is essential for formulating well informed and widely accepted statements of purposes and priorities, and he stresses the freedom of public participation in particular. Freedom and democracy give space for exercise of free choice, regardless of the results. Freedom has instrumental importance and helps to attain other desired ends. For example, free discussion and choice in southern India led to larger and sustained decline in female fertility than compulsion in China has achieved (Gasper, 2005).

Education and health are seen as important promoting factors in the expansion of human capabilities and freedom. Intrinsically, health and education are valuable achievements in themselves as the opportunity to education empowers them for collective demands to resist oppression on the personal as well as collective levels and contributes to their well being, effective freedom and fuller development. Further, instrumentally it is valuable as it provides economic opportunities, for their well being. (Dreze and Sen 1995).

Development as Marginalisation

Marglin (1990) extends Sen's (1987) distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value of the expansion of choice. Instrumentally, the expansion of choice is valuable since it allows the attainment of preferred choices and the intrinsic view is that welfare would be improved by the addition of new opportunities. But Marglin looks at the intrinsic and instrumental value of education critically and says that if the possibility of the traditional choice is removed, the possibility of the modern is not necessarily an enlargement of the

domain of choice and the preference argument has no meaning if the new choice set does not include the old ones. That is, the choice set shrinks in some dimensions even while it expands in others. In a way, preference of new choices over the old destroys the traditional knowledge and skills and in a way becomes a constraint for the development of one section of the people. However, it is worth discussing the scope of expansion of choice to the marginalised communities.

Contrary to the optimism of the earlier discussed development approaches, Marglin (1990) sees the development process as coercion as it is an assault on the autonomy of individuals and local groups. He argues that the transformation of work into its modern western form was the result of deliberate attempts to take control of process and product from the worker. In the same way, modern development projects based on the supremacy of science, technology and western capitalism, crush the resource base and knowledge systems of traditional societies. As Marglin points out development involves coercion when the environment is extracted more than its limit, compromising the needs of future generation and the need of a people dependent on nature's resources. In a similar manner, Gasper (2005) points out that indigenous people's land and resources were taken by the powerful for intensive use and profit with the support of the state and thus development policy involves conscious sacrifice of certain groups. Further, in development induced displacement, non financial costs such as destruction of culture and community life is overlooked.

In the modernisation approach, the concept of development denotes a transformation of a traditional or pre-modern society into technologically advanced, economically prosperous and politically stable nations of the western world. A.G Frank, a leading critique of development economics and modernisation theory points out that attributing underdevelopment to traditionalism is a historical and political mistake and argues that the worldwide expansion of capitalism and the relationship of exchange and domination between the capitalist metropolis and its colonies in Asia, Africa and Latin America resulted in the underdevelopment of these colonies (Frank 1979). Frank focused on the metropole-colony (center-periphery) relations to explain underdevelopment and argues that the same process of development in the western metropoles simultaneously perpetuates underdevelopment in third world colonies. According to Frank

‘underdevelopment was generated by the same process that developed the center; in particular underdevelopment in the periphery resulted from the loss of surplus that was expropriated for investment in the center’s development’ (Frank 1979). For real development, Frank suggests separation from the global capitalist system and argues that the degree of underdevelopment in Asia today is propotional to its degree of colonisation in the nineteenth century. According to him the most underdeveloped populations of India and South Asia were subjected to the most brutal colonial capitalist exploitation. China being a semi colonial country could progress incomparably after its liberation from capitalism and Japan’s industrial progress is attributed to its non-colonial status and to the absence of foreign investment in its development effort.

Frank’s theory is criticised for its failure to specify the economics of surplus extraction, even though sometimes it is obvious like rent or profit to big corporations or interest for debt from banks. According to Amin (1997) the huge amount of surplus extraction by the center is responsible for the blocking of the development of the periphery. He rejects the trans nationalisation of production, capital and distribution and its legitimisation by institutions like IMF, World Bank and WTO. Amin criticises the development equation as expansion of market and the global hierarchy defined by its capacity to compete in the market. He describes this as an unequal fight as the centers use their ‘five monopolies’- technological monopoly, financial control of worldwide financial markets, monopolistic access to the planet’s natural resources, media and communication monopolies, monopolies over weapons of mass destruction- for surplus extraction and hegemony over the periphery. However, treating the whole world as one system in its specific historical and geographical context is missing in this analysis.

Wallerstein (1979) explains development and underdevelopment using the world system theory. Within the world system there are three main economic zones: core, semi periphery and periphery. When there is a difference in the strength of the state machinery, the operation of unequal exchange is enforced by strong states on weak states. The core concentrates its resources on controlling the machinery. In a world economy, the cultural stratification between and within the core and periphery is a complex phenomena due to the absence of a single political system with concentration of vertical economic roles. So there will be pressures for cultural homogenisation. In the core states, the creation of

state machinery coupled with a national culture referred to as integration, serves both as a mechanism to protect disparities arising within the world system and as an ideological mask and justification for the maintenance of these disparities. Peripheral areas have a low degree of autonomy due to the neo-colonial situation. The semi-periphery helps to eliminate the political polarization between core and periphery by acting as an exploiter and exploited and thus partially repels the political pressures targeted towards the core from the periphery and makes the world system more stable (ibid).

According to Wallerstein (1974) one cannot study a part of the world in isolation from the whole. He suggests analysing the simultaneous mutual interactions of all parts of the world system at each point in historical time and the new way of surplus extraction based on more efficient and expanded productivity by means of a world market mechanism with the assistance of the state machinery. Thus, in a world system there exists extensive division of labour which is not functional but geographical. Thus, the range of economic tasks is not evenly distributed throughout the world system. In some, it is ecological consideration but in most, it is a function of the social organisation of work, which magnifies and legitimises the ability of some groups within the system to exploit the labour of others to receive the larger share of the surplus. Wallerstein (1991) criticises developmentalism and modernisation theories and the concept of inevitable progress. He introduces timespace into the analysis of world system and explains how geography and chronology are critical to the understanding of social structure and historical transformation in its complexity. However, Smith (1990) stresses the importance of geographical space more than history and explains the uneven development between different sectors of an economy or between different regions of a country reflected in the persistent disparity of skills, wage rates and circulation of capital. Thus, in spacial terms, uneven development is associated with processes of unequal exchange between the core and periphery.

Sustainable Development

Economic growth based on capitalism and the resultant ecological crisis leads to the concept of sustainable development which emphasises protection of life opportunities of the future generation as well as the present generation and respect for the natural systems on which all life depends (HDR 1994). The word, ‘sustainable’ originates from the Latin

word, *sustenare* which means to hold up, to keep (Silverman 2009). In sustainable development discourse, natural resources are perceived as permanent assets of mankind and the argument for protecting it is based on the need to guarantee future generations the opportunities that previous generations have enjoyed. The Brundtland Commission Report (1987) defines sustainable development as development which meets the livelihood needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) 1987, advocates economic growth which is equitable and environmentally sustainable. It acknowledges that the resource gap between nations is widening and that the decision making is dominated by industrial nations who use a greater portion of earth's ecological capital. The 'Rio Declaration on Environment and Development' put forth the healthy and productive life of a human being in harmony with nature as the primary concern of sustainable development (Ahooja-patel 1995). However, as Chasek (2000) points out, despite all the efforts made at Stockholm and Rio and at national and local levels, the environment continues to deteriorate in many parts of the world and the social, economic, and technological trends are worsening the situation.

Giving central concern to the human being and nature, sustainable human development is defined as 'development that not only generates economic growth but distributes its benefits equitably; that generates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalising them' (Human Development Report 1994: iii). Sustainable human development in its principle gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and their participation in decisions which affect their life. While emphasising the renewal and regeneration of biodiversity, as well as the species richness for sustainable development, Shiva (2005) criticises privatisation of water, use of genetically engineered crops and Intellectual Property Right (IPR) monopolies. She criticises one outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the public/private partnership project entitled 'Washing hands'. Their motto was saving life by reducing diarrhoeal diseases. But Shiva points out that Kerala which has the highest hygiene standard is selected for implementing this project is a clear indication that their project is not about 'saving lives' but merely about 'selling soap' (ibid). Further, the Kyoto protocol is projected as a protocol to fight global

warming and thus sustain earth and its life forms. On the contrary, the World Rain Forest Movement Bulletin Report (December 2005: 31), depicts the Kyoto Protocol and its Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) as a 'notoriously cynical and vicious new arrangement and mechanism to convert the last frontier after the "commons"- the very air we breathe and live by – into a private, market driven "bazaar" of futures of enclosed atmospheric spaces'. Thus, even sustainable development projects carries forward an incomplete perception of poverty, environmental degradation and participation in the context of international trade and liberalisation policies. As Kelkar (2012) points out the issue of climate change is a livelihood issue and it disproportionately hurts vulnerable communities like Adivasis and specially their women as they are excluded from climate change policies.

Critics of development like Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies point out that the average index such as per capita income obscure inequalities among social groups and classes and rising consumption levels are not accurate measures for improvement in the quality of life. Intensive resource consumption such as of water, forest, land and other raw materials may compromise the quality of the life of traditionally resource dependent people or of the future generation. Mies (1993) criticises the accumulation model of development based on exploitation and colonisation. She shows the impossibility of such a model by pointing out that when the colony achieves a considerable standard of development, the industrial center reaches a more modern stage in terms of technological progress. However, the idea of inevitable progress and improving human capabilities and freedom does of course enhance production and material prosperity; but as Shiva and Mies argue, that achieving progress at the cost of vulnerable communities and nature cannot be compromised. Thus, the quality of human life also has to be improved and thus arises a moral responsibility to sustain the earth without damage and the need to listen and learn from local communities who are victims of big development projects.

The above discussion reveals the multi-dimensional nature of development. It emerges that instead of developing precise definitions of development, it is advisable to increase our sensitivity to the types and range of values and meanings attached to development without compromising the ethics of development. Further, it draws light into the detrimental effects and dehumanisation of the marginalised people in our country in

the name of development. Another important point that emerges in the development discourse is its thrust upon the negative impacts on vulnerable communities leading to deepening erosion of cultural identities, local knowledge systems and their moral values. For instance, the tribal communities are facing steady erosion of their life support systems such as land and other basic resources and their cultural diversity due to diverse experiences of modern development in India.

Further, due to the power relations underlying the concept of 'development', a deconstruction of development discourse using various critical perspectives is necessary to understand Adivasi reality. As Escobar (1992) points out the discourse and practice of development can lead us to alternate futures for the 'underdeveloped' as underdevelopment is a concept coined by the 'first world' about the 'third world'. As highlighted by Gordon and Sylvester (2004) the images of deficiency and inferiority are enmeshed in the language of 'underdeveloped', 'developing' etc. and it empowers the developer. However, depicting Adivasis as 'backward' 'primitive' etc. originates from the same colonial power structure which depicts the local as inferior and the ways of the West development model as superior. As Marglin (1990) depicts the marginalisation due to development, in the Wayanad context too when the State and 'mainstream' society talk about 'development' and 'progress' of Adivasi communities through development aids, in practice they experience marginalisation due to their alienation from land, forest and natural resources. This clearly indicates the paradox underlying the concept 'development' and the need to deconstruct it to suit to the Adivasi context in respective regions. As Escobar (1995) points out at the local level, development debates are being contested and transformed by social movements and even though not able to make grand structural changes, helps in constructing identities and provide better autonomy through modifications in everyday practices and beliefs. In Wayanad context also Adivasi movements show a way forward asking questions such as, whose development? Development at the cost of whom? What is development and who has the power to define it? What follows is a review of different approaches to tribal development in the Indian context.

Development in the Context of Tribes in India: Approaches and Debates

In India, historically there have been three main approaches towards tribal communities, which shaped their development – isolation, assimilation and integration.

Isolation, Assimilation and Integration Approaches

The policies adopted by the British rulers were to isolate the tribes from the non tribal population and separate the tribal areas from the purview of the general administration as the dissonance on the issue of command over the habitat created conditions of direct confrontation in many areas. According to Misra (1993) this caused territorial segregation and created a condusive atmosphere for their economic and cultural exploitation which resulted in strife between tribal and non tribal communities. The colonial isolationist approach was not in any way to help the tribal communities but it was for smooth administration and to avoid dissonance when they were exploited (Narwani 2004) and to create few tribal elite to support the colonial policies (Misra 1993). The declaration of a few particular areas of tribal concentration as 'Scheduled Areas' and 'Tribal Areas' is an example of isolation. In the early periods of independence, the Government of India too adopted the policy of isolation.

Verrier Elwin considered tribes aboriginal people and sought to protect them from outsiders to save them from the onslaught of modern development and to improve their living conditions (Elwin 1964). Elwin advocated the 'National Park' approach to keep the tribal people in a wild and remote part of the country under the direct control of a Tribes Commissioner (Elwin 1964). He points out that the isolationist approach intented to give tribal people maximum freedom and power and envisioned to reinstate their old traditional tribal council and the headman and even suggested restrictions to settlers and missionaries from destroying their culture and quality of life. In his autobiography, he reveals that he is criticised for romanticising tribal culture even though his idea was to protect them through administrative reform. Highlighting the similarity between Hindu religion and animistic tribal religion, Ghurye (1959) argues that tribes are backward Hindus. Nathan (1997) maintains that calling tribes backward Hindus is a 'nation building' project which calls for the merging of all people into a Hindu Nation. Referring to Ghurye's argument, Xaxa (2005) points out that the classification as backward Hindus was not based on field data but on inadequate and selective use of the comments and observations of the census commissioners and their dissatisfaction with the description of

tribes as animists. According to Rath (2006), Verrier Elwin insisted that the tribes should maintain a careful distance from the mainstream socio-political-economic system, which was however, not acceptable to Nehruvian patriotism and his nation building approach. Other Congress and nationalist leaders like Gandhi and A.V Thakkar also denied the tribal people a separate existence thinking that it may weaken the national solidarity (Rath 2006).

The question of how to incorporate tribes into Independent India was a crucial one at the time of independence. Ghurye promoted the assimilation policies which were supported by some of the nationalists. Inspired by Elwin's approach of protection, Nehru formulated the 'Panchasheel' concept for tribal communities to develop according to their own genius, maintaining their culture and identity (Rath 2006). Xaxa (2005) observes that the provisions meant for the tribes in the Indian Constitution however point to an approach of integration rather than assimilation. The Constitution aims at bringing tribes closer to the larger Indian society. At the same time, the Constitutional provisions aim at protecting and safeguarding their language, culture and tradition and promoting them. According to Xaxa, integration provides space for diversity but assimilation entails that the small minority must give up its culture in favour of the dominant majority. Furer-Haimendorf (1985) pointed out earlier that the proponents of integration ignore the fact that there exists no homogeneous Indian society with a standard cultural pattern for tribal communities to merge with. According to him, the Indian society is diverse with its linguistic, religious and caste divisions and the tribal population is equally divided, and their heterogeneity extends to race, language, culture and diverse geographical environments and thus the idea of integration is confusing.

According to Roy Burman (2005), integration does not guarantee their development, but tribal communities have to integrate for their economic progress. According to him, different levels and different techniques of integration have to be adopted. He envisions integration beyond mere association and results from the interaction of two different social structures. Further, in an ideally integrated society, the structural relationship between the tribal communities and non tribal communities cannot follow any rigid pattern but is determined contextually. In the beginning, the development planning process was directed completely from the centre which did not evaluate the local realities

adequately while formulating the Constitutional provisions. However, some special care was taken about the protection and welfare of tribal people in the Constitution, which in Sharma (1995)'s view amounted to only 'positive discrimination'. According to him, special provisions were made to ensure that the law and institutions must be adapted in keeping with the situation in tribal areas and the needs of the tribal community. But in the course of history, the adoption of an egalitarian constitution remained a dream. He observes that this is partly because of the difference of the local realities that prevailed in the tribal areas. He further points out that the laws, the institutions and even the Constitution itself is responsible for the deviations and in the name of national integration and public interest, the tribal people became more vulnerable to exploitation.

Some of the tribal leaders however perceived the approach of national integration as a way to superimpose an alien culture over tribal culture and they spread the spirit of revivalism (Misra 1993). Misra observes that the negligence and injustice tribal communities experienced in the forest policies and the resultant exploitation generated a strong sense of tribalism. At times, they were violent against the government and were opposed to the idea of being integrated with the rest of society, who were their exploiters. According to Misra the tribal policy in post Independent India was an extension of the paternalistic and protectionist policy adopted by the colonial regime and was not integrational in its spirit.

The administrative approach is closely related to the political approach of integration. Article 244 of the Constitution provides for the administration of the scheduled areas in accordance with the Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule to the Constitution. The basic spirit of these special provisions is that, when an administrative and development system is adopted for Adivasi areas, the traditions of the Adivasi society should be accepted as a basis, and no outside system should be forced on them (Roy Burman nd). Article 244 (i) provides for a Fifth Schedule, which may apply in any state other than those states in North East India where a separate Schedule, namely the Sixth Schedule applies. According to the provisions of this schedule, the executive power of a state extends to the scheduled areas. Under the Fifth Schedule, the governor becomes the sole legislature of the scheduled areas, and a Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) is formed consisting of not more than twenty members of whom three fourths must be of the representatives of the

Scheduled Tribes in the legislative assembly of the state. If the president so directs, the Tribes Advisory Council may also be established in states without scheduled areas. However, even for the areas that are scheduled, the idea of administration was that these areas need only some extra financial investment to bring them up to the level of other areas in the concerned state (ibid). Sharma (1995) notes that the Fifth and Sixth schedules are also known as a 'Constitution within the Constitution' as the powers executed under this schedule are so extensive. However, people's perceptions and their voices are not heard in macroeconomic planning and grand schemes and thus it did not help in the matter of self reliance and self management of the tribal people (Sharma 1995). The governors of the states have been given unlimited powers which could be utilised for preventing the mechanisms that harm the Adivasi interests articulated through the Tribes Advisory Councils (TACs). However, the experience reveals that TACs meet very infrequently and when they meet they are concerned with petty matters of local relevance rather than policy issues of general concern for the tribals (Roy Burman nd).

The central and state governments constituted vast machinery for tribal development administration. At the national level, the President of India is primarily responsible for safeguarding the provisions enshrined in the Constitution. He/She has to appoint the Director General for backward classes at the national level to investigate into all matters relating to tribal safeguards. At the state level, the Governor and on his behalf, the chief minister and welfare ministers are in charge of the special schemes to be implemented in the tribal areas (George and Sreekumar 1994). There are separate departments to look after the affairs of the tribal people in some states and in other states, the welfare department looks after the interests of the tribal people. The department is advised by the Tribal Advisory Council (TAC). The TACs and the Tribal Research Institutes frame the tribal policies and programmes (ibid). Though West Bengal does not have any schedule area, a Tribes Advisory Council has been established in this state according to the directions of the President. The tribal population in the states of Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal still remain outside the scheduled areas.

In Kerala, the Adivasi areas are not scheduled even though areas like Attappady and Wayanad can be scheduled using Constitutional provisions. This is because 'Kerala has not taken steps to bring Adivasi villages or habitations under the V Schedule despite

recommendations from the Committee (Dilip Singh Bhuria Committee) constituted by the central government to formulate the new law for V Schedule' (Bijoy, 2006:4). There are no criteria laid down in the Constitution about the principles on which areas are to be included in the schedule. There are very few scheduled areas where tribes are in majority. What has been followed is a now commonly accepted principle of preponderance of tribal population, reasonable size of the area, underdeveloped nature of the area and marked disparity in the economic standards of the people (Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, 1998 as cited in Hooja, 2004). Bijoy points out that 'One of the terms of the agreement on 16 October 2001 between the Kerala government and the leaders of the Adivasi movements was to pass a cabinet resolution to bring Adivasi habitation in the state under the V Schedule. This has not yet materialized' (Bijoy, 2006:4). In 1960, when the Dhebar Commission visited Kerala, the government ignored the struggle of the Adivasis and informed the Commission that the Adivasis were not marginalised in Kerala and that there was no need to include them in the Scheduled area. As a consequence, the provision of PESA (Panchayats Extension to the Scheduled Areas) 1996, has been denied to Kerala. However, it resulted in the denial of Constitutional provision for self-governance available at least in law to the Adivasi villages of Kerala and affected their capacity for self development negatively (Bijoy 2006). As Roy Burman (nd) points out, self-management cannot be imposed from above but to be nurtured from below through democratic process, and through an approach of self assertion for the development of tribal communities. In this context, it is important to debate on who holds the power to include or exclude them and marginalise or develop them in the context of their struggle to assert their rights and establish their self development.

Tribal Rights and Development Discourse

The 'Panchasheel' concept for tribal communities to develop according to their own genius, maintaining their culture and identity suggests that ideologically, the Nehruvian strategy of tribal development rejects an exogenous development model. Even though Nehru argued for promoting tribal genius, his anticolonial nationalism based on the western paradigm of development was not suitable for the tribal context and their self initiatives in development. Roy Burman (nd), Baviskar (1995), Sharma (1998),

Kunhaman (2002), Xaxa (2003) and Fernandes (1992; 2004) criticise the project of national development, its legitimising tools, its imperialist development frame and the intensification of the victimisation of tribal communities. They question the rationality of the development approach which first impoverishes and displaces tribal communities through modern development projects of World Bank and multinational companies and then treats them as a burden waiting for aid and then uses the country's resources to sustain their life. In this process, the local technology, culture and economy are delegitimised and through the new value system, culture is turned into a tool of colonialism to marginalise the tribal people (Fernandes 2004).

Baviskar (1995) points out the subordination of Adivasis by the State and she highlights their construction of 'state as a thief' looting their resource base, thereby contradicting the image of state as a benevolent provider. According to Sharma (1998), both the system and the development paradigm have to be challenged and reoriented. He observes that the resources on which people depend on for their living cannot be deemed to be property and argues that people have an inherent and inalienable right over the same as a means of livelihood which is superior to the state's claim. He hopes that the tribal resistance movements for recapturing their resource base and cultural identity and the articulations and fights for self rule based on their consensus model may provide the thrust for a basic transformation which forces the ruling elite to shift from the obsession for production and economic growth to more humanitarian values. Sharma's (1998) consensus model of decision making by tribal communities and the need for the rule of self determination over their resources; Kunhaman's (2002) critique of depoliticisation in development process and his idea of the autonomous development concept of tribal communities; Roy Burman J.J's (2005) concept of territoriality and self rule etc. are some of the alternate visions for a development model for tribal communities rooted in their culture. Kunhaman (2002) emphasises the neglect of community rights to land and other resources of tribal people in the modern global scenario. He questions the state's business to be in the development of the subaltern but reiterates its responsibility for redistributing the assets and resources, a prerequisite for tribal self development. As Bijoy (2006) argues, tribal control over the local resources of their ancestral domain also led to the development of distinct and sound local self governing systems. Their critique of the exogenous development model brings forth the realisation that they cannot be

compensated for their traditional ways of living by developing and socialising them into consumerist values of the modern capitalist society and its market rationality.

The formal state policies and laws, administration and development from the colonial period onwards imposed its own outlook on the tribal people without considering the latter's world views and knowledge systems. Tribal communities living in a land and natural resource based culture and history are pushed into a market culture which treats land, their resources, their identity and culture as commodities to be sold and leased (Fernandes et.al 1988, Fernandes 2008). Fernandes (2004) highlights the internal colonialism of dominant classes by monopolising culture, legitimising it and reproducing it, to describe the subaltern people without a history and culture. Pathy (1998) too observes that due to the contemporary imposition of supposedly universal development, implemented without any concern for the cultural, historical and ecological complexities prevailing in the tribal region and the reductionist world view of development practices have destroyed the physical, cultural and cognitive survival of the tribal communities. In this regard, Skaria (1999) argues that the indigenous notions of development got marginalised in the civilizing processes of colonialism and nationalism. For instance, the *jangal* and the *jangali*, once central to kinship and authority have converted into backwardness and wildness and against the nation to become modern.

While studying the plantations in Kerala, Philip (2003) tracks the nineteenth and early twentieth century practices of science in British colonial India and exposes the scientific modernity functioning at the level of everyday experience. According to her, the European liberal doctrine was not applied in the colonial context where racial differences naturalise class differences and thus legitimate the strict surveillance of the working population. She highlights how economics, science and religion supported each other and used as a political tool to strengthen the 'colonial power' and 'their vision' of modernity. So the conflict between pre-colonial tribal communities and colonial groups cannot be perceived as the war between the forces of irrationality and the enlightened rationality of scientific knowledge; it is a historically situated process of conflict between two rational systems of knowledge supported by unequal structures of economic, political, cultural and social practice. Economic modernisation and plantation agriculture marked a shift in agriculture from subsistence farming to capitalist peasant relations and it is assumed that

it will be accompanied by a shift from feudal to mobile free wage labour, but it did not materialise in the practical sense (ibid). However, the official record of this period reveals that the planter's primary aim was sustained production for the global market. Plantation economy also had a huge impact on tribal groups who had freely used the forests and hills that were converted into 'ordered productive landscapes' (ibid).

The contrast between colonial construction and the Adivasi construction of knowledge and world views are explored in recent studies in other parts of the world. Surrales (2005) critically analyzes the modern way of describing reality by dividing it into subjective and objective. By highlighting the world views of Candoshi people of high Amazon, the author illustrates how indigenous discourse overcomes the subject object division or the division between society and nature by looking into their notions of environment, territory and space. Descola (2005) points out that viewing Amazonian Indians as primitive environmentalist and their holistic perception of the universe only as practical knowledge for ecological management does not do justice to their vast ecological knowledge and resilient cosmologies. While exploring their world views, the author clearly demarcates indigenous knowledge with the knowledge produced by the ecological scientists. For instance, in Amazonian and Canada's sub- Arctic indigenous people's world view, animals and plants form part of their community of 'person' and thus the author challenges the dualism underlying the western conceptualisation of culture and nature. Even though the bodily appearance changes, they believe in the essence of a spiritual kind common to all animate beings. Albert (2005) explores the interventions of development agencies and the counter development occurring among Amerindian societies in Amazonia to surpass states hegemonic and assimilationist aims.

In the Indian context, Padel (2009) and Padel and Das (2010) follow the method of social construction of knowledge and the institutions which are the centres of Adivasi culture to deconstruct the nexus of colonial values and its false objective rationality. However, by unraveling the spirit behind human sacrifice as a ritual of propitiation of earth, Padel (2009) affirms that Konds attribute great value and sacredness to human life than the colonizers who use coercive force to civilize the other cultures. Padel and Das (2010) in their study on aluminium mining in Odisha depict the opposition of Adivasis by corporate power which destroys their mountains, non renewable resources and their rich

culture and spirituality. They challenge the notion of the corporate which sees bauxite as dead matter to be exploited for profit and highlight the Adivasi notion of seeing it as something that should be preserved in the mountains to maintain the balance in nature and keep the earth fertile. However, Padel and Das (2010) point out that corporate and financial hierarchy merge with the hierarchies of administration and political parties while invading Adivasi resource frontiers for profit.

According to Xaxa (2003) the most serious impact of development is that it drastically altered the relationship of tribes with the natural environment and their resources such as land and forest. Xaxa sees the tribal community as an enormous storehouse of knowledge on world views and ways of life, and affirms that today tribes are occupying a greater space in the discourse on alternate development and in the protection of ecology and development. Tribal movements emphasize the need for an alternative model of development in which not only people's participation and people's power become central but also promotion and sustainability of life, both of human beings and nature, are given importance. They articulate culture, nature and material activity as an organic whole in their world view instead of dividing their social life into functional spheres such as the economy, polity, society, culture and so on. However, due to unequal power relations, they are made objects of knowledge and management and not given any credit for their ways of life and discourses emerging out of their resistance (ibid). The impact of development also has bearing on tribal women's status and their unequal power relations in tribal society.

The better status of women in tribal society is critically examined in connection with their land rights by Kelkar and Nathan (1991). They trace witch hunting to the pattern of land ownership and argue that victims of witch hunting are tribal widows who had a life interest in their husband's land. Also they highlight taboos against women ploughing or even touching the plough as key to establishing man's right over land. They argue that such taboos in disguise are ways of establishing division of labour, which implies both a political hierarchy and a form of property. According to them, the division of labour is not biological or natural but a construction of society. For instance, they highlight that hunting of small game by women is common among foraging tribes including the Birhore of Jharkhand even though it is considered a male activity among tribes. They also

highlight the ritual called *jani shikar* (women's hunt) of the Oraon, Munda, Santhal and Ho. Further, as Fernandes and Menon (1987) in an earlier study showed, the depletion of natural resources (land, forest, water) has negatively impacted women. According to Kelkar, Nathan and Fernandes (2003), before the introduction of state pressure on matrilineal societies gender relations were relatively equal in Adivasi societies. He notes that they enjoyed more freedom and power in decision making regarding the use of resources within the household and community due to their role in production, their special knowledge of forests and their place in the cultural and spiritual life of matrilineal communities. Further, in the context of development induced displacement, Fernandes (2006) examines the status of tribal women in terms of gender roles and rights and duties. He maintains that the relatively high status of tribal women is due to her access to an abundance of resources and the economic support that she gives to her family. In addition, as Xaxa (2001) highlights, tribal women are depicted as having higher social status than their counterparts in caste society, but the economic burden and workload of tribal women as well as their access to education, food and nutrition, modern occupation and political participation, especially in the modern context, have not been given much attention. However, when common resources are used for development projects and when displacement takes place, women lose her status in the family. He notes that when land for land is given as compensation, it is given in the name of man in past decades.

There are ethnographic studies on tribal communities in Wayanad describing their culture and socio-political organisation and super natural belief system (Thurston 1907, Aiyappan 1992) but these studies seldom address their development experience. Panoor (1963) depicts the poor standard of living and slave-like existence and unemployment of Paniya people with a sympathetic attitude to call the attention of the government and civil society. However, these studies are descriptive and see tribal people from a colonial perspective rather than view them from the actor's point of view. Mathur (1977) presents a general view of the tribal situation in Kerala by describing their landlessness, indebtedness and bonded labour. Kunhaman (1989) critically analyzes the inter regional variations in the socio-economic development of the tribal people in Kerala and the reasons for these variations. The limitation of this study is that it is not based on direct field work, but mainly on the data from the Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Kerala from 1965 to 1979. Antony (1995) explores the differential development status among the

Kurichiyas and Paniyas, taking into account the difference in their diet profile, morbidity and mortality. She argues that the initial class position of each group has played a vital role in shaping their response to the modern economic situation and state sponsored development initiatives and highlights the feminisation of poverty among them. Aerthayil (2008) anlyzes the impact of globalisation on the livelihood of the tribal people in Kerala. He has looked into their socio-cultural life, education, health, employment and livelihood and the challenges they face in the context of globalisation. The study emphasises that globalisation has negative impacts on the life, livelihood and culture of the tribal people. Land distribution is suggested as a remedial measure to counter the effect of globalisation as they can cultivate the land for food crops. However, the tribal's everyday experiences of the development discourse and the individual and collective responses to development are not part of these studies.

Rationale of the Study

The existing literature points out that bonded labour, colonisation and the plantation economy, non-Adivasi migration into Wayanad and deforestation are some of the historical reasons that have led to the marginalisation of Adivasi communities. The development discourse and the government welfare policies in post independent India have further marginalised some of the Adivasi groups. Kunhaman (1989) exploring the inter-regional variations in development among the tribes of Kerala, argues that the general socio-economic conditions prevailing in different regions resulted in the differences and the Adivasi communities residing in the Malabar region, of which Wayanad is a part, became the least developed group among the Adivasi communities in Kerala. While the analysis of the historical forces that marginalised Adivasi communities are rich and nuanced, they do not carry the perceptions and views of the Adivasi communities themselves, their embodied experiences and their notions of development. Seen as devoid of any agency as a consequence of marginalisation, these analysis tend to deny Adivasi communities' own critique of development and their everyday struggles.

Most of the studies on Adivasi communities in Wayanad (Aiyappan and Mahadevan 1990, Antony 1995, Centre of excellence 2006 etc.) understand Adivasi communities' present situation broadly within a developmentalist perspective. Questions such as 'whose development' and 'development at the cost of whom' are asked to highlight the point that

the economic and social growth has bypassed Adivasi communities and the need to redefine what constitutes Adivasi development. Kunhaman (2007) points out that during the Ninth Five Year Plan, Kerala experienced the highest rate of income growth and in the same period the largest number of starvation deaths occurred among the Adivasis. The recent assertion of Adivasi identity, demand for their ancestral land and self rule in the historic Adivasi mobilisation at Muthanga in Wayanad district is seen as challenging the dominant Adivasi development discourse.

While the socio-political and cultural 'exclusion' is acknowledged as a universal feature of tribal life, the everyday experience of their 'exclusion' may differ among tribal communities. This is reflected in the differential development status and the socio-economic stratification among them. Existing research attributes these differential development outcomes to certain historical advantages and disadvantages. How do these differences play out differently in the life of different Adivasi communities are not explored in these studies.

The literature reviewed shows that studies focusing on Adivasi women's status in Kerala are rare. The studies on Adivasi communities do not discuss women's social status, their decision making roles and the emerging modern patriarchal trends in their society which restricts their freedom and power. In the post independence period, Adivasi groups such as the matrilineal Kurichias have experienced tremendous changes in the women's ownership of property, in their lifestyle and social roles as well as in their living and making of culture. The resource depletion and landlessness affect Paniya women more severely than their men and also the Kurichia women.

The homogeneous development policies and programmes for Adivasi communities which are heterogeneous and the impact of these policies and programmes on their socio-economic, cultural and political organisation and development are not sufficiently explored in these studies. While sharing the same geographical region, and confrontation with landlords, colonial rulers, market, settler farmers and independent state, the Adivasi groups trace a history of different trajectories of development. Even though a strong stream of historical continuity can be traced in their differentiation, Adivasi communities are treated by the State as homogenous and static with little or no differentiation among the different groups, a trend which began with the colonial anthropological constructions.

Among the Adivasi communities in Wayanad, the Kurichias were skilled in martial arts and were known as a warrior community. They still observe touch pollution against all castes and communities. Paniyas were food gatherers, who later became bonded and agricultural labourers (Mathur 1977). Kurichias and Kurumans are traditionally land owning communities. Kurichias followed matriliny and continue to have joint families and joint land ownership and this helped them to save their land from alienation. On the contrary, Paniyas have a history of being bonded labourers with no history of land ownership except access to common lands in earlier times. For the purpose of this study, two larger Adivasi communities, with contrasting development status and historical features have been selected: Paniyas, bonded and landless with low educational and health status and Kurichias, matrilineal, landed and with relatively better educational and health status.

Objectives

General Objective

In the context of development (viewed in terms of modern education, health, employment and land ownership) of Adivasi communities in Wayanad, the present study attempts to analyse the experiences and responses of two Adivasi communities with contrasting development status. The general objective of the study is to understand the perceptions and subjective experiences of development among different Adivasi communities and to analyze the role of historical, structural and agential factors in shaping them.

Specific Objectives

1. To understand Paniyas' and Kurichias' access to land, forest and other material resources.
2. To analyze how the two select Adivasi communities perceive and utilise development programmes for education, health and employment.
3. To understand and analyze Adivasi communities' perception of the idea of development vis-à-vis that of the State.
4. To analyze Paniyas' and Kurichias' everyday experience of the development process and their individual and collective struggles over the years.

5. To examine the position of women in the two communities and to analyze the consequences of development on gender relations.

6. To explain the differential development trajectories of two Adivasi groups within a region.

The main assumptions of the study are:

- Adivasi communities may have their own perceptions and experiences of development
- There are inter and intra Adivasi variations in these perceptions
- The different perceptions and experiences of development may be shaped by structural factors
- Their perceptions and experiences may be shaped by specific socio-economic and geo-political histories of the area and people
- They experience 'state initiated development' as marginalisation.

Based on the above assumptions, a qualitative methodology was adopted for the study giving importance to perceptions and experience of Adivasi communities. Since marginalisation is both an objective and subjective reality, this in-depth study attempted to understand this process not only in the socio-cultural and historical contexts but in the everyday lived experiences of the Adivasi communities. This study envisions following an approach that presumes the agency to the subject who is at the receiving end of assistance from state and development agencies. Departing from the top down development models and discourses, this study take a stand that Adivasis are the authors of their 'development' experience. And 'others' can become sensitive to their values and world views while representing their reality.

Owing to the influence of dominant ideas of 'development' among Adivasi communities and the prevalence of stereotyped constructions of Adivasi reality by non-Adivasi communities, this study demands immersion into the culture and everyday life experience of the Adivasi communities to elicit a perspective of the subject. The logic of inquiry in this research study is qualitative since the study unravels people's perspectives and experiences, giving emphasis to the processes and the responses of the individuals in

their specific contexts. The ethnographic method has been found to be the most appropriate qualitative method to achieve the above objectives.

Thematic Areas

As the studies on tribal people in different parts of India reveal, the condition of tribal communities cannot be conceptualised as a low stage or a slow process of development. In many countries of Asia, Adivasi's resources are not managed in a way to promote their livelihood, local accumulation and development and this becomes the essence of their marginality (Nathan, Kelkar and Walter 2004, Kunjaman 2007). The subsistence oriented economies of Adivasis are brought under commodity forms of production with the dislocation of original accumulation and global flows with the neo-liberal privatisation of their economies that has resulted in their marginality (Bijoy 2001, Nathan, Kelkar and Walter 2004). They become marginal even in their world views and cultures, being stigmatised as primitive by the dominant, being politically voiceless due to their minority status, being dispossessed of their commons, being workers and investors in the labour markets, and being consumers and tax payers. Nathan and Xaxa (2012) use the term 'adverse inclusion' along with social exclusion to denote the increasing adverse impacts of development initiatives like mines and industries which increases the gap between dominant classes and Adivasis. Thus, Xaxa situate Adivasi deprivation in the larger context of political economy. As he argues marginalisation of Adivasis is a relational outcome of their land and resource alienation. As Xaxa, Kunhaman, Roy Burman, Fernandes, Nathan, Kelkar, Walter and Baviskar maintain, in the context of tribal communities elsewhere, the development project seems to exclude and alienate tribal communities, it may be more appropriate to conceptualise their lived reality as a process of deprivation and marginalisation. Rather than development, material deprivation and cultural marginalisation are two important features in the history of tribal development in India.

As the review of literature on tribal development shows, some studies do stress on tribal self development and the importance of their own knowledge and discourses on development and view the state's responsibility as redistribution of resources in an equitable way. There is a slow shift visible in the recent literature on tribal development. The earlier work on tribal reality mostly relied on colonial records and official narratives.

More recent studies have begun to give importance to their everyday experience to understand tribal reality. Both the individual agency in the everyday experience as well as the collective agency in the social movements are important in their identity formation as well as in deciding development experience. The critical analysis of broader historical, cultural and structural processes is important to understand the reality holistically and to support and supplement the understanding emerging from the community and its social actors.

Tribal movements emphasise the need for an alternate model of development in which people's participation and people's power become central, in which promotion and sustainability of life, both of human being and nature are given prime importance. A reconstruction of Adivasi ideology and assertion of their rights is emerging in the framework of another pattern of development. History reveals that people's resistance is necessary to make the government machinery function in favour of deprived people.

Thus, in understanding the development experience of Adivasi communities in Wayanad, the following four themes gain importance and they are analyzed in the subsequent chapters.

Material Deprivation and Cultural Alienation

Material deprivation and cultural marginalisation are two important aspects of tribal development and these two features are explored in the context of development. The aspect of material deprivation is discussed in greater detail in the chapters on land, employment and livelihood while the aspect of cultural alienation is explored in detail in the chapters on education and health.

Social and Cultural Reproduction of Marginality

The chapters on education and health analyzes in detail the social and cultural reproduction of inequality and marginality and symbolic violence exerted in subtle ways to perpetuate the inequality and discrimination through schools and health care institutions. The chapters also explore the multitudinal ways in which Adivasi world views, knowledge and epistemologies are made illegitimate.

Subordination and Resistance

With reference to Wayanad, the Adivasis are exposed to state violence of extreme situations as well as the embedded violence of every day practice and these are delineated to understand the different types of social suffering as well as the differences experienced by Paniyas and Kurichias in their marginalisation process. All the subsequent chapters discuss not only the means and methods of subordination, but also Adivasi strategies of resistance.

Agency and Social Movements

Paniyas and Kurichias offer a critique of development through their enormous suffering and resistance to build their life as well as to bring forth a different vision of the world. They emphasise a moral, need based subsistence economy over the want based profit oriented economy of modernisation in the context of general erosion of resource base of the Adivasis. In the context of Wayanad, Paniyas and Kurichias were critical towards the dominant Kerala culture and the modern development experience. Their land struggles were crucial in challenging the Kerala model and its development patterns with homogenising trends, neglecting the cultural diversity and Adivasi world views. In the midst of capitalist economies which tear apart Adivasi identities, they are found resisting, negotiating or demanding for better treatment from the state and its development apparatus. Muthanga struggle was the culmination of these resistance movements where they proclaimed that they need a different development framework to save their lives and the lives of the people on earth. Adivasis proclaimed at Muthanga ‘our culture and world views are different from the dominant culture and world views of Kerala’. The assertion of their subjectivities through social movements and demands for their rights become the core of their responses to modern development. Their individual struggles are discussed in all the chapters, their collective struggles are discussed mainly in the chapter dealing with the historical and socio-political contexts.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The literature review and the conceptual framework reveal that the top down development models and the dominant development discourses relying on positivist methodology do not give due importance to the voices and experiences of the Adivasis. This leads to imposing the perspectives of scientists or policy makers upon the people. The programme of 'planning from the above' that follows the positivist methodology neglects the voice of the people (Jayaram 2006). This study calls for an interpretive approach. The interpretivist thinking emerged from the German intellectual traditions of hermeneutics and the *verstehen* tradition in sociology. Proponents of this position aim at understanding the reality from the point of view of the subject who is living in that reality. In order to understand the meaning, one has to interpret the reality. Weber (1947) discusses some of the foundations of a systematic science of *Verstehende Sociologie,* a system of sociological categories in terms of the subjective point of view, that is, the meaning of things, ideas, normative patterns, and motives from the point of view of the persons whose actions are being studied. Weber stresses that sociology should develop the method of interpretive understanding. Benton and Craib (2001) note that Weber's use of the word *verstehen* is sometimes translated as 'empathy', an emotional identification with the actors.

However, as Jayaram (2006) points out, Weber does not follow an anti-positivist perspective but is concerned that sociology should examine the meaning underlying social action, and further maintains that a positivistic type of explanation for such action is possible. Benton and Craib (2001) point out that Weber believes that the social sciences are primarily concerned with meaning, and in particular with individual meaning or the ways in which shared cultural meanings affect the actions of the individual. At the same time, Weber points out that the verification of subjective interpretation using cause and effect relations is something indispensable. According to Weber, the ability to grasp the subjective quality of human behaviour is dependent upon the sociologist's ability to interpret the causal meaning of human action (Benton and Craib 2001) and thus he attempts to balance subjectivity and objectivity in his theoretical formulations. However,

as Benton and Craib (2001) point out, by causal adequacy, Weber does not mean what natural scientists mean by the term. For instance, he notes that it is not possible to give an over-arching or general account of the rise of capitalism, but he identifies a number of contributing factors which explain the reality, such as the legal and the economic preconditions for the rise of capitalism (ibid).

The main theme in hermeneutics is that the meaning of a text can be understood in relation to the whole. The part which was initially a passage from the Bible or the Greek classics now includes the written texts in general and the spoken word or any act. A hermeneutic approach meant that the parts can only be understood in reference to the whole and the whole in reference to the parts. Similarly, the 'whole' meant to place the text in its context, which meant taking into account the author of the text or social actors in an event, their background and socio-cultural environment from which a text or an act emerges. Any understanding thus presupposes a meaning context that within this context alone anything can appear meaningful. That means 'our understanding cannot be a presupposition less comprehension of something given in experience' (Tharakan2006:23).

The interpretive and hermeneutic approaches that give importance to the experience, voice and meaning of the subjects in their specific contexts have guided research in different fields such as feminist, phenomenological, critical and cultural studies. Feminist theories emphasise that knowledge is not separate from experience and stress the importance of subjectivity in their theoretical formulations while accepting the material base of women's oppression. Further, feminist standpoint theories point out that the context from which one observes the reality shapes what he or she sees and thus knowledge is socially situated (Harding 1991). They stress the inquiry of social context, the power relations of ruling which organise everyday life for analysing experience (Smith 1987). They criticise the male bias in science and stress the plurality of knowledge as well as plurality of experience of different people and propose practice based theories instead of proved models. Thus, the feminist theory helps understand the multiple subjective experiences of Adivasis within the family, community, among different Adivasi communities and in the non-Adivasi 'mainstream' society and also helps to explore the multiple forms of marginalisation.

This study aspires to delineate and explain the perceptions and experiences of the Adivasis on development/marginalisation and follows an interpretive paradigm giving importance to the subjective experiences of the people. Since marginalisation is both an objective and subjective reality, this study attempts to understand this process in the socio-cultural and historical contexts as well as in the everyday lived experiences of the Adivasi communities. Thus, this study draws upon insights from feminist, phenomenological and critical indigenous methodologies.

At the national level as well as the state level, a huge administrative set up has been constituted for Adivasi development. At the same time, the literature shows that Adivasis are facing abject poverty and threat of extinction due to various issues. According to Lester (nd), using a phenomenological approach is effective in delineating the experiences and perceptions of individuals from their own perspectives, which therefore challenges structural or normative assumptions. He points out that adding an interpretive dimension to phenomenological research, enabling it to be used as the basis for practical theory, allows it to inform, support or challenge policy and action. According to Tharakan (2006), a phenomenological methodology opens up the possibility of integrating the different goals of scientific enquiry, namely description, explanation, and critique by synthesising the empirical and interpretive elements of social scientific inquiry. Thus, phenomenology mediates positivist and anti-positivist methodologies without losing its centrality on subjective experiences and alongside, it elaborates the scope to an interpretive and intuitive realm in explaining the reality objectively. Das et al (2001) open a new area in anthropology with their phenomenological explorations of the subjectivities formed out of everyday violence as well as extreme forms of state violence and the ways people cope with or resist and address the complex nature of subjectivities. The consciousness of the subject and the meaning they give to their actions are also given due importance in the theoretical formulations of Scott (1985).

However, as Scott (1985) points out a pure phenomenology may not unravel the reality holistically as behaviour and speech can be automatic and unreflective and may not be raised to the level of consciousness. According to him, a careful observer must provide an interpretation of such behaviour which is more than just a repetition of the common sense knowledge of the participants. As an interpretation, it has to be judged by

the standards of its logic and its consistency with other known social facts. As Scott reminds, the observer/researcher cannot negate the possibility that human agents may also provide contradictory accounts of their own behavior or they may wish to conceal their meaning from the observer or from one another, of which they are scarcely aware. However, Scott also notes that there may be factors in any situation that shed light on the action of human agents. As Kincheloe and Steinberg (2008:135) point out, the 'epistemological colonialism' and the trends in modern development views indigenous knowledge as a commodity to be exploited. They point out that a critical dimension of the study of indigenous people involves the insights they bring into the epistemology and ontology of knowledge creation as 'colonised' people. The emerging indigenous methodologies affirm the multiple perspectives and multilogicality in understanding the complex social realities and the Adivasi's experience of development (ibid). Denzin, Lincoln and Smith (2008) point out that the research is always moral and political and stress the importance of decolonising Western epistemologies using critical and indigenous enquiry. According to Battiste (2008), the indigenous people's epistemology is derived from their immediate ecology, their perceptions and experiences, thoughts and memory and their spiritual worlds interpreted by their elders. Battiste stresses the need for reconstruction and renewal of indigenous people's world views, environment, language and communication forms from within when they face threats of destruction of their language and cultures. While studying the colonised, subordinated, indigenous Maori groups of New Zealand, Smith (2005) argues that decolonisation and demystification of research methodologies are necessary to acknowledge and interpret the power relations and give voice to the marginalised groups. She stresses the importance of knowledge that indigenous people bring into the epistemology and research as colonised people. She affirms that representing the voices of the indigenous people are not enough but the spaces of marginalisation have to be transformed into spaces of resistance and hope and the research must contribute towards this transformation. Finally, referring to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Baviskar (1995) points out that there are multiple realities constructed by people in different ontological positions and inquiry into these multiple realities may not lead to a unified truth, but it enriches our understanding of divergent socially situated truths. Baviskar (1995) follows a bottom up approach in favouring the Adivasis instead of uncritically accepting the state's representation of Adivasis. In the midst of contested

realities and interpretations about Adivasis, this study favours the Adivasi point of view and how they perceive state policies and programs.

Methods of Gathering Information

Qualitative studies are usually more intensive and in-depth in nature and choose small communities to get a holistic perspective about the phenomena by collecting data from multiple stakeholders and by using multiple tools for data collection. Ethnography has been found to be the most appropriate qualitative method to achieve the objectives of the study.

Ethnography

While historical write ups favour the one who invaded landscapes, the official constructs of development discourse favour the powerful and the dominant. From this point of view, Adivasis are perceived as uncivilised and 'mainstreaming' is the panacea prescribed by the dominant for their development. In this materialistic view of progress, their distinct cultures and their values are undervalued and neglected. In my experience of working with the Adivasi communities in Wayanad, I have noticed that the dominant communities and institutions in Wayanad perceive that Adivasis are culturally deficient and a homogenisation of culture is advocated instead of appreciating their differences.

Mathur (2006) points out that the native's point of view is the fulcrum of ethnography and that a complete immersion into their culture is necessary to understand their perceptions and experiences of development, their values and motives. This calls for ethnographic field work. According to Bryman (2001) ethnographers immerse themselves in society and its culture to give a descriptive data through field work, a perspective of the meaning actors attach to their social world. According to Marcus and Fischer (1986:18), 'ethnography is a research process in which the anthropologist closely observes, records and engages in the daily life of another culture - an experience labelled as the field work method – and then writes accounts of this culture, emphasising descriptive detail'. They point out that contemporary ethnography breaks through the cultural anthropology, which emphasises a general theory of culture and embraces a reflection of doing ethnographic field work and writing. They note that a good ethnography is one which explains the

conditions of field work, of everyday life and the micro processes capturing indigenous ideas, their meanings and subjectivity.

According to Hammerslay and Atkinson (1983), ethnography involves the ethnographer participating in people's daily lives for an extended period of time observing listening and asking questions. According to Smith (2001) ethnography allows the researcher a degree of penetration into the inner working of an occupation or work setting that is not easily available by other methods. This research demanded a long period of stay (one year and six months with the Kurichias, and six months with the Paniya community) and interaction with the people, participating in their life world to interpret the meanings and processes in their life. The flexibility allowed in ethnography helped capture different perspectives of different actors from their respective sub universes and enabled comparisons and analysis of different perspectives. For instance, different perspectives and expressions on the development and practices of non-Adivasi and Adivasi actors gave more insights into the context than by concentrating only on Paniyas and Kurichias point of view.

Further, highlighting the flexibility and maximum scope of ethnography, O'Reilly (2005) notes that each ethnographer will choose the extent to which he/she wishes to incorporate historical or macro factors, the extent to which to be critical or to engage in cultural politics, and the range of methods to be employed beyond direct and sustained contact, watching, listening and enquiring.

Combining various definitions, O'Reilly (2005:3) gives a critical definition of ethnography stating that it is an 'iterative-inductive research' drawing on 'a family of methods', 'involving direct and sustained contact with human agents which is context specific and produces a rich account that respects the irreducibility of human experience as well as the role of theory and the researcher's own role, and that views humans as part object and part subject.

Multiple tools such as participant and non participant observation, in-depth unstructured interviews (for individuals and groups), interviews of key informants (elders, leaders, educated members etc. among Adivasis), group discussions, case narratives and informal conversations have been used for data collection. Different sites (their home,

work place, market, schools, hospitals, worship places etc.) have been observed to understand the unspoken processes and patterns in their experience of development. For in-depth interviews, the interview guide helped facilitate discussion and made sure that the major themes were covered. Participant and non- participant observation helped understand the inclinations, motives, and subcultures present in both the communities and their symbolic and material resistance and coping mechanisms.

While the Kurichias are very articulate, the Paniyas are generally reticent and not very forthcoming. The silence and withdrawal of the Paniya community may be the result of slavery and violence they have experienced from the settler communities for many years. Generally, they hesitate to say 'no' to the settler community if they call them for daily wage labour. They silently skip the labour except for rare occasions of confrontation. The non-Adivasi communities perceive this behaviour as laziness, dishonesty, pride due to government support etc. and they adopt different methods including distribution of liquor to get them for wage labour. Is the Paniya's noncompliance a way of resistance to the settler community? Or in their culture is there no recognition or concept of daily wage labour? There were rare incidents of slave labour among the Kurichias and they articulated those experiences with anger and frustration.

According to Fetterman (1989) participant observation is the key method of ethnography and it demands participation in the lives of people under study and observation and recording of data. According to Upadhyaya (1999), participant observation combines the objective observation - the outsider's view- with close interaction or participation in their social life to acquire subjective understanding from the inside. She highlights that with the immersion into another culture, a mental leap is possible to see the world from the perspective of another culture. I cannot claim that my experience was one of complete participation or complete immersion in all their activities and culture. My participation shifted from participation to observation to discussion. In their ritual celebrations, they tried to involve me as much as possible without breaking the boundaries. The Paniyas allowed me the freedom to enter their prayer rooms and see the activities of their religious functionaries. When it came to participating in the rituals of the Kurichias, my being a 'non-Adivasi' and a 'woman' posed limitations. Even their own women's entry into the *kavu*, temple premise and *daivappura* (special room kept for

their ancestor gods) was restricted. I was cautious not to hurt the sensibilities of the participants as far as possible.

When it came to activities like wage labour, I could not participate in the same way as they did, but tried to be with them observing, discussing and sometimes helping. Fifteen years ago, while staying with an Adivasi family in Attappady, I realised that experience can differ even though I participated in the same activity. I approached the employer for wage labour with the Adivasi workers. First, the employer was hesitant to employ me and was wary about my identity. However, he agreed when I expressed my desire to work. Unfortunately, the work was cutting cotton plants for replanting and it was a difficult task for me. I worked hard and by evening, I had blisters on my hands; when the land owner noticed my hands, he asked me to not to work. More than an experience of subjugation, for me it was an experience of rejection. During the study period, unlike the other members in the family, I could not go get wage labour and support the Adivasi family with my wage earnings.

Field notes were prepared daily, based on observation, each day's experience and informal conversations. The data collected included primary accounts of the study containing field work procedures, cultural narratives of the communities and the ethnographer's personal and theoretical reflections. As experience and observation cannot be counted as complete evidence for explaining people's motives and their views of reality, semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted with key participants as the principal means in eliciting data. According to Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao (2004), interviewing is one of the most important data gathering techniques of ethnographers, which helps to explain and understand the broad context of what one sees and experiences. To understand the changes over time, older members as well as youth, both men and women were interviewed. Other qualitative techniques like group discussions and case studies were also employed under the frame work of ethnography. According to Creswell (2007), in ethnography, the thrust is to understand how the culture works rather than to understand an issue or problem using a case as a specific illustration. Individual cases of health and illness among the Paniyas and Kurichias were collected to explain their health problems in the context of their experience of different systems of medicine. Informal conversations and unstructured interviews were conducted in their 'natural

group gatherings' (family gatherings or colony gatherings) as there was greater scope for free conversations and flow of ideas.

Research Site

The selected Paniya and Kurichia settlements became the core areas for in-depth study and the Panchayats in which their settlements were located became the next level for investigation. The whole of Wayanad district became the third level of investigation as development sites like Adivasi departments, District headquarters, schools and hospitals they utilise are spread all over Wayanad. As development/lack of development experience cannot be isolated from the broader context of Wayanad and its history, the broader location of Wayanad was selected to meet important officials. The land struggles and initiatives of the Adivasis for self development cannot be understood without exploring the broader context of Wayanad and the history of land ownership in the region.

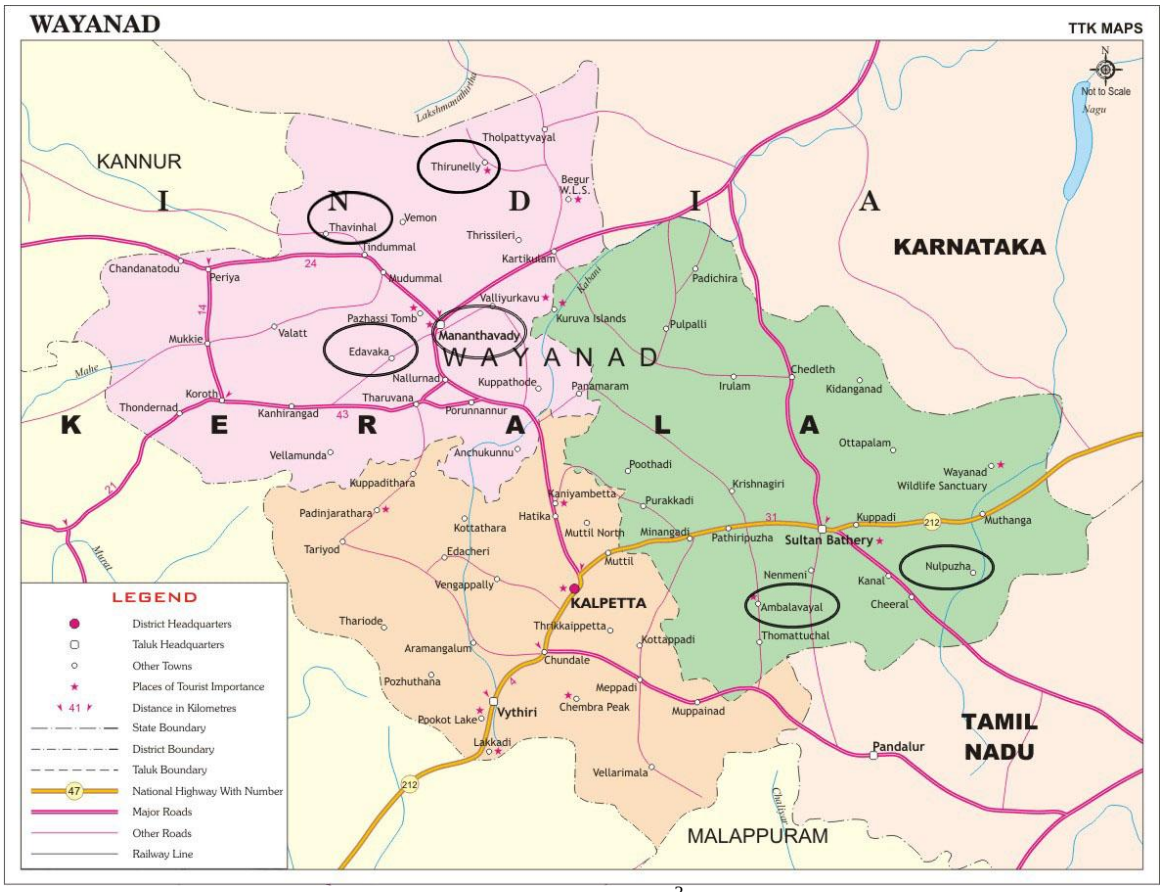


Fig 3.1: Wayanad District [3]

3 http://tourskeralam.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/Wayanad-Map.jpg accessed on February 1st 2012.

The Panchayats with considerable Adivasi population and representation of both the communities were preferred for selection of settlements. The Panchayats selected for in-depth study were Edavaka, Mananthavady, Thirunelli and Thavinjal Panchayats in Mananthavady block and Ambalavayal and Noolpuzha Panchayats in Bathery block. Mananthavady block was given priority due to the significant presence of both Kurichia as well as Paniya communities. Thirunelli Panchayat in Mananthavady block and Noolpuzha Panchayat in Bathery block were selected due to their active presence in the Adivasi land struggle. Edavaka and Thavinjal Panchayats in Mananthavady block were appreciated for the better functioning of the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS), a programme implemented in all the Panchayats in Wayanad.[4] The settlements in the interior areas, closer to the forests and 'development' infrastructure (schools, hospitals, markets, highways etc.), were included in the study to get maximum divergence in the data. The Panchayat and settlements selected for collecting primary data are given below.

Block Panchayat	**Gram Panchayat**	**Settlement**
Mananthavady	Edavaka	One Paniya colony One Kurichia *tharavad*
	Thirunelly	One Paniya colony One Kurichia colony
	Mananthavady	One Paniya colony One Kurichia *tharavad*
	Thavinjal	One Kurichia *tharavad*
Bathery	Ambalavayal	One Paniya colony
	Noolpuzha	One Paniya colony

4 Thavinjal panchayt received the award for spending maximum amount for NREGS in Wayanad District and a Kurichiya Panchayat member Jaya from this panchayat spent maximum amount in her ward and came first in all India level.

In the chapters pseudo names are used to name the participants and the settlements to maintain anonymity. Tulsi Kurichia *tharavad* in Thavinjal panchayat was selected since elements of *tharavad* culture exist there alongside their better landholding, group agriculture and representation in the local Panchayat. The large number of voters in the *tharavad* and the special status assigned to the *tharavad* due to the large extent of landholding gave them a voice in the Panchayat and party politics. A Panchayat member of this *tharavad* became a Minister in 2010. In Thavinjal Panchayat, among the Paniyas, it was difficult to find a colony that had at least a minimum landholding and representation in the local Panchayat. In Ambalavayal Panchayat, Richur Paniya colony was selected as it partially satisfied these criteria. They had a landholding extending from 15 cents to 1 acre. In this colony, the leader of the *oorukoottam* had initiated a struggle to protect their burial land and achieved success. A Paniyan from that area, and a relative of the *oorukoottam* leader was selected as a Panchayat member. They had struggled for land and had achieved partial success in accessing land records. Arayal colony in Thirunelly Panchayat and Kunnil colony in Edavaka Panchayat were selected noticing the exceeding number of school dropouts. Arayal colony is interior, but Pathilkunnu is in the proximity of the school and other infrastructure facilities. The presence of a number of 'unwed mothers' was another criterion for selecting Arayal colony. Champa Kurichia colony in Thirunelly Panchayat was selected to include the nuclear families of Kurichias and to study the differences in development perceptions and experiences in comparison to the *tharavad.* The Adivasis's history of bonded labour is very much connected with Valliyoorkavu temple. So the Paniya community from Vally colony and Kurichia community from Karpuram *tharavad* closely associated with temple activities were also included in the study specially to collect data related to Valliyoorkavu. Noolpuzha, Alippura Paniyan colony was selected as Paniya women and men from this colony actively participated in the Muthanga struggle as well as land struggle with their neighbours. The number of houses in a Paniya colony is not fixed but ranges from 9 to 50 in the study area and the size of a Kurichia *tharavad* also varies as the typical *tharavad* structure no more exists after the partition of property among the members.

While selecting colonies and households, variations in material conditions and household composition was maintained to get maximum divergence in data. Among Paniyas, *Mooppan*'s (male head of the Paniya settlement) family and in the case of

Kurichias, the *Karanavan's* (traditional male head) family was included as they had more knowledge about the history of the entire settlement as well as the individual families in the settlement. Other criteria followed while selecting the household include

1) extended families having at least two generations in the case of Paniyas and *tharavads* (joint family) in the case of Kurichias

2) nuclear families from both the communities

3) families in which the householder or any member has at least primary education

4) families having school going children as education is one of the main themes in the study.

As development cannot be separated from the history and context, communities in the same settlement with a rather long period of stay (more than 20 years) were preferred for collecting data. For elaborate study, two *tharavads,* one from Mananthavady and another from Edavaka panchayat and two nuclear families in Champa were selected from the Kurichia community. From the Paniya community, one extended family and two nuclear families were selected from Edavaka, Kunnil colony;Thirunelly, Arayal colony and Ambalavayal-Richur colony.

Research Participants and Process of Data Collection

Informal conversation with Paniyas and Kurichias with an aim to do research started in 2006. My friends in other organisations as well as relatives in Wayanad helped me with some contacts in colonies and *tharavads* in some of the panchayats. Other areas were explored using the help of Adivasi promoters as well as through self exploration by collecting details from previously visited Adivasi settlements, from fellow researchers as well as from local people. As per the custom in the Adivasi community, the Paniya *Mooppan* or Kurichia *Karanavan* of the settlement has to be informed first and permission has to be taken from them for any interaction in the settlement. Even though such customary rules are fading in recent times due to increased involvement of the political parties in the colonies, it was necessary for building trust and assuring co-operation. For instance, their role as decision makers in the rituals and agriculture operations (especially in the case of Kurichias) has not yet changed and this has given

them certain authority over the community. My research began with visits to the houses in each Paniya and Kurichia settlement and engaging in informal conversations with them. Meanwhile, the informal conversations and interviews with some of the key persons helped me to understand the Adivasi development scenario in Wayanad which was helpful to formulate the objectives and methodology for this study. Since the rapport was built earlier, except in two newly included settlements, the insertion into the community was easy when I started my field work for the study in 2009.

Primary data was collected from the above mentioned settlements of Kurichias and Paniyas, and their Adivasi leaders and elders. Data was collected between the periods, April 2009 to April 2010. There were further visits to fill the gaps in the data at regular intervals. Key informants were selected while staying with each family. The main criteria in selecting key informants were resourcefulness and capacity to articulate their development experience in their day to day life as an individual and within their community. Even though more equitable sharing of power and consensus in decision making was seen among the members of the Adivasi communities, differential power relations was not totally absent among them. So there were efforts to include the powerful as well as powerless, the materially better off and the materially disadvantaged while selecting the key informants in an attempt to balance the power differentials. This helped in cross checking the data. When the key participants were not aware of the details of programmes such as NREGS and Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY), others were called for help and discussion. Efforts were made to include people from different age groups for interviews and discussions. The age groups included were 16 to 30, 30 to 60 and 60 and above. Precautions were taken to give equal representation to men and women in the interviews and discussions. Other than this, Kurichia and Paniya elders, their religious functionaries and *Karanavans* or *Mooppan*s were interviewed from other areas to understand their culture from different stakeholders. Flexibility was allowed and at times interviews ended in discussions and informal conversations. There were around 32 key informants, 16 from Paniya and 16 from the Kurichia community, who provided voluminous data for the research study.

State initiatives for the development of the Adivasis were probed, as well as the non Adivasi and official narratives regarding them. Informants from Adivasi communities

were not familiar with all the state policies, programmes and the administrative setup implementing these programmes. It seemed relevant to study the gap in the administrative understanding and interventions, and the Adivasi ways of understanding and functioning of the state initiatives. So in-depth interviews were also conducted with Adivasi leaders (even though a few were not residents of the selected settlements), political leaders, Adivasi development officers, non Adivasis, school authorities and teachers, health personnel and the leaders of different organisations and movements giving importance to their relevant area of involvement with Paniyas and Kurichias or Adivasi development initiatives. The ethnographic method gave scope to the multiple voices to be heard and analysed. Interviews were tape recorded if participants gave their consent. Interviews were transcribed and written in narrative form.

Secondary data was collected from various Adivasi study centers such as the Kerala Institute for Research and Training and Development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (KIRTADS) in Kozhikode, Swaminathan Research Foundation (SRF) in Wayanad, and other sources such as the Centre for Development Studies and State Archives both located in Thiruvanthapuram, the Solidarity Library and Pazhassi Library in Mananthavady and Thudi Kala Kendram at Eachom, Wayanad. Kerala University Library and Loyola College Library in Thiruvananthapuram were visited for collecting secondary data. Data was also collected from newspaper reports, local magazines and articles, Adivasi Development Departments, Schools, Educational offices, the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan Centre, Health Departments and Hospitals.

Field Work Experience – A Few Glances

I began my field work in Edavaka Panchayat of Wayanad district. It was a familiar area for me as both my brother and sister stay in that Panchayat. While going to Pathilkunnu Paniyan colony, people enquired about my purpose and I explained about my research study among Paniyas and Kurichias. One Muslim friend asked me in a teasing tone … "You are here to reform Paniyas? They will not change. Are you not interested to study about our community?" Within few days I understood that this was not an exceptional comment from one individual but the perception of the majority of the non-Adivasis in the area. I have not seen non-Adivasis engaging in friendly talk with the Paniyas except when they were required for work and business. When I started interacting with them,

engaged in friendly talk in small market centres, non-Adivasis started staring at me with a question mark. Going with them to the tea shops resulted in strange glances from the non-Adivasis. One day while going to a Paniya colony, a friend from the rich landed class enquired where I was going with the sleeping mats. I told him that I was going to a Paniya family to stay and they had only two torn mats and there were 8 members to sleep on those mats. Suddenly he said… "They are drunkards and lazy people and that is the only reason for their poverty. The Government is giving them free provisions and so they can stay lazy. Don't try to make them lazier. My family also had nothing when we came as migrants to Wayanad and by hard work only we earned our living." Perhaps, he was not aware of the fact that the huge chunk of land he worked to earn livelihood and owned as private property was the land over which the Adivasis wandered freely collecting firewood and food items until not very long ago. One day, Paniya women living near to his house told me that when they entered his land for collecting firewood his wife shouted at them "…do not take firewood from our land…. let it decay and become manure for the soil". Paniya people were hesitant to share all these stories but when I started staying with them, sharing food with them, joining them in minor work and visiting them in their work site etc. they started treating me like an insider and the other non-Adivasis became 'they' while describing their experience to me. On the first day Paniya people were doubtful whether I will eat their food or not and they were happy and generous to me when I started sharing food with them. At the beginning they were doubtful because usually non-Adivasis do not eat from their houses even today in Kerala.

Fixing up time for interviews and attending rituals according to their timing was really a challenge to cope with in the beginning. On the occasion of *therandu kalyanam* (puberty) in Pathilkunnu colony the rituals started very late and all their relatives waited till past midnight up to 2'o clock for dinner. I felt tired and impatient after 12'o clock and started criticising them in mind for prolonging it till 2'o clock. Paniyas remained calm engrossed in their own roles like dancing, playing *thudi* and *kuzhal* (musical instrument like pipe), performing rituals, cooking etc. and I really appreciated their capacity to live in the present moment. Dancing with the Paniya women helped me to overcome my impatience. However, I realised my obsession with time, and with tomorrow. Boudieu's reflections on time was apt here as he notes that discovery of time as something can be wasted or saved or the concept of lost time or well filled time is connected with the

capitalist money economy. The Paniya people are not found worried about not finishing the rituals according to the earlier plan and it appeared that for them time was not connected with past or future but stands still as the pre capitalist experience of time mentioned by Bourdieu in his work on 'the attitude of Algerian peasants on time'.[5] For the non Adivasi the time spent consciously unemployed becomes time wasted and it prevents rational calculation of the future and Paniyas enjoyment of leisure becomes lazyness in their view. It appears that, it is not just a clash between Adivasi and non-Adivasis but between two world views- capitalist and non capitalist or economy centered on money and economy centered on social embeddedness.

The general opinion of the non Adivasis about the Kurichia community was a positive one and few of them even promised to take me to the Kurichia *tharavad*, three km away from town. Since I knew a Paniya youth who had studied with a Kurichia youth from that *tharavad,* I decided to go with him. When the auto reached near the *tharavad* yard, the Paniya youth told the auto driver to stop. After getting down he said, "Now you go, I will wait here". I forced him to come with me and then he said… "If I enter their yard they have to take bath. Why should I give trouble to that old *Karanavan* sitting there?" He explained how the pollution taboo was very strict earlier and how some of the educated younger generation move freely with them outside the premises of their *tharavads* now. But in the *tharavad* even now, they believe in the practice of pollution. While they show warmth and hospitality with other visitors outwardly, during the entire period of field work Paniya people were never seen entering Kurichia *tharavad.*

While meeting people from the political parties and administrative departments there was support as well as some resistance to share information suspecting that it was going to be a study critically looking into the administrative and policy level implication of development programmes to the Adivasis. An *Anganwadi* helper who promised to give all the details, did not cooperate and she said that the police had given her the duty of informing them if anybody came to stay with the Adivasis in their colony. She added that once people from *Porattam* (which literally mean fight and in her view a naxalite group in Wayanad) came and lived in the same house I was staying in. She said that the

5 Refer Jenkins (1992).

Adivasis may get influenced by their ideology when they eat and stay with them. Even after sharing my history as a spiritual seeker and my work experience with the Adivasis elsewhere, she was not willing to share detailed information as she had during my first visit. As an Adivasi *Mooppan* in that colony said, she came as a dependent on the Adivasis, became an *anganwadi* helper and then a Panchayat member with the support of the Communist Party. Usually, researchers go to the colonies with the support of Adivasi promoters or a political party leader or some other non-Adivasi acquaintance. Since I had done the pilot study earlier in that colony there was no need for another person to introduce me. However, the non-Adivasis were not just curious but showed uneasiness about a strange woman staying with Adivasis without being introduced or accompanied by a locally known person. The area was 'infamous' for the *Jenmi* (land lord) brutality towards Adivasis and the 'Naxalite' resistance against them in the past.

Other initiatives such as teaching the Adivasi children was challenged in one colony. In Pathilkunnu Paniya colony, parents asked me to teach their children when I stayed with them to collect data. I was happy to contribute something to them in return for their time and the knowledge they had generously shared with me. But after one week of classes, a Hindu organisation (Muttil Vivekananda mission) sent a person claiming that it was their tuition centre. I told them that I was there only for a short period and asked them to teach regularly. They seemed relieved with my explanation but never returned. When I left for other colonies and tried to shift the class to my sister's house so that one of my sisters could help them in their studies, the children attended the classes for one day and did not turn up later. There were comments "…is this an initiative for starting an Ambedkar model school here?" Gradually, I realised that the comments were from non-Adivasis who recruit Paniyas for work in distant Kodagu as well as from those who do petty business with them. All these initial experiences gave me a glimpse of the cultural politics and the power relations that exist among the Adivasi and non-Adivasis in the study area; it also revealed the importance of gathering information from non-Adivasis to understand their construction of Adivasis within the local context.

When I accompanied the Paniyas to the Panchayat and Adivasi development offices where they tried to procure necessary documents or avail themselves of some facilities, I realised the difficulties they faced. They were unaware of many schemes and their claims

were often rejected. The researcher's identity and acquaintance with the Panchayat members helped the community members to avail themselves of some benefits.

In certain cases, the key participants among Paniyas were not aware of the laws and policies in favour of them. They used to describe them in one word, either "good" or "bad". In such cases, I collected the leaflets and materials regarding the programmes and discussed them with the key informants in the second round of interviews to understand their viewpoints. Among the Paniyas, an overwhelming majority of those interviewed were ignorant or had only partial information about the laws and policies favouring them. The Kurichias were better in collecting details regarding the development programmes meant for them. There were Paniyas as well as Kurichias who were ignorant about the toll free number to register their complaints directly to the NREGS administrative cell and their right to apply for unemployment benefits in cases where the authorities failed to provide them with employment. There were whole Paniyan and Kurichiyan settlements that did not come to know about the *adalat* kept for clearing their complaints.

While a large amount of information is collected by state agencies, accessing official data for research is becoming increasingly difficult. Many departments maintained that the files were 'not up-to-date'. Finally, I was compelled to use the Right to Information (RTI) Act to access some basic data regarding education and health. But even this did not help when I asked for details of the landholdings of Adivasis and big planters. I got either partial information or nothing at all. Some offices responded by asking me to search the files for data. When I went again to the offices, their excuse was that if there was a case in the court against any landholding, there was no provision to provide data. On repeated requests, they agreed to collect the data from the concerned departments, but were reluctant to show me important files. Considering this enormous delay in collecting information, I started enquiring about other sources. The taluka offices where big plantations were involved in ongoing court cases showed maximum resistance in sharing information. However, a sub collector who was dealing with the pending plantation cases in one of the talukas shared some data even though the hearing of cases was going on. A visit to the encroached sites and the *Patta* (land document) distribution sites helped me understand their feelings about their struggle and the processes of land distribution by the government.

I attended cultural festivals like Valliyoorkavu *utsavam* (festival), *thira utsavam* at Thonichal and Valad, where the Kurichias and Paniyas actively participate. I also visited Paniya and Kurichia *kavu*s (sacred groves) at different places as there were no *kavus* in all the study settlements. Kurichia herbal medicine centres helped me understand how they differ from modern medical practices.

Situating the Self in the Field – Insider/Outsider

The Paniyas and Kurichias cooperated with me and considered me one among them. On my first visit, they asked me why I was not studying my own community and why this study was useful to them. I tried to tell them that there were many studies about my community, but the culture, self-development initiatives and voices of the Paniya and Kurichia communities were still part of the oral tradition and there was the possibility of losing it all if nobody wrote about it . They agreed that their ancestor's knowledge about herbal medicines and the variety of food items were lost to us. There was little research on the communities and few had the chance of higher education. I affirmed that when their children opted for such initiatives, there would be no need for outsiders to write about them. One Kurichia youth asked why I described their culture as 'rich'. He added that they did not want to be museum pieces for outsiders. This revealed the importance of lived in experience and reminded me of Gopal Guru's argument that only a Dalit has the moral authority to study a Dalit group. I shared my previous work experience with the Korku Adivasis in Madhya Pradesh and brief interaction with the Adivasis in Attappady and Noolpuzha, and could convince the Kurichia youth that I was not romanticising their culture but trying to capture the nuances of their lives through an intersubjective experience. Another Kurichia friend said that generally non- Adivasis feel an aversion towards Adivasis and asked me how I felt. I told him that my acquaintance with Adivasi culture has shown me that they are a people who promote a culture that resists the capitalist culture centered on profit and greed. My answers perhaps removed some block and they started conversing with ease. However, there were occasions when they rejected my invitation to talk. There were limitations to plunge into their silence and behavioural patterns intuitively and give meaning to it. While visiting a research site in Karappuzha, one lady resisted talking and when I asked her once more, she was furious. However, I could understand and be empathetic to their silence since I have heard and read

experiences of their brutal suppression during the feudal period and continuing state suppression whenever they fought for land.

The intersubjective experiences and their narratives revealed some of their views and the meanings they made about their reality which are illustrated in the following chapters. I felt that to break the epistemological boundaries and totally align my thoughts and motives with them needed a lot of mutual understanding and proximity. The Paniyas who squat on the verandas (squatting at verandas is a usual practice noticed among Paniyas) of the shops in the town, started waving to me and talking freely, which they seldom do with a non-Adivasi. The school going Adivasi children on their return trip rushed into my sister's house calling her *chechy* (local way of addressing one's own sister and also used to call elders when there is a feeling of closeness) and sharing snacks and food with me and giving me information about new incidents in the colony. They started inviting me to stay with them, especially for special occasions. Women spoke freely about their burden of bringing up the family. Since I ate their food and drank their tea, they were free to ask for food and tea when they came to the house where I stayed. Usually Paniyas do not go to other people's houses and ask for help or food even if there was a famine, unless they have a close bond. They were happy about my attempts to talk in their language and promised to teach me their dialect. These were all small external signs of the melting of boundaries between us. While I attempted to understand their reality, I cannot claim complete immersion into their culture and everyday life. As Bourdieu points out, the awareness of the distortion of looking into the life experience objectively can lead us to an imaginative leap into the shoes of the subjects of study. Thus, according to him 'authority' and 'epistemological integrity' can be produced by a reflexive encounter with the research participants.

In the case of Kurichias, the *tharavad* rules restricted my entry into their world. Since they still believe in the pollution taboo, they hesitated to allow me to stay in the *tharavad* rooms with them or enter their *Daivappura* (a room kept aside for their deities). They gave a single attached room for me to stay or invited me to stay in their nuclear families surrounding the *tharavad*.[6] Their remarkable hospitality and expression of warmth

6 Small houses were built around the *tharavadu* and partition of property was done among the members when the government stipulated the amount of landholding of a joint family by law.

removed the negative feelings about small exclusions. Their interactions were free and some of them even shared what could have been defaming their tradition. The discussions about untouchability were countered by their claims of cleanliness and minimum chance of infection and disease. It was time to stop the pollution taboo. But the strictness had really diminished and old members as well as children took courage to take me to inhibited areas like their temple, *kavu* and rooms in the *tharavad* even though they did not want to break the institution of *tharavad.* They could protect many of their rich cultural traditions like joint paddy cultivation with their traditional seed varieties and avoidance of chemical fertilizers, and the communitarian feeling and the divine blessing they invoke through rituals during cultivation. Further, the institution of *tharavad* gives legitimacy to their '*sub-universes*' of perceptions and making meaning.[7] The nuclear families I visited were out of the *sub-universe* of those who believed in untouchability and they allowed me to enter all the rooms including the kitchen. However, I experienced that the *sub-universes* were more rigid in modern institutions like hospitals and schools than in traditional institutions.

Berger and Luckmann (1967) give an illustration to the *sub-universe* of medicine. They point out that it is not enough to set up an impenetrable *sub-universe* of medicine but the lay public has to be convinced about the legitimacy of the *sub-universe* by intimidating the patient if they go against the advice of the doctor. They point out that the entire legitimising machinery will work to keep the lay person as a lay person and doctors as doctors so that both follow the rules without questioning them.

I cannot claim that I have been accepted fully as an insider; however, I had the experience of living with them for one week at a stretch or three days at a stretch at regular intervals in different seasons at different locations. The idea was to have an experience of the life in the colony across the seasons with varying employment opportunities. The time limit of the field work period also was a block to stay for longer periods as there were many settlements and sites to visit. For short periods, I could undergo the experience with whatever minimum facilities they had, but it was difficult. Sitting without any food all day and eating at night was familiar to Paniya families in the

5 Berger and Lukman (1967) use the term sub-universe to denote a particular collectivity which produce particular meanings and within this collectivity these meanings are presented as objective reality.

lean season. The Paniya households where I stayed said that they did not get headaches even though they did not eat all day. But I could not do it, however much I wanted to and when they bought food for those who went for work, they were keen to share it with me. Sometimes, I tried to manage with black tea like the Paniya people did. When the children cried for food, they were sent to other houses where they cooked at least once during the day or they had to make do with black tea. In one colony, the *anganwadi* helped in distributing food occasionally to pregnant ladies and children at times of scarcity as the teacher was empathetic to their condition. Living with the families gave tremendous insights into their day to day activities.

Data Analysis

The research studies on Adivasi development mainly concentrate on a set of Government programmes and free provisions for them, but they are challenged by Adivasi movements as well as by academic writings. This study concentrates more on the issues related to the Paniya and Kurichia community resource base (land and forest). The areas of their education, health and employment have been included as indicators of development.

The analysis falls under the broad category of narrative analysis. According to Lewis-Beck, Bryman and Liao (2004: 705) what makes a text narrative is 'sequence and consequence: Events are selected, organised, connected, and evaluated as meaningful for a particular audience'. They point out that narratives do not speak for themselves but need interpretation when used as data in social research. For analysis, the emphasis was on the content of the text, on *what is said* as well as *how it is said.* Also attempts were made to connect personal experience and social structure in the analysis. The data is mainly in the form of oral narratives and events. Field notes and observational data were also used for analysis. The data were first categorised into four major themes connected with Adivasi development - land, employment and livelihood, education and health. Sub themes were identified and the data were arranged and shuffled under each sub theme to understand the meaning. Then the sub themes were rearranged under each broad theme to identify emerging patterns and theoretical inclinations. Close inspection of the narratives were attempted to sharpen the analysis and build arguments. Documents from different sources and theories were also used for further analysis and to substantiate the findings. Against the backdrop of the broader methodological context explored in this chapter, the next

chapter introduces the historical context and the specific socio-cultural and political contexts of the two communities selected for the study.

Limitations of the Study

The scope of the thesis became vast as development encompasses all aspects of Adivasi life which are interconnected. As a non-Adivasi with little proficiency in their dialects, I may have failed to capture some of the nuances.

Many areas can be identified for further study and deeper analysis such as the agricultural practices of the Paniyas and Kurichias, their similarities and differences from the modern practices of organic farming, an elaborate study of their social institutions, the pattern of transition as well as its continuity in the context of the modern development trajectory, their herbal and spiritual healing practices, an analysis of their folk songs and stories to understand their rich culture and world views, all of which can contribute to human and social development as they are based on values of ecological, social and cognitive justice.

CHAPTER IV

Paniyas and Kurichias of Wayanad
Socio-cultural and Political Context

This chapter provides the broad historical, socio-cultural and the political contexts for the study, and the experiences of Paniyas and Kurichias have to be located within this context. An exploration of the historical background of the area, a brief discussion about the two communities and the development policies and programmes of the state have been attempted to understand and draw insights about the processes of development/lack of development of the Adivasis. Against the background of state initiated policies and programmes, the Adivasi responses and land struggles are discussed towards the end of the chapter.

Wayanad: The Historical Context

Wayanad was traditionally known as the land of forests (Nair 1911). There are different versions about the origin of the name Wayanad, that it was derived from the word *Vayalnadu* (the land of paddy fields) or *Vananadu* (the land of forests) and that it was the land of forests as well as paddy fields (Nair 1976).

There is considerable evidence about the new Stone Age civilisation as historical proof for the existence of organised human life in Wayanad, centuries before Christ. The earliest record of a ruling family in Wayanad is available in the shape of rock inscriptions in the Edackal cave of Ambukuthimala and this throws light on the bygone era and civilisation. This cave discovered in 1894 by a British Administrator was identified as a habitat of Neolithic people on the basis of the nature of representation on the cave walls (Gurukkal 1995). Based on the rock inscriptions in the Edackal caves in Wayanad, it has been presumed that Astroloid groups lived in the region prior to the arrival of the Dravidians and the Aryans (Gurukkal 1995).

From the oral tradition, it is evident that there were trade routes to Wayanad in the pre colonial period and that the thick forests of Wayanad supplied part of the timber for the sea trade from Calicut port (Cherian 1999). However, the role of the Adivasis in early

trade is not known. There is a memorial in Lakkidi in Wayanad of an Adivasi chieftain who disclosed the route from Tamarassery to Wayanad to the Britishers, and was treacherously killed after the disclosure. Kunhaman (1989) points out that till the middle of the 17th century, Wayanad was inhabited exclusively by different hill tribes in separate geographical divisions and ruled by Adivasi chieftains. Historically, the Adivasi communities of the Malabar region became the least developed among the Adivasi communities of Kerala. This is attributed to the socio-economic and geo-political conditions that prevailed in the region (ibid).

Some glimpses of early history of Wayanad are available in William Logan's Malabar Manual and from oral traditions in the form of songs and legends. Logan (1989) observes that the country was formerly held by Vedar Rajas ruling the Vedars (wild hunters) and thus the belief that Wayanad has been the home of many aboriginal tribes driven up from the low country of Malabar is probably true. It is believed that Wayanad came under the rule of two neighbouring kingdoms of Kottayam and Kurumbranad in the late 14^{th} or 15^{th} centuries (Johney 2001). According to the oral tradition, the king of the Kuruman Adivasi community in Wayanad was defeated by the Kottayam and Kurumbranad kings and Wayanad came under their rule. The Rajas of Kottayam introduced a settled form of government in Wayanad and brought several Nair families from the coastal land. They divided the country into Nads or small divisions and placed them under Nair chieftains for purposes of administration (Nair 1911, Mundakkayam 2002). The Nair chieftains became hereditary holders of the lands and derived a share of the produce instead of regular rent. All administrative powers rested with Nair chieftains and they treated Adivasis as inferior beings and used them for hard manual labour. Even though Adivasis were enslaved by the migrants, they were free to use forest land and its resources by giving a minimal rent in the form of forest produce to the Nair landlords (Logan 1989).

The conquest of Wayanad by the Mysore Sultans had a significant impact on the property rights of the indigenous communities. After Hyder Ali invaded Wayanad in 1766 AD and brought it under his rule, the migration of Muslims to Wayanad, which had started in the 16^{th} century accelerated (Johney 2001). During this period, large areas of forests were mortgaged by the Nair landlords to certain Muslim merchants who exercised the rights of the original proprietors. This affected the customary rights of Adivasi people

and curtailed their access to agricultural and forest lands (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 2007).

After the defeat of Tippu Sultan in 1792, the province of Malabar was ceded to the British, but Wayanad was excluded from it. Tippu handed over the entire region to the British after the Sreerangapattanam truce. The Kottayam Rajas who were ousted by Hyder Ali and who helped the British in overthrowing the Mysorean power, were restored to their original status of rulers of Wayanad by the British (Kurup 1986). Wayanad thus came under the administration of Pazhassi Raja, the then ruler of Kottayam. Subsequently, the British turned hostile and this was followed by encounters between the British and Kerala Varma Pazhassi Raja of Kottayam, and Wayanad became one of the main centres of anti-British struggle in the Malabar province under the English East India Company. Pazhassi Raja fought the British till his death in 1805. After that Wayanad was under British colonial rule until 1947. Kurichias who were experts in martial arts were part of Pazhassi Raja's army.

The entry of the East India Company into Wayanad stands out as the most significant part of the onset of 'modern civilisation'. Wayanad was used for raising plantations and large scale cultivation of cash crops such as tea, coffee, pepper and cardamom. This district is one of the biggest foreign exchange earners of the state in India due to its cash crops and there is the complaint that it is not given the consideration and attention it deserves by the powers at the centre and state levels in various development programmes (Johney 1995). Wayanad has an agricultural economy and there are no major industries in Wayanad. The severe drought in 2003 in a high rainfall district like Wayanad is clear evidence of the destruction of balance in the eco-system. This has affected agricultural practices, yields and prices and the availability of wage labour. Further, alienation of forest lands, village commons and other landholdings led Adivasis to material and cultural alienation. The transition of landless Adivasis was quick, from forest dependence to slavery, to bonded labour and to wage labour.

The Current Scenario

Wayanad is one of the beautiful hill stations located in the Western Ghats on the north eastern part of Kerala state. The District Headquarters at Kalpetta is at a distance of 76

km from the sea shores of Calicut. Its boundaries are North, Coorg and Mysore (Karnataka); South, Malappuram District; East, Nilgiri (Tamil Nadu) and West, Kannur and Kozhikode districts. During the colonial period, Wayanad was part of the Malabar district of the Madras Presidency, directly under British rule. The present district of Wayanad was formed by merging parts of Calicut and Canannore districts on November 1, 1980 as the 12th district of Kerala. A large part of Wayanad is forested and covered by plantations.

Despite the large forest cover and plantation economy in Wayanad, poverty among the Adivasi communities is estimated at 60.4 per cent (Chathukulam and John 2006). The level of extreme poverty is indicated by the fact that 32 starvation deaths were reported among the Adivasis in 2002 from a single Panchayat, Noolpuzha in Wayanad district (George 2004). Wayanad district has the highest proportion (37.4%) of the Adivasi population in the state, but they constitute only 17.4 per cent of the district's population (Census of India 2011a). Adivasis who had been in the majority in Wayanad a century ago became a minority over a period of time (Aiyappan 1992).

The Adivasi communities of Wayanad are socio-economically and culturally diverse and include Paniyan (44.7 per cent), Adiyan (7.1 per cent), Kattunayakan (9.9 per cent), Kurichian (17.4 per cent), Mullukuruman (17.5per cent) and Uralikuruman (2.7 per cent), (Menon 2010). Kurichias and Mullu Kurumans own land and practice settled agriculture; Paniyas and Adiyans are mainly wage labourers with a few who own land; Kattunayakans depend on forest labour for their livelihood. Occasional forest labour and collection of non timber forest produce contributes to their income. The Urali Kurumans were traditionally artisans and today, most of them are agricultural labourers (Centre of Excellence 2006). The landholding pattern and the nature of occupation are also different among these Adivasi groups.

The two communities under study are Paniya and Kurichia communities of Wayanad district. They represent two large tribal communities in Wayanad and have distinctive socio-cultural economic and political status and experience in the state initiated development programmes. As these two communities present maximum diversity in their social organisation, cultural heritage and practices and development experiences in terms

of land and livelihood, they have been selected for this study. The following section discusses the socio-cultural background of the Kurichias and Paniyas.

Paniyas and Kurichias: The Socio-Cultural Contexts

As per the census of 2001, among the 35 Adivasi communities in Kerala, the Paniyas form the single largest group (22.5%), followed by the Kurichias (9.0%). In Wayanad, the Paniyas constitute 44.7 per cent and the Kurichias 16.9 per cent of the Adivasi population in Wayanad (Census of India 2011b).

The Paniyas, being the original inhabitants of the area, are considered aborigines (Nair 1911). Nair describes their past as savage tribes living in caves and thick forests, enslaved by the *Goundar* land owners. Gradually, they spread to the Wayanad hills and neighbouring places like parts of Coorg and Mysore. An old *Chetti*'s narration is given in the 1961 Census, according to which the Paniyas were living in the interior of Wayanad hills until they came into contact with the plains people. They used to gather on festive occasions to collect the leftover food from discarded leaf plates of the *Chettis*, and flee to the forest uttering '*ippi – ippi'*. Once, the *Chetti* decided to trap them by using nets. The Paniyas entered as usual and the *Chetti* trapped them and used them for agricultural operations. They were living in the forests eating wild food and they wore no clothes but leaves and barks.

Different authors have different opinions about the exact location of the origin of the Paniyas. Aiyappan (1992) points out that according to Paniya legends, their origin is Ippimala, a mountain near the Banasuran hill in West Wayanad. However, the exact location is unknown to the Paniyas and they believe that their great forefathers whom they refer to as Uthappan and Uthamma were trapped by Wayanadan *Chettis* (Wayanadan Goudar in another Mooppan's description) while gathering food and enslaved. However, they are perceived as the original inhabitants of Wayanad region according to this myth. According to Gopalan Nair (1911), *ippimala* is near the Thamaracherry Ghats. However, according to Aiyappan there are no traces of *Chettis* in Thamarassery Ghats. In their *penappattu* (the song they sing during the death ritual beginning on the seventh day), they narrate the story of their origin from Ippimala and remember all their ancestors beginning from *Uthappan* and *Uthamma* who negotiated with god in the creation process.

The Kurichias are also considered one of the oldest inhabitants of Wayanad (Mathur 1977). According to Balakrishnan (1983), the Kurichias, Paniyas and Kadars lived in the heart of the high range Durga forests before the arrival of the *Namboothiris, Nairs and Ezhavas* (different caste groups). According to him, they had no contact with *Namboothiris* and *Nairs* before they settled in the forest region. About Kurichias there are other constructions- for instance, that they are warriors from the *Kari Nair* community brought by Pazhassi from the southern part of Malabar (Aiyappan and Mahadevan 1990). According to Vayaleri (1996), this location is reasonable as there are Kurichias in the Kannavam areas, which is part of southern Malabar. At the same time, he doubts their origin as *Kari Nairs*. In a personal interview with him, K.K Annan an ex-MLA from the Kurichia community said that they were not brought from Travancore area by the Pazhassi Raja as some authors have written. In his enquiry about the family of the Rajas at Kottayam, Travancore he found that it is a baseless argument. He believed that Kurichias are one of the early inhabitants of Malabar. He maintained that their presence in Kannur and Kozhikode districts shows their traces in the Malabar area rather than in Thiruvithamkur. Kurichia's *olipporu* (guerilla type war) with Pazhassi against the British and their special talent in *olipporu* gives further evidence that they knew the nooks and corners of Wayanad forests and this is another inference for their being the inhabitants of Malabar forests before Pazhassi.

The Paniya settlement was known as *Padi* (settlement) and it consisted of many *Chalas* (huts) where individual families lived. Now nobody is using these terms and their settlements are commonly known as 'Paniya colony', a term given by the state. During the feudal period and early independent period, Paniyan's huts were built on the fringes of their employer's dry land or paddy fields and thus a settled way of life began. At present, they are settled in the same area or in a different location in government built colonies, in tiled houses with two or three small rooms and a kitchen.

The Kurichias traditionally lived in large matrilineal joint families known as *mittam* (now referred to as *tharavad*), each a self contained unit with hills and fields. The main house was usually big and multi-roomed. The main room is reserved as the abode of ancestral spirits. There is a special room for the *karanavan* or head of the family and a series of attached rooms or separate sheds around the main building constitute the living

quarters of the married members and their young children. When the members in the family increase, separate *pandals* (sheds) are built but they share a common kitchen and dining room. They were known for their massive joint families ranging from 30 to 100 members and matrilineal heritage in the past. During field work, it was observed that Kurichia's houses are situated in the middle of their agricultural land. The values of their joint family system is not completely destroyed even though many of them have shifted to a nuclear family set up by building separate houses in the premises of the *tharavad.* Even though the land has been partitioned among the members in several *tharavads,* there are no clear boundaries and the impression created is one of being under a landlord. They meet in the *tharavad* for rituals and festivals and for joint cultivation. Out of the 107 *tharavads,* 56 continue to remain undivided as an institution for continuing their traditional practices even though the property was divided among the members when the state restricted the extent of landholding of a joint family. The Kurichias consider themselves to be higher in the social order and still observe pollution taboos in their *tharavad* against all castes and communities except Brahmins. There are also myths to connect their origin to Brahmins. Kurichia elders from one *tharavadu* claimed that their ancestors were Brahmins of the hill whose entire *tharavad* was devastated in a landslide except for a girl child who was brought up by other castes. Their present *tharavad* was built by her successors. The Kurichia nuclear families separated from their *tharavad* due to various reasons such as breaking the *tharavad* customs and not following the practice of touch pollution. The touch pollution practices still hinder the active interaction among the different Adivasi communities unless they gather around a radical cause like struggle for land. It has been observed that even now Paniyas are not called for work in Kurichia *tharavads.* Even in the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) organised in Kurichia *tharavad,* Paniyas were absent.

According to Balakrishnan (1983), different Adivasi groups in Wayanad kept their distance from each other to observe clan purity. However, he points out that these ordinary observances took the form of caste hierarchy and exploitation with the arrival of Namboothiri Brahmins in the area and they institutionalised and used the caste system to further their self interests. Ajit (2002) in his book *Bhoomijati Bandhanam* (land, caste bondage) describes the strong connection between caste hierarchy and land ownership. Higher castes used lower castes for production of profit by utilising their slave labour and

the lower caste was meted cruel penalty and subjugation for breaking the conventions. They made the rule that each high caste can relate only with the caste just lower to them and this can be perceived as a much planned activity to use the lower castes for exploiting their labour for production process in a smooth way through their higher caste category. At the same time, the lower caste cannot deal with the upper caste and this blocked the possibility of resistance. Discussion with some of the Kurichia elders and also some non-Adivasi elders made it clear that the Adivasi observance of clan purity did not lead to exploitative production relations that existed between the castes. On the other hand, the Kurichias were reported as the most generous people and the non-Adivasi settlers misused their generosity and innocence and exploited them. According to Kjosavic and Shanmugaratnam (2007), there existed a social stratification in the organisation of work during the early period. However, in the analysis of *Aivu* (which describes the way in which Kuruma community is organised, their ideology and relationship with other Adivasi communities)[8] they point out that even though the Kurumar observed touch pollution with Paniyas, they accepted their rights unlike in the caste system. Likewise, Paniyas never reported exploitation by Kurichias other than their pollution practice, unlike their experiences with the non Adivasi *jenmis* and settlers who exploited them.

Against this backdrop, being a landed class, the Kurichias enjoy a higher social status even in recent times in the local Wayanad context. They were skilled in martial arts and well known as a warrior community. Their behaviour (similar to the erstwhile practice of untouchability in the caste system) towards other communities, matriliny similar to the Nair caste, historical association with the political power derived from being part of the army of Pazhassi Raja[2] and the economic advantage of having received large tracts of land as grants and rewards for their military service contributed to the higher social status of the Kurichias among the Adivasi communities in the region. In contrast, the identity of belonging to the slave caste from pre-colonial times has placed the Paniya community on the lowest rung among the Adivasis and also in the hierarchy of the caste and class structures. The Paniyas were exchanged and sold even at the beginning of the 20th century though the Indian Penal Code had declared slavery a crime in 1883 (Therakam 2010).

8 Aivu is 'the political-economic and social-spiritual code of conduct of the Kurumar, passed down from generation to generation…(Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 2007)

The traditional practice of untouchability kept a Paniyan 20 meters away from the others even during the early period of independence. Although the poor and landless among the Kurichias were ill-treated by the landed class, it was not as severe and brutal as the treatment meted out to the Paniya community.

The Kurichias valued hierarchy and discipline within their *tharavad* and considered disobeying elders a major offence (Aiyappan and Mahadevan 1990). In contrast, the Paniya community has a flat kinship structure with an elderly male as the head of the community, the *Mooppan*. There was far greater age and gender equality among the Paniyas than among the Kurichias. The Paniyas mainly speak a dialect of their own called the Paniya *Bhasha* at home, which has no script. It has been identified as a member of the south Dravidian family closely related to Malayalm, with borrowings from Kannada and Tamil languages. The Kurichias speak the North Malabar dialect of Malayalam (Menon 1996). They use both Malayalam and their dialect and are more bilingual than the Paniyas. Only for special occasions and ritual celebrations, when their elders gather, do they use their dialect. There are clear differences in other cultural practices like the dress pattern and the ornaments they use. In the Paniyan community, the male members wear *mundu* or a loin cloth. The women wear loin cloths around the waist, reaching just above the knees, with both ends brought up and knotted together through the arm pit, at the right, covering the breast. A sash (*aratti* in Paniya language), red or black in colour is worn around the waist. A fold of *aratti* is used as a miscellaneous container (Menon 1996).

They used to collect leaves and other food items in the *aratti* and it was a dress suitable for their lifestyle. Paniya women used to wear bead necklaces and ear ornaments made out of brass and various types of beads and leaves. Old ladies still use earrings made of dried leaves of *kaitha* (*pandanus*) or dried leaves filled with bee wax on one side and small red seeds on the other. Now the younger generation has given up most of these distinctive styles and adopts 'modern dresses' and hairstyles and ornaments (Menon 1996).[9] During field work, women and girls were seen wearing saris, churidars and ornaments they got from the market and boys wore pants or jeans and shirts. Even though

9 For detailed description of Paniyas and Kurichias traditional dress, ornaments etc. refer Menon (1996).

youngsters changed their dress pattern, they reported that non-Adivasis made insulting remarks about the Paniya's traditional dress and styles. It is also observed that non-Adivasi people who adopt a simple and genuine lifestyle are teased at times by saying that they follow 'Adivasi culture'.

In the Kurichia community too both males and females used to wear a loin cloth, which reached below the knees. Kurichian women used to go out without covering their breasts like the upper caste non-Brahmin women in Kerala. When that system changed in Kerala, Kurichias also started wearing a piece of cloth knotted above the left shoulder covering their breasts. Now they wear dresses like sari, churidar, *mundu* and blouse or 'nighty' (at home) except the very old women (above 70).

When Paniyas worship 'Gulikan', 'Kooli', 'Kuttichathan' 'Mariyamma', 'Muthappan', and 'Valliyooramma', Kurichias worship 'Malakkari', 'Karimbil Bhagavathy' and 'Athiralan Theyyam' with special reverence. Kurichias also worship Kuttichathan, Gulikan, and Valliyooramma and according to them, they are seasonal deities who are worshipped seasonally. Both communities are particular in worshipping their gods (Paniyas mostly use the word *padichavan* and Kurichias use *daivam*) and following their traditional rituals to keep away the wrath of the gods. However, ancestor worship and adoring nature in their rituals are common in both the communities. Kurichias in their *tharavads* keep '*daivappura,*' a special room for their ancestral god, *Muni*. The Paniyas keep a sacred place called '*thina*'- an elevated platform made of mud inside the Paniya house to venerate their ancestor gods. During rituals, Paniyas use the *kulapperu* (clan name) of their *uttappanmar* (ancestors) to address their ancestral gods. Kurichias use the term, '*nekal'* to represent the spirit of the ancestors during their ritual, while Paniyas use the term '*nizhal*. The photos of Hindu gods in Paniya and Kurichia houses were very common during field work (photo 1&2). There are many festivals that the Paniyas and Kurichias celebrate in their settlements as well as in public places. Some of the festivals of Paniyas and Kurichias observed during field work were the famous Valliyoorkavu festival, at Valliyoorkavu temple and *Thira* festival in various temples. Both these festivals are now organised by the Hindu community. Paniyas and Kurichias from the field claimed that Valliyoorkavu temple was their temple and that it was captured by others. Mundakkayam (2002) and Johney (2001) report that the two famous

temples, Valliyoorkavu and Thirunelli in Wayanad, once belonged to Adivasis. In Valliyoorkavu, the Paniyas reported that there was a traditional post called '*Adichuthali*'(washer man) given to an Adivasi Mooppan who did the cleaning of the temple area, washing of utensils, bringing leaves and firewood for temple etc. from the beginning of its official functioning. The temple is surrounded by Paniya, Kurichia and Adiya settlements even today (2009-2010). These are proofs to believe that it was an Adivasi worship place before *Nairs* and *Nambiars* took over the management.

However, alternative developments in the ownership of the temple were also noticed among the Paniyas during field work. Three km away from Valliyoorkavu temple and near the Mananthavady taluk headquarters, there was another temple, *Chundakkunnu Mahalakshmi Kshethram* owned by a Paniya family. It was situated in the Paniya colony and they reported that the divinity of that place was revealed to them. Nanthan in Chunda colony, Mananthavady reported, "We call Brahmins for *pooja* so that people from all castes will participate but the ownership will not be given to the Hindus or the government as we did in Valliyoorkavu. Now we know to develop it further and organise the temple activities and twice a week (Tuesday and Friday) we are able to give *nercha bhakshanam* (food which is blessed and offered to the devotees) to all the devotees using the offerings we get". They have made *thara* (sacred space) for Paniya god Gulikan, Kurichia god Malakkari as well as Hindu god Ayyappan and Ganapati (photo 3). However, this can be described as an alternative temple organisation initiated by the Paniya community resisting the existing hierarchical models of ownership of temples. At the same time, the purity/pollution taboos and the assertion of Brahminical superiority in conducting *pooja* unravels the Hinduisation process of Adivasi spiritual practices.

The Kurichia community also claimed that they were the main worshippers at the 'Gurikkilal Bhagavathy' temple at Valad and 'Malakkari–Siva' temple at Thonichal, both located within the study area. In the historical process, caste Hindus became the owners and organisers of these common worship places and it was gradually owned by the Devaswom.[10] When the Kurichias lost their hold on the community temples and *kavus* in

10 Devaswom is a socio-religious trust with the government or community nominated members as trustees to manage temples and its assets to ensure smooth functioning. 'Deva' means god and 'swom' means ownership in Sanskrit language.

public places, they built temples in their *tharavads* and maintained *kavus* (sacred groves) in their private land. However, the Kurichias have better representation in the temple proceedings during festivals as compared to the Paniyas. During the *thira* festival, the Kurichias can perform their *thira* dance in the main yard, while the Paniyas are segregated and have to perform their dance in another compound. In the Thonichal temple, the Malakkari *thira* performed by the Kurichias was attended by thousands of people from all castes and communities (photo 4). But the Paniya ritual dance performed in the next compound as part of *Thira* had only a few people as audience as the remuneration given to them is not enough to organise it elegantly (photo 5).

Vishu, an agricultural festival in the month of April, is celebrated all over Kerala. On the occasion of *Vishu,* the Kurichias as well as the Paniyas have their own special rituals in their settlements (photo 8). *Onam,* the harvest festival of Kerala celebrated in the Malayalam month of *Chingam,* is also celebrated by the Paniyas and Kurichias. Kurichias in the *tharavad* celebrate Onam and Vishu elaborately. The lack of money prevented the Paniyas from performing these celebrations elaborately. Until about thirty years ago, it was common for Paniyas from the same clan (a group of closely knit and inter related families) to join for celebrations in their Mooppan's house. Earlier, Paniyas carried food items like rice and leafy vegetables with them while going to the celebrations. These were also occasions to share paddy earned as wages with the clan. However, the sounds of *thudi* and *kuzhal* (small drum and pipe like musical instrument of Paniyas) played during celebrations and their colony gatherings till three decades ago have became rare in recent years. According to Aiyappan (1992), before the massive migration of plainsmen into Wayanad, every evening one could hear the happy music of the Paniya's pipes from some settlement of theirs. He points out that for Paniya men and women and their gods, music and dance were essential. However, during death rituals, Paniya women did not dance the way they did at other festivals and rituals. Dance and music were however, not an integral part of Kurichian's religious rituals even though the occasions of consulting god through shaman and embodying the experience in trance was practised among them.

The main rituals related to life cycles among the Paniyas as well as the Kurichias were puberty rites, marriage and death rituals. Both communities reported that they celebrate these rituals without incorporating much from outside cultures. The colonies

and *tharavads* in the study area reported that unlike olden times, there was a lack of religious functionaries who had the gift of getting into a trance and invoking the spirit for healing, blessing and giving advice as god's spokesperson. If they do not have the religious functionaries in their locality, they call them from other colonies and *tharavads* during the rituals. Both the communities follow ancestral worship and reported that they rigorously observe taboos and rituals associated with death.

The Kurichias stated that before they used to celebrate *thirandu kalyanam* (puberty celebration) and *thalikettu kalyanam* (engagement) [11] very elaborately and marriage without much festivities.[12] But today that trend is changing and marriage is celebrated elaborately with exchanging of garlands and clothes, tying *tali*, exchanging rings and conducting a marriage ceremony in the temple as part of enculturation (photo 9). However, the custom of giving dowry and conflict associated with the dowry system is seldom reported among the Kurichias especially among those living in *tharavads*. According to the Kurichias in *tharavads*, the transition is slow, but in nuclear families the change in ritual practices is quicker but not uniform. It depends on the circumstances they live in, the employment they hold and so on.

Puberty celebration was usually done on the seventh day of the first menstruation and the pubescent girl is separated to *orappura or theendarippura* (a separate house built in Kurichiya *tharavads* to separate the polluted) or to a separate room till the purification ceremony is over. During menstruation girls had to stay separately for seven days, but now after four days, girls start going to school as the elders are less stringent. In the case of Paniya girls, it was observed that the puberty celebration was postponed until the family gathered the resources to meet the expenses. K.J Baby's *Guda* (a film released in 2001) [13] depicts the story of a young Nayaka Adivasi girl and her impoverished family who were forced to postpone the puberty ritual for one year due to lack of resources. The Paniyas also confine the girl to a corner of the house during menstruation and do not

11 In Kurichia tradition there is a ritual called *thalikettu kalyanam* during which the *muracherukkan* tie *tali* for his future wife before she is ten years old.

12 For elaborate description of the traditional rituals of Kurichias during puberty, marriage and death, see Aiyappan and Mahadevan (1990).

13 The word 'guda' literally mean a hut made by the Nayaka Adivasis to separate the girl at pubery till the puberty ritual.

allow her to enter the kitchen, touch others or cook food. They take a bath and sprinkle cow dung water in their rooms, yard and the premises to remove the pollution before resuming their daily routine. The Paniyas celebrate puberty as well as marriage with equal importance from the beginning and continue the trend even today. During marriage, new rituals of garlanding, *tali kettal* and change in dress are reported among them (photo 10). According to them, these changes are only superficial but their core community values and customs have remained intact. The custom of *penpanam* (bride price) still continues and this enhances the status of Paniya women.

The Kurichia as well as the Paniya community believe in life after death and they believe that their souls live with evil spirits until they complete the rituals beginning on the seventh day of mourning to grant them rest. They believe that the rituals during death and burial are necessary for transfer of the deceased soul to the other world. They believe that the dead man's soul can enter a human body through the shamans of *nizhal* or *nekal* (literally shadow, the spirit of the ancestors who contributed to the prosperity of the community and family) and they free the soul from all evil spirits through ritual performances to merge their spirits with the ancestral spirits. The Kurichias believe that the ancestors who lived a respectable life, looked after the matrilineal kith and kin and protected their land will become *munis* (ancestor gods) and they keep special *daivappura* (special room for their ancestor gods) to venerate them. Gathering as a community for solving the conflicts and breaches of community rules through rituals and dialogue was common in both the communities during the life cycle rituals, festivals and other solemn occasions. It was observed that the shaman dance to invoke the spirit and ward off the evil spirit exist in both the communities even though the interest in performing this ritual is diminishing among the youngsters with the influence of modern education and media. While the Paniyas call the ritual performer *Attali,* the Kurichia call him *Changathi.* One Paniya, *Attali* said that he had to sing continuously for one day and night (24 hours) to give rest to the deceased soul (photo11). However, in both the communities the headman, (in Paniya's case the *Mooppan* and in Kurichia's case the Karanavan) (photos 14 &15), has a special role in the ritual practices during death. Paniyas moan during the death ritual but the Kurichias divert the moaners with folk songs which are similar to *vadakkan*

pattukal[14] in tune, rhythm and heroism. Kurichias crack jokes to distract the blood relatives and friends from their pain and affirm their warrior history as a self assertion of their identity. Even though they have undergone mild forms of slavery and exploitation under the *jenmis* and settlers, they regain their identity as warriors by reciting *vadakkan pattukal* during the death ritual and by reciting their stories of valour against the Pazhassi.

In one Paniya colony, death rituals have changed, for instance, instead of keeping the dead body in a bier made out of banana stems according to their tradition, it is kept in a coffin box as the communist party brought it for them. However, there were old people in the colony who were not happy with such changes in the rituals related to death.[15] Also at times, the Paniyas postponed the rituals if there was no way to gather money for the purpose. The Kurichias keep strict observances of conducting the rituals on time as they are relatively better off economically.

Further, the difference in the socio-economic status of the Paniyas and the Kurichias was reflected in and reinforced by the perceptions and attitudes of the non-Adivasis towards them. The constructions of the Paniyas as 'thieves', 'liars' and 'lazy' are used to legitimise the non-Adivasi behaviour of violence towards them. In contrast, the non-Adivasis often refer to the Kurichia *tharavad* and their '*adyathvam'* (of high social rank, aristocratic and cultured). A retired headmaster said, "The Kurichias are the most trustworthy 'Nairs' brought by Pazhassi to fight against the British. They are very honest and keep their word, not like the Paniyas who are liars and inconsistent in their work."

However, despite their higher status compared to the Paniyas, the Kurichias do not enjoy the social status equivalent to the other upper castes and classes in society. For instance, the non-Adivasis underplay and disregard the Kurichias' historical role in the anti-colonial struggle. For instance, a non-Adivasi from the Edavaka Panchayat commented, "Oh, what could the Kurichias have done with their bow and arrow when the British came with their guns!" Ignoring the fact that the Kurichias fought the British even after Pazhassi's death, he praised only the Nair warriors in Pazhassi's army. The non-

14 A collection of Malayalam ballads of medieval region present the saga of Nair heroes like Aromal Chekavar.

15 For an elaborate description of traditional rituals of Paniyas during puberty, marriage and death, see Aiyappan (1992).

Adivasi constructions thus not merely reinforce the divide between the Kurichia and the Paniya communities but through their deft narratives constitute 'Adivasi' and 'non-Adivasi' identities as distinct categories with inherently inferior and superior traits. The construction and reconstruction of the Paniya and Kurichia identities and cultural features were alive in the field. Non-Adivasis construct the community and cultural features of Paniyas and Kurichias and similarly Adivasis construct the cultural features of non-Adivasis. This study also discusses how these constructions affect the self perceptions and development/marginalisation experiences of the Paniyas and Kurichias. Although these constructions of differentiation as superior and inferior are contextual and related to specific events and experiences in history, they strengthen the structures of inequalities in the Wayanad context.

The Socio-Political Context: Land Tenure System and Bonded Labour in Wayanad

The ancient land tenure system in Malabar of which Wayanad is a part was almost like the feudal system of tenures prevalent in medieval Europe. During this period, the caste system was prevalent and the land rights corresponded with the hierarchy of social gradation with Brahmins at the top and untouchables at the bottom. Kunhi Krishnan (1993) observes that the King made grants of lands to Brahmins, the members of the priestly class even though they did not cultivate or supervise the agricultural operations. The Nair chieftains also got lands from the King as a reward for their military services to him. These land grants were continued on a hereditary basis. Such *Jenmam* lands were in turn leased out in '*Kanom*' tenure to persons belonging to the next highest caste such as *Nairs* and *Nambiars*, who maintained close relations with both Brahmin landlords and Nair chieftains. These lands are further sub-leased under '*verumpattam*' tenancy to Ezhava Muslims (Kunhaman 1989). None of them engaged in manual labour and the work on land is done mostly by hill tribes or by lower caste communities. The scarcity of workers in the field led to the development of slave labour and an extensive market for such labourers (ibid).

While exploring the brutal slave history in Malabar, Banaji (1933) points out that they did not even have the chance to complain about the daily violence meted out to them.

Tribes especially Paniyas and Adiyas were the worst victims of two centuries of slavery under feudal landlords and that history was unique to Wayanad. When planters first began to settle in Wayanad (part of Malabar) they purchased the land along with the Paniyas (Kunhaman 1989). In this system, the slave was treated as an object and the masters owned the life of the slave. The number of slaves among tribal people increased due to the interest in land and cultivation of the migrant population and the division of land among them through the multi tier tenure such as *kanam*,*verumpattam* etc. In addition to agricultural operations, slave labour was used for gold mining in Wayanad, an important source of revenue for the early Malabar Rajas. Since it was risky to work in the mines, labour was not available for this work and hill tribes were therefore employed (Kunhaman 1989).

The tribes of Wayanad were attached to one landlord and were traditionally known as *kundal panikkar* (bonded labourers). The bonded labour (*kundal pani*) existed mainly among the four tribal communities of Wayanad – Paniyas, Adiyas, Wayanad Pulayas, and Kattunayakas and to some extent among the Kurichias (Mathur 1977). By advancing a small amount of money '*nippupanam*' during the festival period, the tribal people used to pledge her/his labour for the whole year for daily meals and a pittance in kind. At the beginning stage, this slavery extended to the whole family and it lasted their entire life. This bonded labour system was institutionalised around the temple, 'Valliyoorkavu' and the annual festival there. This gave social and religious sanction to the bonded labour system and the Adivasis feared Valliyooramma who punished those who did not obey and keep their promise to the landlords. The Paniyas were beaten to make them work and punished for their disobedience (Panoor 1963). Panoor compares the slave trade of Paniyas in Valliyoorkavu to the cattle trade in the market.

The colonial land policy in Malabar was influenced by their interest in land revenue and in creating a few superior right holders on land to act as British agents (Varghese 1970). The British identified and interpreted three types of rights-holders in land: 1) *Jenmis* or freeholders who hold their lands either by purchase or by inheritance, 2) *Kanamkars* or mortgagees, to whom an actual delivery of the land appeared to be made, although the money taken was not proportionate to the value of the land, and 3) *Verumpattamkars* who were tenants-at-will (ibid) According to colonial interpretations,

the landlords or *jenmis* possessed the entire rights in the land. *Kanamkar/* mortgagee, is one who has land pledged to him in security for the interest of money advanced to the *jenmkar/jenmi*. The British government in India took the above reports as the basic principles on which land revenue was to be settled. During Warden's term as the collector of Malabar (1804-1816), *Jenmis* were ascribed the sole ownership of the landed properties of Malabar, and this was accepted by the British administrators unconditionally and steps were taken to legalise their assigned ownership right (ibid). The civil court also accepted the position that the *jenmam* of Malabar was absolute private property (ibid).

Thus, the creation of private property rights in this region occurred through the power of colonial discourses and the legitimisation of the same using the British legal system that was transplanted in India. The interpretations made by Warden as regards different land tenures – *Kanam* as mortgage and *verumpattam* as mere tenancy at will did not take into consideration the customary practices of the people over centuries (Varghese 1970). Further, the British even recognised all the waste lands in the region as the private property of the *Jenmis*, thus recognising every inch of land in Malabar including Wayanad as *jenmam* land. The Paniyas remained agrestic slaves, and *Kattunaikkar* withdrew further into the forests (Kjosavic and Shanmugaratnam 2007).

The colonial rulers, however, chose to ignore their own rules when those rules did not subserve their hegemonic interest. Thus, in Wayanad a new form of property rights called Government *Jenmam* (in contrast to private *jenmam*) was created. In 1848 the Pazhassi escheats, that is the land owned by the late Pazhassi Raja, was taken over by the colonial government and was declared as government *jenmam* land. The cultivators of the government *Jenmam* land, mostly indigenous communities such as Kurumar and Kurichiyar, were then forced to pay rent directly to the government, as the government acted as the *Jenmi* (Kjosavic and Shanmugaratnam 2007).

Later, some British writers after careful study of the ground realities pointed out that the declaration of the entire lands including wastelands as *jenmam* lands based on the complex customary property rights obtained in Malabar and therefore unwise (Varghese 1970). The first serious attempt to question the British interpretation of the *jenmam* as dominium was made by William Logan who was appointed the special commissioner to enquire into the tenancy rights in connection with the peasant unrests. He concluded that

the wrong interpretation of *Jenmam* as freehold by the British courts completely upset the customary land tenure system in Malabar.

British rulers allowed continuing slavery for not disturbing the economy (Aiyappan, 1992) and their abolition of slavery was only namesake. Even after the abolition of bonded labour by Kerala state in 1963, different forms of slavery existed among the Paniyas in the form of annual engagements to work for a farmer who gave the labourer a lumpsum advance. According to the government report till 1983, 823 bonded Adivasi labourers were identified in Kerala and since then no further cases have been reported (Aiyappan 1992). All the identified bonded labourers have been said to be rehabilitated in the projects envisaged for them and the government claims that they are given regular employment in these projects. They are also provided houses and other basic amenities (Adivasi Sub Plan, Government of Kerala). However, the statements of the Paniyas reveal that many of them are still struggling for basic amenities.

During the colonial period, modern private property rights were established in Wayanad region through the imposition of colonial laws. By establishing the concept of private proprietorship, the British gave protection to a powerful landed class and made them the rent collecting agents under the British authority. Customary agreements were replaced by written agreements which could be produced in the courts of law if necessary (Kunhi Krishnan 1993). Colonial juristic concepts of *res nullius* (land that has not been conferred by sovereign belongs to the sovereign) and *terra nullius* (land that belongs to none) subjugated the concept of community rights and territorial rights of tribal communities. The concept of private property and legal ownership were alien to the tribal communities who followed community rights over land (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 2007). Unlike in Travancore where the Hillman Settlement Act of 1903 gave special protection to tribal communities, in British Malabar, especially in Wayanad, the tribal communities could be sold along with agricultural land or pledged or even taken on lease, but the Kurichias were exempt from the slave trade (Chathukulam and John 2006). The marginalisation of tribal communities that started in the feudal period was strengthened in the colonial period through the enforcement of different land laws and labour legislations.

The impact of historical factors such as feudal and colonial governance, deforestation, migration and land grabs by non-tribal communities, and the growth of plantation and

cash crop economy on the 'landed' and the 'bonded' tribal communities would have been very different with consequences for their later 'development'.

State Policies

The policies adopted by the Indian state after independence were in continuation of the commercial and revenue approach of the British to increase state income. The extensive deforestation, growth of plantation economy under colonial rule and state initiated food crop cultivation changed the land availability and ownership pattern and consequent labour requirements of the region and affected the tribal communities drastically. With the Forest Acts and the Land Reform Act the condition of Adivasis deteriorated further.

Forest Rights

The colonial administration had established state monopoly over the forests by the end of the 18th century with the Forest Act of 1864 which empowered the British empire to declare any land covered with trees as government forest by notification. The roots of Adivasi alienation from forests lie in the policy of reserving forests during colonial rule (Sarin 2003). The focus of the colonial policy was on extraction of forest resources for commercial purposes and revenue generation neglecting the livelihood needs of the Adivasis (Saravana nd). He points out that plunder of timber, other forest resources and establishment of coffee, tea and other plantations I then forest region became a source of decline of the environment and affected the Adivasis adversely. Sarin (2003) argues that the colonial government was more responsive to local claims than the post independent state. For instance, she points out that the colonial state institutionalised the settlement of existing local rights in the IFA of 1927 by constituting village forests for meeting local needs of fuel and fodder. She criticises the state forest policies as well as the constitution of the Central Empowerment Committee (CEC) by the Supreme Court which views all lands with trees as forest and the reinforcement of its management responsibility to the Forest Department (FD), the biggest institutional landlord in the country.

There has been progressive depletion of forests in the district due to the forest policies of the colonial administration and the Indian state, with its large scale introduction of capitalist interest in forest wealth. Prasad (2003) points out that in 1803 when the East India Company established the monopoly to cut trees, people resisted and Colonel

Watson, a police officer was appointed as conservator to suppress the resistance. According to Prasad, the British government tried to acquire forest land many times and Adivasis resisted their move.

Finally, with the Forest Act of 1927 the rights of Adivasis over forests were reduced to mere privileges conferred by the state. The Forest Policy of 1952, the Wild Life Protection Act of 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 further reduced these privileges of the people to concessions of the state in the post independent period (Bijoy nd). The Kerala state's Forest Conservation Act of 1980 displaced the Adivasis from their lands in the forested areas and declared those areas as forest reserves. There are further attempts to discard even the concessions as indicated by the draft 'Conservation of Forests and Natural Eco Systems Act' that is to replace the Forest Act and the amendments proposed to the Land Acquisition Act and the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution (Bijoy 2001).

According to Kjosavic and Shanmugaratnam (2007), the migration process gathered momentum in the 1940s with the 'grow more food campaign' and when the private forests used by the Adivasi communities, especially the Paniyas and Kattunayakas, were taken over by the settlers for cultivation. Also, under the Wayanad colonisation scheme, land was allotted for ex- service men from the Second World War period and this also had detrimental effects on common the property rights of the Adivasis (ibid). Further, Prakash (2002) observes that in the 1960s, the migration intensified due to the private forest bill and land reform policies and it destroyed the ecological balance of the area as well as the Adivasi economy and life support systems by occupying their forest habitats.

According to Prakash (2002), migration to Wayanad destroyed the forest ecosystem as they indulged in deforestation for cash crop cultivation, oil grass cultivation, fuel and fodder. This resulted in soil erosion, climate change and failure of food crops. The yearly rainfall in the 1960s in Wayanad was 3441 millimeter and it reduced to 2000 millimeter in the 2000s. Kurichia's *punam* (slash and burn) cultivation practices and hunting was also affected due to lack of availability of forest land and this in turn affected their health and their livelihood (ibid).

Prakash (2002) points out that the law to convert private forest into vested forest was passed in 1971 from which 50 per cent was earmarked for Adivasis.[16] On May 10, 1971 government took over the responsibility with an ordinance and on August 23, 1971 permission was given by the president. But these lands have been encroached upon by the non-Adivasis and the government is endeavouring to regularise the encroachment instead of distributing it to the Adivasis. Further, against this law, Grasim Industries who bought 12000 hector private forests from Nilamboor Kovilakam approached the High Court and the court abolished the private forest law. However, the Supreme Court again passed the private forest law. This indicates the anti-Adivasi stand of the legal apparatus, which completely negates the customary laws of Adivasis.

Madhava Menon Committee. To study the private forest law and to implement the conditions in private forest law, the Government appointed a Committee under Madhava Menon as special officer. During the enquiry, the Madhava Menon Committee found out that without any record many Adivasis lived in the vested forest for centuries and the committee recommended that they should be given back their land from the vested forest (Prakash 2002). In the wake of this recommendation, many cases were filed related to vested forest and forest tribunals were established to settle the cases (ibid). In the 1971 law, there was no provision for appeal. But when the private forest law was amended in 1977, they included the clause to go for appeal. From 1978 onwards high court cases began between the government and private forest owners. The Government accepted defeat in the cases and the vested forests were captured back by *jenmis*, plantation owners and companies. After the Madhava Menon Committee recommendation to give the vested forest to the Adivasis who had lived there for centuries, those who got the forest land through court cases started evacuating Adivasis using force (ibid). So the vested forests which the government acquired returned to private parties and the Adivasis did not get the 50 percent of the vested forest recommended by the Committee. In fact, they lost even the forest land they had used earlier for their livelihood. Big plantation owners continued to occupy the vested forest. Thick forests were converted into cash crop plantations and

16 Trough the private forest vesting and Assignment Act 1971, the ownership and possession of all private forests in the state of Kerala shall transferred and vested in the government free from all encumbrances and the ownership of any other person in any private forest shall stand extinguished

later for purposes of tourism due to the failure and loss in cash crop cultivation (ibid). Prakash points out that the government used the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 to avoid giving vested forest land to Adivasis, but the same government allowed cash crop cultivation and occupation of forest land for tourism development. This clearly indicates the anti-Adivasi policy and lack of political will of the state to take decisions in favour of Adivasis. For instance, Prakash highlights the occupation of Nelliampathy forest by plantation owners where Adivasis had lived for a long period.

Later, the Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill, 2005 recognised the close relationship of the Adivasis with the forests and the historical injustice done to them through displacement. However, the subsequent Scheduled Tribe and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, diluted the Adivasi preference by including other forest dwellers in the purview of the Act and by extending the cut-off date. Even though the Act purported to address the historical injustice done to the Adivasis, it has not materialised in the implementation of the Act and the experience of the two Adivasi communities is analyzed in detail in the chapter on land issues.

Land Reforms

Land has been a major issue for Adivasis from the time of independence. It was the essential component around which Adivasis were mobilised in Wayanad as their land and common property resources got alienated from their hands in the feudal, colonial and post colonial periods. The Adivasis were not beneficiaries of the Kerala Land Reform Acts that abolished the 'Landlord –Tenant' system as they became victims in the process of such reforms.

As part of land reform, the Kerala Agrarian Relations Bill (KARB) introduced by the communist ministry of Kerala in 1957, was a landmark in the history of land legislations in post independent India. However, many modifications were made due to agitations led by landlords and political parties. Continuing pressure of the landed interests resulted in the dilution of KARB. As a result, the KAR Act of 1960, excluded plantations and all the adjacent and scattered agricultural land within the boundaries of plantations by broadening the definition of plantations. This redefinition of the provision in the Act relating to plantations has to be seen in a serious light concerning the Adivasi population

who followed a subsistence model of economy (Radhakrishnan 1989). The Amendment also permitted the eviction of labourers from small allotments of land given for hutments within the plantations. Further deletion of the provision invalidating land transfers after December18, 1957 reduced the availability of surplus land. The one year time guaranteed to the *jenmis* for resumption of tenanted land also gave time for the *jenmis* to transfer lands securely (ibid). This again turned against the rights of the peasantry and Adivasis.

The land ceiling reform forced *Jenmis* to sell the land to the migrants at cheaper rate. The Paniya community became one of the worst victims as they were bonded labourers and had no record for land ownership. The Paniyas and Kurichias lost the common lands they had used for livelihood when the state took ownership of surplus land and waste land. The state policy of surplus land included the land where a plantation was not established or there was no plan to raise a plantation by the landlords in the near future. According to Rammohan (2008), the land ceiling reform that was expected to release land to the landless was severely inadequate with the exemption of plantations and the landlords evading reforms through family partition arrangements.

Owing to continuous mobilisation and protest from *jenmis* and Devaswoms from different parts of the states, KARA was further diluted to Kerala Land Reforms Act (KLRA) and according to Radhakrishnan (1989) it is a mutilated version of the KARB as it eliminated the core provision of the earlier bills which allowed the rights of *jenmis* to transfer land to the tenants. It provided the *jenmis* and tenants to work out transfer of ownership mutually through the Land Tribunals (ibid). Also it allowed further exemptions in ceiling, such as cashew estates with an area of ten acres or more in one block, pure pepper or pure coconut gardens of more than five acres etc. (ibid). The leftist coalition government attempted to restore the major provisions of the KARB by amending KLRA in 1969 (ibid). However, the holding of untitled land and surplus land by the planters in Wayanad discussed in the later chapter on Land reveals the flaws in implementation.

The plantation based model of development implanted by big companies and rich landlords with lavish support from the government has displaced many tribal people from their homelands and their work, as vast areas are occupied by them. Land was purposely converted into rubber plantations for overcoming the ceiling laws and there was no effective machinery to restrain this practice (Kunhi Krishnan1993). Raman (2002) points

out that the issue of land availability for distribution to the Adivasis could have been sorted out if the government was ready to redistribute the lands of big planting companies who have vast tracts of uncultivated land.

During the period of migration to Wayanad, the Devaswom managers and landlords allotted land to migrants under tenancy rights. In some cases, these lands were earlier under the tenancy of tribal people. But when landlordism was abolished and the tillers became owners, tribal people were left out. Settler farmers acquired the land in the garb of tenants to 'tribal landlords' and the tribes lost their land as the settlers attributed the position of landlords to them. The Adivasis had no other option but to become agricultural labourers and refugees in their own land (Raman 2002; Kunhaman 1989). Also the landlords started leasing out the land for minimum remuneration to outsiders realising that their surplus land would be taken away by the government and tribal people could not claim the land on which they had worked for years. The long process of legislative deliberation and implementation also was a stumbling block for the illiterate tribes in claiming land.

The policy of occupation of wastelands also affected the Adivasis as they were not competent enough to occupy such lands and get legal sanction for the same. With the occupation of waste lands, tribal people lost the village commons they used freely before. In the KRA Act of 1960, land belonging to religious, charitable or educational institutions of 'public nature' and public trust were exempted from the purview of the Act (Kunhi Krishnan 1993). This helped in the mushrooming of Religious institutions and NGO organisations in the area at the cost of alienation and dispossession of Adivasis.

Further, Ajit (2002) highlights that the conversion of food crops to cash crop plantation economy and the destruction of vast areas of paddy fields and forest was not the choice of farmers but the result of imposition of political power through the means of tax exemptions and other incentives especially during the land reform period. He points out that in Kerala between the 1940s and the 1990s, the paddy fields reduced by 6 lakh acres. The destruction of paddy fields was a major blow to the Paniya community as these fields were the reservoirs of their food and employment.

When the Land Reform Act was passed, the feudal concept of ownership changed. However, the capitalists were not touched. For instance, the plantations - small holdings as well as estates were not touched in the land reform under the name of development. All the natural vegetated land with varieties of plant species has been taken up by the government and distributed to the *Kudiyans* and *Marupattakkar* (the tenants), taking a small amount from which one share goes to the *jenmis*. Thus, during land reform, these common lands which were freely accessed by the tribal people for livelihood purposes came under strong private ownership with land records. This shows the vested interest of the state to promote capitalist forms of cultivation with trading interests.

According to Bijoy and Raman (2003), the Kerala Land Reform Act was manipulated to suit the interests of the non-Adivasi people as they took land on short term lease for cultivation from the Adivasis. Accordingly, the Adivasis became 'landlords' and the non-Adivasi immigrants in turn registered themselves as tenants. Later the non-Adivasi immigrants claimed *patta* and the Adivasis became dispossessed. As Rammohan (2008) points out, the land reform enacted for garden land and rice fields was primarily a tenancy reform with transfer of land to intermediate and small tenants that left out the landless masses. Thus, the Paniyas, the landless Kurchias and the non tenant Kurichias were at a loss, but Adivasi landlessness and land alienation was ignored during the implementation of land reforms.

Kerala Scheduled Tribes Act, 1975

The Debar Committee recommended in 1960 that all Adivasi land alienated since January 26, 1960 had to be restored to Adivasis. Considering the large scale land alienation, the Indian government promulgated an Act in 1975 called the Scheduled Tribes Act (restriction of transfer of land and restoration of alienated lands). This Act makes all transaction of Adivasi land during 1960 to 1976 invalid and states that they be restored to the original owners. However, it took fifteen years after the Debar Committee recommendation to enact the Kerala Scheduled Tribes Act 1975 (Singh 2001). The Government's lack of sensitivity towards the tribal population is again revealed in the reluctance showed to restore their alienated land according to the Kerala Scheduled Tribes Act, 1975. It took a long time to formulate the Act in 1986 and by the time the politically powerful migrants opposed the implementation of the Act.

In 1988, Dr. Nalla Thampi Thera, a non-Adivasi physician and activist filed a petition to the High Court seeking the restoration of alienated land by implementing the 1975 Act. In October 1993, the High Court ordered that all alienated land be restored and all cases of land alienation be settled within six months. The United Democratic Front (UDF) and Left Democratic Front (LDF) government tried to make amendmends in the 1975 Act but the governor foiled the attempts. The case dragged on till the court issued a dead line that the alienated land be restored by September 1996. The Bill was amended in 1996 legalising all transactions that took place with the Adivasis during the period, 1960-86 and those that did not exceed one hectare from restoration. However, most of the land alienated was less than a hectare in area and the greatest number of encroachments occurred before 1986. The president, K.R Narayanan pointed out that the amendment to the Act was in violation of the Constitution. Raman (2002) observes that the 1999 amendment twisted the Adivasi land question further by deciding encroachments up to five acres (less than 2 hectares) of land were to be ignored. Also the land to be given in compensation to the Adivasis was halved from more than two acres to one acre to achieve more gain to the settler farmers (ibid). The State government ensured that the new bill did not go to the President of India by putting it under 'agricultural lands'- a state subject. Further, Raman (2002) points out the linguistic twist that happened in the 1999 Act -'The Kerala Restriction on Transfer and Restoration of Lands to Schedule Tribes'- the word 'alienated' denoting the lands captured by the settlers was removed from the Act. In August 2000, the High Court declared the controversial provisions in the new 1999 Act as unconstitutional and pronounced that the state government had willfully disobeyed the direction of the court to restore alienated lands and charged the state with contempt of court. The state government challenged the High Court judgement in the Supreme Court. As Bijoy (2002) opines, imposition of alien laws regulating ownership and an insensitive and biased administrative machinery alien to Adivasi culture contributed to the land alienation and marginalisation of Adivasis.

The 1996 amendment Bill was perceived by the Adivasis as an attempt to legalise the alienation of their land and they expressed their protest under the leadership of C.K Janu supported by the CPI (ML) group by organising an agitation before the state assembly (Singh 2001). Every single encroachment became legitimised and democratic, political

and legal avenues of the dominant system neglected the survival needs of the Adivasis (Bijoy 2002 see also Raman 2002).

In Kerala, the total number of applications for land restoration under the 1975 KST Act was 8,754 as on April 4, 1991 claiming 9, 909.4522 hectares (Bijoy 2006). The government considered 8,088 applications requesting to restore 6,817.28 ha of land as valid. Only 463 applications were disposed off and an area of 544.5602 ha was restored. Over 3,000 applications were rejected for want of adequate documentation or recorded proof of ownership of land (Bijoy 2006). The Adivasis experience of the recent processes of land distribution under the KST Act will be discussed in the analysis chapter.

Critically examining the political lethargy in the issue of tribal land alienation, Bijoy and Raman (2003) point out that even though the CPI led Kerala government unanimously passed the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975, they remained inactive as regards its implementation. The situation today is that neither political parties nor the non-governmental organisations are found to be supporting the tribal communities in retrieving their alienated land (Centre of Excellence 2006). However, the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGMS), a movement led by C.K Janu (Adivasi leader in Wayanad from Adiya community) has revived the land issue of Adivasis in Kerala.

Other Constitutional Provisions - PESA, TSP

After independence, constitutional provisions were made to protect tribal communities for their development. Article 244 of the Constitution provides for the administration of the scheduled areas in accordance with the Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Kerala has not taken steps to bring tribal villages or habitation under the Fifth Schedule despite recommendations from the Dilip Singh Bhuria Committee. As a result, the constitutional provisions for self governance available at least in law have been denied to the tribal communities in Kerala (Bijoy 2006). The provision of Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act – commonly known as PESA came into effect from December 24, 1996 by which the 73rd amendment extended to the Fifth schedule areas envisioning self rule was therefore not applicable to Kerala.

During the Fifth Five Year Plan, the Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) strategy of tribal development was introduced to address the issues of backwardness among tribal communities. TSP included strategies to promote the tribal's standard of living through development activities as well as to protect them from exploitation through legal and administrative support (Manjula 2005). The Act to prevent Adivasi land alienation and the act to abolish bonded labour was passed in 1975. As part of TSP in Kerala, a separate government department was set up for tribal development in 1975 to rectify the drawbacks and speed up socio-economic development. During this period, more Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDPs) started functioning (ibid). The TSP that commenced in 1975 was decentralised during 1984 to the district level. Kunhaman (2002) points out that even though there was slight improvement, the approach was top down and the centralisation was shifted to the district level. As part of the Ninth Five Year Plan campaign, hundred per cent of the Tribal Sub Plan money was transferred to the Panchayati Raj Institutions but they faced difficulty in delivering the services and again fifty per cent was entrusted with the Tribal Development Department and 50 per cent with the Panchayats (George and Krishnan nd). The Tribal Development Department planned programmes in the areas of education, health, house construction, and other development programmes. However, studies show that the programmes catered to regional development more than to the welfare of Adivasis and thus benefited the non-Adivasis (ibid). According to Kunhaman (2002) these programmes were not more than organised charity and the reason for failure was the thrust on quantitative investment rather than qualitative achievement. He points out the flow of a large part of TSP to physical infrastructure development and the resultant non tribal migration into tribal areas with the improvement of infrastructure which further impoverished the Adivasis. He notes that tribal development has become a 'bureaucratically dispensed charity' and Adivasis became more dependent without any decision making power.

Kerala's Decentralised Planning

The bureaucratic proceedings are so complex that it is difficult for tribal people to become partners in the development initiatives meant for them. There are too many levels of administration to pass any message or to implement any programme and tribal people become totally handicapped since their system is totally different and they are not

equipped with negotiating skills. The district planning approach was described as the first attempt at plan decentralisation in Kerala even though it was a bureaucratic decentralisation. The passing of the 73rd Amendment to the Constitution of India in 1993 formally recognised the authority of district, sub district and village level elected bodies (Panchayati Raj Institutions). As part of decentralisation, the Kerala government passed the Kerala Panchayati Raj Act in 1994, which intented to enhance the power of the Gram Sabha and the accountability of the Gram Panchayat. During this phase of decentralised planning, the planning campaign aimed at transforming the already decentralised bureaucratic planning at the district level into a democratic one (George and Krishnan nd).

In the process of decentralisation planning in the state, the concept of *Oorukoottam* (Tribal Gram Sabha) was introduced giving tribal people an opportunity to participate in their development planning. The new *Oorukoottams* (Tribal Gram Sabha) came into effect during 2003-04 with a vision of rejuvenating traditionally existed tribal community structure and self governance. George and Krishnan (nd) point out that the recommendations made by the Gram Sabha can be accepted or rejected by the executive council, but the recommendations of the *Oorukoottam* are binding on the executive council of the Panchayat. Kunhaman (2002) appreciates the new space created through *Oorukoottam* and people's planning, but later studies show that even though *Oorukoottams* were envisioned to give voice to the tribal people in the planning process, in actual practice this was not more than a mandatory formality to be fulfilled by local level panchayats and Adivasi communities were side lined again. The elected tribal members of the Panchayat and *Oorukootam* head are driven by the political party to which they are affiliated and the community interests are not brought out in the decisions (Centre of Excellence 2006, Manjula 2005).

Once the Kerala State Planning Board (KSPB) realised that the *Oorukoottams* are not functioning well, it introduced the concept of tribal promoters, a group of tribal youth matriculate or above, selected by KSPB to work in the tribal hamlets and report back about the real local needs/demands of each of the tribal communities, envisioning more participation. Instead of finding out the root causes in their lack of participation, KSPB integrated *Oorukoottam* to the existing bureaucratic set up. Even though the system

makes the tribal promoters dysfunctional, a study conducted in Panamaram Panchayat reveals that they are aware of the influence of the politicians and corruption of the bureaucracy (Manjula 2005). This study also revealed a great difference in the participation of the Kurichias and the Paniyas in the *Oorukoottam* planning process. This again indicates the social stratification among different categories of tribal people as an outcome of the development initiatives and various other factors.

As the discussions in the preceding sections show, when feudal land lords used the caste hierarchy system for its legitimacy, the colonial rule used its administrative set up to assume and force its superior scientific rationality and technology to exploit and alienate Adivasi communities in Wayanad. The increasing commercialisation of forest lands, agriculture and other common property resources caused maximum damage to the Adivasis and their subsistence economy. The state policies as a whole have been criticised by various scholars. According to Cheria (nd) the welfare programmes created contempt in the encroacher migrants towards tribal communities perceiving them as the beneficiaries. Bijoy and Raman (2003) observe that the progressive state of Kerala with its famed political will brings forth efficient implementation of 'development projects' including social forestry and eco-tourism adding injury to the tribal ethos, culture and welfare. Wayanad is described as a tourist spot and it is declared a tourist district by the Kerala government. Bijoy and Raman (2003) point out that these development trends further destroy the natural resource base of the area, affecting tribal communities, the most marginalised groups, who still depend on nature for their livelihood in manifold ways. As pointed out by others, the development programme itself creates dependency and reduces tribal communities to objects of charity and they are treated as lesser human beings (Cheria nd). It emerges from the discussion that state policies do not reflect the connection between Adivasi development and their access to land. Further, state policies do not respect the customary rights and cultural practices of Adivasi communities while implementing the land policies and other development programmes. Against this background, the response of Adivasis through their historical struggles for land and dignity are discussed. State policies in a way made the Adivasi communities more vulnerable and they responded to it through various resistant movements.

Adivasis' Responses to Historical Exploitation and Development Policies

The failure of the colonial and independent state to address the Adivasi issues has led to various resistant movements. Adivasi demands were repeatedly thwarted even in the policy formulations of the state and underscored by the successive governments of the state. Inspite of the recommendations by the Debar Committee and the Madhava Menon Commission, the state disregarded Adivasis demand for land. Inspite of the availability of land there was no political will to restore Adivasi alienated land or to distribute land to the landless Adivasis. When the colonial rule introduced oppressive agricultural taxes to appropriate Adivasi land and labour and when Adivasis were pushed to the margins by the modern state, they were forced to plunge into resistance. Among many resistance movements in Wayanad, the Kurichia revolt in 1812, the so called 'Naxalite' struggle in Wayanad, the Ambukuthi, Cheengeri and Panavally land struggle, the AGMS strike at Secretariate, Thiruvananthapuram, and the recent, well known Muthanga struggle in Bathery, Wayanad are historical struggles led by Adivasis.

Kurichia Revolt

After the defeat of Pazhassi Raja, the Kurichias broke out in rebellion challenging British domination. The Kurichia revolt in 1812 is important as this is the first struggle in South India that the Adivasis organised against colonial and feudal exploitation, against intolerable levels of taxation and asserting their rights, even though it has not been given much credit by historians (Jacob 2006).

Until the arrival of the British, there was no systematic land tax system, though the Mysore regime made attempted to collect some tax. The share given to the landlord also was nominal in the form of gifts. The change from tribute paying to rent paying system achieved momentum during the colonial period; in 1806, the *patta nikuthi* (rent-tax) system was introduced by Warden, the then collector of Malabar. According to this system, a part of the produce had to be given to the landlord as rent and a part to the government as tax, and the tax had to be paid in cash. This was a double burden on the cultivators and raised serious protests from the agricultural communities that resulted in an uprising in 1812 led by the Kurichias and the Kurumas who were land owning communities (Logan 1951, Johney 2007). Johney (2007) points out that on March 25,

1812 they disarmed the company force which was in Wayanad and they occupied the control of the road to Wayanad. The posts of British armed forces at Bathery and Mananthavady were attacked. This rebellion lasted for six months and after the suppression, the colonial administration disarmed the Kurichias who were skilled hunters and archers, recognising their strength to fight against them. According to Kunhaman (1998), this is the first peasant uprising, but historians have not evaluated it in the context of the British policies and the beginning of the agricultural sector in Wayanad. This taxation was introduced by the Britishers to own agricultural land in Wayanad (Kunhaman 1998, Prasad 2003). Kunhaman points out that due to lack of commercialisation of agriculture, money was a rare commodity with the Adivasis and the British rulers hoped that the introduction of tax in terms of money would alienate Adivasis from their land and they could appropriate land and labourers easily for developing British plantations. This exploitative policy was recognised by the Kurichia community and they organised the struggle and British rulers were forced to remove the new tax policy.

It emerges that the Kurichia struggle, being an anti feudal and anti colonial struggle based on agriculture, has great relevance in the agricultural policies of the state, but they are not depicted as heroes of war against the British and against capitalist agriculture for revenue generation. However, they themselves reaffirmed their great role in the struggle against the British by erecting the monument of Thalackal Chandu, the famous Kurichia warrior. Kurichia leaders assert their identity as the leaders of an anti-colonial struggle and use the symbolic and cultural capital around it to organise themselves and act collectively. When official history neglects their great share in fighting against colonial rule, the young generation of Kurichias uses their collective memories to reconstruct their history. Das et al (2001) explore the reclamation of history by the marginalised Kui and Cree community for recognition of their own voice through discursive formulations and new ways of performing identity.

The ‘Naxalite’ Movement in Wayanad

In 1966, Varghese a radical communist leader committed to the cause of the poor became the secretary of the *Karshaka Thozhilali Union* in South Wayanad and he organised many strikes for the rights of Adivasis against the landlords. During the 1960s, the communist

parties tried to mobilise Adivasis against the local landlords for better wages. This helped the party enter into Adivasi areas and gain their support. However, complex issues such as restoration of land, forest legislations, curtailing their rights etc., were not a priority for the party. Those who were sympathetic to Adivasi issues organised the '*Wayanad Adivasi Swayam Sevak Sangh*' (WASSS) that included all Adivasi communities. WASSS protested against alienation of land and the levying of tax for Adivasi farmers.

Varghese left the Communist Party when it stood against the communist ideologies and joined the Naxalite leader Kunnickel to fight for poor agricultural labourers who suffered bondage under landlords. In 1968, they organised a struggle in Pulpally, Wayanad against the Madras special police camp, the Forest Department and Pulpally Devaswom authorities who were trying to evict nearly 70,000 farmers who had settled in a forest area. They attacked the houses of two land lords and distributed the food grains stocked there among the Adivasis (Krishnakumar 2005). In another strike, one landlord was killed and this led to the unleashing of police force to suppress the Adivasis and their leader, Varghese. It is reported that innocent Adivasis were hunted by the police in their suppression of the Naxal movement and many of their women were sexually exploited. Varghese's strike against landlords and his martyrdom for the Adivasi labourers shook the land lord - labour relationship in Wayanad (Johney 2001).

In Thirunelli Panchayat, they treasure the name Varghese and call him *Peruman* (The term which Adiya community use to address their elder people respectfully) for his contribution to the strike against the local landlords for better wages and rights of poor peasants and Adivasis. Raman from Chempankolly colony hesitated to call Varghese a naxalite. He remembered few names, Varghese, Uthaman and Raghavan, the radical left leaders who represented the Adivasi cause during the 1960s and 1970s. The brutal killing of Varghese is still alive in their minds and they say that today there is no committed leader like Varghese for addressing Adivasi issues. According to them, if Varghese were alive today he would not have allowed the political parties and bureaucrats to be corrupt to this extent.

In recent times, even criticism against the ruling party is labelled as Naxalism[17]. There is a recent trend of branding people who critically evaluate the ruling party without engaging in any militant action as Maoist or Naxalite. Varghese's murder and the declaration of emergency stopped the struggles of the Adivasis for two decades. However, since 1992, Adivasi mobilisation to reclaim their traditional rights over land has been revived under the leadership of Adivasi leader, C.K Janu. This movement was a response to the historical exploitation of Adivasis by the feudal, colonial and post-colonial state. When the Adivasis realised that the government was not taking any initiative to restore their alienated land and was reluctant to address their plea for allotting land to the landless, the Adivasis began occupying land through various land struggles.

Land Struggles at Ambukuthy, Cheengeri and Panavally in the 1990s

Fifty per cent of the land restored by the government under the Kerala Private Forest (Vesting and Assignment) Act of 1972, was meant for distribution among Adivasis (Singh 2001). When the Adivasis came to know about this rule, they started their struggle to occupy land which was meant for them. Adivasis identified 128 acres of vested forest in Mananthavady area and realised that half of it was already encroached by non-Adivasis and that the government had issued records for that (Prakash 2002). However, in 1994, when the Adivasis occupied the land and built 220 huts, the Forest Department and the police suppressed their move by harassing them and by arresting the encroachers. When the Adivasi occupants went to participate in a rally to affirm their land right, the Forest Department burned their huts. The Adivasis lead their rally to Ambukuthy in protest and the police arrested 317 Adivasis and filed case against 133 Adivasis (ibid). Adivasi women started a relay hunger strike in front of the Revenue Divisional officers' (RDO) office and they rebuilt their huts in the vested forest and started living there again. C.K Janu and Surendran, a Dalit lecturer in DIET Wayanad started a hunger strike and the collector promised them an immediate solution. However, the collector could not do anything due to lack of political will (ibid) and they could not restore the land. Even

17 During my work ,a foreign researcher reported that one Paniya in his study area was depicted as a naxalite by a political party. I have known this Adivasi man living with his wife and nine children. He was participated in Ambukuthy land struggle with Janu and has critiqued party politics and the government development model

though the Adivasis approached the National Human Rights Commission for restoring their land at Ambukuthy they could not do anything (ibid). The court cases against the Adivasis who participated in this struggle are still going on.

After the aggressive land struggle at Ambukuthy, Mananthavady, Adivasis began the struggle in Cheengeri Rehabilitation project, where the government's promises to distribute the project land to the Adivasis were not met and the social security measures failed. Two hundred and forty nine people entered the project land at Cheengeri, set up huts, occupied hundred acres of the project land and started their struggle on January 26, 1995 (Prakash 2002). Cheengeri Colony Samrakshana Samiti (A wing of South Zone Adivasi Forum) gave a petition to restore the land meant for them in the project but could not pressurise the government and they resorted into forceful occupation (Local Support Team 2010) Using the police, the state brutally suppressed their struggle and arrested 224 Adivasis including women and children and released them after keeping them in Kozhikode jail for 11 days. Janata Dal volunteers burned the huts that they had erected and the government immediately constructed a barbed wire fence to protect the land from further encroachment (Prakash 2002). The local Adivasi organisation, Cheengeri Colony Samrakshana Samithy remained vigilant and continued its struggle and the petitions filed from 1995 to 1998 bear witness to their protest (Local Support Team 2010). However, in a project meant for the Adivasis, they could achieve title deeds and that too for a few only after the historical struggle at Muthanga in 2003.

After the Adivasi struggle at Cheengeri and their release from jail, they marched to Panavally on March 5, 1995 under the leadership of C.K Janu and occupied 18 acres of forest which was earmarked as vested forest (Prakash 2002). The Adivasis erected huts in the area and started cultivating. The Forest Department burned their huts, arrested three people but they were released when Adivasi leaders negotiated with the authorities. They came back and again set up their huts and the police burned their huts again and arrested 102 Adivasis including children below five years. When they were released, they set up their huts again, started cultivation and proved that their determination could not be suppressed even with continuous harassment (ibid). Land occupation at another site, Panavally also challenged the idea that different Adivasi groups cannot come together for protest and proved the possibility of a pan Adivasi identity around the issue of land as

Adiya, Paniya, Kattunayaka and Kurichia communities together occupied the land at Panavally. However, the state continued the suppression of Adivasi land strikes using its police force even though their demands were within the provisions of the Indian Constitution. The history of breaking promises of distributing land to Adivasis was continued by the government and the land struggle achieved momentum from 2001.

Intensified Land Struggles from 2001

The Adivasi struggle reached its height when successive governments in the state failed to restore Adivasi land, despite several laws enacted for this purpose. All democratic, political and legal avenues in the dominant system neglect the survival need of Adivasis and their struggle intensified from 2001. In 2001, the Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti (ADSS) led a forty eight day long agitation, by erecting Adivasi huts in front of the state secretariat at Thiruvananthapuram which came to an end with an agreement by the government to provide land for Adivasis.

Instead of solving the land question of Adivasis, the government first tried to buy the struggle by issuing a master plan to rehabilitate Adivasis on September 4, 2001, a day before the meeting with the Adivasi leaders (Singh 2001). The leadership strongly objected and insisted on land distribution. The Government failed to acknowledge the Adivasi struggle and tried to threaten them into submission by giving a stern warning. On September 19, 2001 A.K Antony, the then Minister of Kerala announced that the Adivasi struggle would not be restrained. Again the Kerala SC/ST minister, M.A Kuttappan promised to develop an Archery Institute, an Adivasi Medicine Research Institute, an English medium school along with some short term measures to pacify the agitators and to divert them from their agenda of five acres of land. By September 22, 2001 the Centre gave permission to establish a National Institute of Engineering for SC/ST students in Kerala. The Centre also sanctioned Rs.70 crores for the project to rehabilitate Adivasi families. The Government came forward with promises to identify 10,000 acres of land for distribution within two months and to give at least one acre of land to each landless Adivasi family (Singh 2001). On the meeting scheduled for September 25, 2001, the government included various political parties and Singh points out that the government sought to weaken the voice of the Adivasi committee by including the political parties claiming to represent the Adivasi community in the negotiation.

Their struggle at the secretariat achieved national attention and they received interstate support from civil society, writers, social activists and media persons. The government was forced to accept the historical necessity of giving land to the Adivasis in Kerala and to sign the agreement with AGMS promising land and implementing the Fifth Schedule. For the first time in the history of the Adivasis, their demand for land was agreed to and signed by the state; this will be remembered forever in Kerala's Adivasi development history.

The major demands of the struggle committee was five acres of land for the landless and for all those with less than an acre of land, with a support programme for a period of five years to reach self sufficiency; the declaration of all Adivasi habitations in the state as 'Scheduled Area' under the Fifth Schedule of Article 244 and implementation of the Supreme Court judgement on the land restoration case. Under sustained pressure, the government agreed to provide five acres of land to each Adivasi wherever possible and accede to their other demands. The government also promised to distribute the land by January 2002. On the Government's agreeing to this promise, the Adivasis withdrew the struggle on October 16, 2001 after 48 days of continuous struggle over land and livelihood. The Government constituted the Tribal Resettlement and Development Mission (TRDM) to carry forward the agreement in consultation with the people. The TRDM recommended that land distribution be started in January 2002 and completed within a period of five years. The High Court also directed the government to complete the distribution process by August 2006, but the order was not materialised.

The formation of Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (the Grand Council of Adivasis, AGMS), an extra parliamentary instrument of the people was a significant result of the 2001 land struggle. AGMS has achieved popularity and attention from different parts of the world with the Muthanga struggle in Wayanad. The AGMS was founded in 2002 and is headed by C.K Janu. It has formed 2000 *Ooru sabhas* (groups formed in different Adivasi hamlets) from 36 Adivasi communities of Kerala and formed a state presidium constituting 160 members for its activities of restoration of their land. It was spontaneously formed after their historical struggle for Adivasi land in front of the secretariat of Kerala. The success of the 2001 struggle lay in the Adivasi's success in securing the promise of the government to distribute one to five acres of land. But the

agreement and promises remained dysfunctional and Adivasi resistance reemerged at Muthanga.

Resistance at Muthanga

When all the promises and agreements made by the government to distribute land to the Adivasis in 2001 were broken, the Adivasis plunged into another struggle by entering the Muthanga plantation and declaring self rule. Even though the Adivasis were once again brutally suppressed in the struggle, the Adivasi land issue gained national and international attention and support. The development concept designed for Adivasi people was challenged thoroughly with this struggle. When the government depicted this struggle as encroachment, the Adivasis defined it as a're-entry' into their home land (Prasad 2003).

Adivasis proclaimed at Muthanga: '....thousands of refugees going to their ancestral lands conversing with the spirits of the mountains with ease, as though they got back their freedom that they lost centuries ago' (Janu and Geethanandan 2003). However, the people whose belief system is rooted in ancestral worship and nature worship were deprived of land, the very base of their identity, culture, belief system and survival. In Muthanga, they tried to reclaim it through word and action. They related their land with their ancestors. They reconnected their ownership to land by pointing out that their ancestors were buried there. More than land records and evidence, the Adivasis always value and stress their relationship with ancestors and the customary practices of their community for accessing the resources of land.

When land becomes the central issue, Adivasis transcend all differences - ethnic, class and party differences and converge. So Adivasi identity, culture and mobilisation in Wayanad is not just a romantic idea, but a highly contested political and cultural concept revolving around land and its resources that they lost in the historical process. However, there are enough incidents of disowning their Adivasi identity and culture to evade the exclusion and stigmatisation by the dominant group who attach backwardness with *adivasiness*. Today their affinity for modernity and progress and acceptance by the larger community results in identity conflict. As Osella and Osella (2000:10) point out, 'identity is always multiple, and always composed of interwoven threads of caste, class, religion,

party affiliation, family, house name, occupation, gender, age and locality'. According to them, identity has at least four levels of meaning and association, for the person, ontologically; for others, looking at and placing the person within various social arenas; for the community, presenting a group face to itself and to other groups and finally for the analyst as outsiders looking in. So they suggest a person's identity is as dependent upon the behaviour of the neighbours as upon the self, and thus shifts in identity or status should be worked out in groups. However, AGMS was transcending the stigmatised identity contributed by the dominant group and expanded their consciousness to perceive their Adivasiness as a cultural and political right centred on land right and self management.

Steur (2009) however, criticises that Janu is romanticising the Adivasi identity and culture by creating the illusion of a pan Adivasi identity. However, in Muthanga, she proved that it is possible to transcend the ethnic, class and political boundaries among different Adivasi groups if they organised themselves around the issue of land right and other unique cultural aspects of Adivasis like nature worship and ancestor worship. According to Kujur (2010), the Adivasi consciousness has emerged to promote their rights and privileges because their very survival is at risk. As Xaxa (1999) points out, the identity now being expressed by the term, 'Adivasi' is an expanded identity cutting across tribes bearing different names, speaking different languages or dialects. It appears that Janu is not romanticising the Adivasi identity but affirming the cultural and political right of the Adivasis with an expanded consciousness. However, we cannot deny the fact that notions and practices of untouchability exist among different Adivasi groups as a shadow of the past when they are not politically conscious about their cultural rights and common threads as Adivasis.

Adivasi leaders in the colonies were disheartened and one of them challenged the state by pointing out, "We are not yet given the Promised Land. At least if we are released from the court cases in connection with the land strikes we could have earned our livelihood peacefully". This resistant movement indicates that the land question of Adivasis is unresolved in Kerala, the state which achieved worldwide acclaim for its development model as well as land reforms. Baviskar (1995) in her study on Anjanvara Adivasis and their struggle, points out the subordination of Adivasis by the State. She

highlights the Adivasi construction of ‘state as a thief’ looting their resource base contradicting the image of the state as a benevolent provider and this is relevant to Wayanad too.

According to Kunhaman (2007), redistribution of assets and resources must be the responsibility of the State and development must be that of the community. He points out that ‘development’ is an abstract concept and it can be materialised only if decomposed to right to land, food security, employment, education, health and shelter. While talking about development indicators, education and health take precedence and the Kerala model is appreciated for its achievements in education and health. Against the background of tribal development initiatives and Adivasi responses, we will look into the current experiences and perceptions on education, health, labour, employment and land in the analysis chapters. The next chapter examines how Paniyas and Kurichias perceive and experience the present institutions and the process of education.

CHAPTER V

Education, Socio-cultural Reproduction and Marginalisation

In India, educational backwardness and inequalities are most intensely experienced by Adivasi communities (NCFR 2005) and the situation is not very different in the state of Kerala well known for its educational achievements across social groups. Studies show that the gap in educational achievements between Adivasi and non-Adivasi communities is significant and it continues and there are significant intra-community differences among Adivasi groups. The persistent educational backwardness of the Adivasi people has been identified as the result of structural inequalities, historically evolved and consolidated under colonialism and capitalist development (NCFR 2005). The Kerala model of development, which attracted the attention of academicians and policy makers nationally and internationally, highlighted its superior educational and social achievements at low levels of income. While the Adivasi communities in general are excluded from the gains of the widely acclaimed educational experience of Kerala, a section of them have derived marginal benefits.

This chapter discusses how schooling reproduces social inequalities and cultural asymmetries by examining the educational experiences of the Paniyas and the Kurichias. The first section briefly describes the educational scenario in Kerala and Wayanad, and the state's commitment to Adivasi education. The second section explores the differential educational experiences and outcomes and attempts to understand how historical advantages and disadvantages affect them in their everyday experience of schooling and thus shape their destinies. As described in the earlier chapter, there are notable socio-economic and cultural inequalities between these two Adivasi communities which get reproduced through the micro processes of the present schooling system.

Literacy and Education

Considering Kerala's outstanding success in the field of literacy and education, the gap in literacy and education between non-Adivasi and Adivasi people, and between the various

Adivasi communities is striking. As per the census of 2001, the general literacy rate in Kerala is 92.1 per cent and the Adivasi literacy is only 64.4 per cent. The literacy rate of the Paniyas and the Kurichias in Kerala is 48.5 and 78.2 per cent respectively (Narayana 2010). In Wayanad, the overall literacy rate is 82.7 per cent, while it is only 49.4 per cent for the Adivasi people. The literacy rate of the Paniyas and the Kurichias in Wayanad was estimated at 52.3 and 80.8 per cent respectively in 2004 (Centre of Excellence 2006). The school dropout rate, another indicator of educational backwardness, is much higher among the Adivasi children of Wayanad as compared to children from other non-Adivasi communities (Table 5.1)

Table 5.1

Drop out Percentage of Students in Wayanad, Standards I - X (2000-2010)

Year	All community	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribe
2000-2001	3.94	4.69	6.03
2001-2002	3.72	4.57	4.19
2002-2003	2.86	4.41	6.66
2003-2004	2.86	4.41	6.66
2004-2005	2.45	3.65	5.7
2005-2006	2.44	2	6.19
2006-2007	1.07	2.24	2.85
2007-2008	2.16	1.46	6.44
*2008-2009	1.71	1.69	4.78
*2009-2010	1.23	1.37	3.52

Source: Office of the Deputy Director of Education, Information collected through RTI

Note: *compiled by the author from the data collected from the office

Further, the recent KILA survey (2008) reveals the severity of drop outs from schools, colleges and other courses. Among Paniya students there were 7694 (51.59%) drop outs and among Kurichia students there were 2344 (15.72%) drop outs according to their report.

As part of the Madras presidency under the British, Wayanad has had a slower growth in educational facilities compared to the rest of Kerala, which was under the princely states of Thiruvithamkur and Kochi. The first school in Wayanad, an upper primary school was established in Mananthavady only in 1869, and by 1900 there were just six schools in the region (Krishnan 1999). But educational facilities picked up momentum after independence. Yet, the number of schools in Adivasi areas of Wayanad remained few and some of the Adivasi children remained un-enrolled in schools (Mary 2002), although a baseline survey conducted in 2004 stated that enrolment was hundred per cent (Centre of Excellence 2006). Despite the growing educational facilities in Wayanad, the data on the highest educational attainment among the Paniyas and the Kurichias show that Adivasi students who cross secondary schooling form a very small proportion (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2

Percentage of the Paniyas and the Kurichias in Wayanad who attained different Levels of Education as of 2004

Level	**Paniyas**	**Kurichias**
Illiterate	47.7	19.2
Literate without Schooling	02.9	03.1
Primary School	34.1	28.3
Secondary School	14.2	45.6
Pre-Degree	00.6	02.5
Graduate	00.2	00.3
Post-Graduate	00.3	00.6
Technical Training	00.0	00.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Centre of Excellence 2006: pp.69

Note: Survey conducted for 2139 respondents

As per the data for 2009-10, there are 292 schools in Wayanad, consisting of lower primary (LP) Standards I-IV, upper primary (UP) Standards V-VII and high school (HS) Standards VIII-X in the government, aided and private unaided sectors. In addition, there are 62 higher secondary schools (HSSs) Standards XI-XII (including 10 vocational HSSs), 15 schools under the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE), one under the Indian Certificate of Secondary Education (ICSE), one Kendriya Vidyalaya, and one Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (Government of Kerala 2011).

State Commitment to the Education of Adivasis

In the government and government aided schools, education is free for all the students. In these schools, Adivasi students are given two pairs of uniforms, textbooks and other study materials, an annual lumpsum grant and a monthly stipend up to Standard X. As per the data collected from the Adivasi development office located in Mananthavady, Wayanad, the respective annual grant and monthly stipend per student are Rs.140 and Rs.55 for Standards I-IV, Rs.240 and Rs.60 for Standards V-VII, and Rs.330 and Rs.70 for Standards VIII-X. Free breakfast and lunch are also provided in these schools for all the students up to Standard VII. However, most of the schools reported that they receive the funds for uniform, study materials and for conducting other Adivasi cultural programmes very late. While appreciating the special grants for Adivasi children, the Deputy Director of Education reported that a large part of the grants is dispersed so late that schools are unable to use the funds effectively. The Deputy Director of Education, who belongs to the Adivasi Community, took the initiative to arrange a night camp for one month for Standard X students before their final examinations, in schools with 30 per cent or more Adivasi students.

In Wayanad, the state Adivasi Development Department runs three Model Residential Schools (MRSs), two Ashram Schools and 28 pre-matric hostels for Adivasi students. They provide the Adivasi students free stay, board and education. The presence of Adivasi population in Wayanad and their comparative low status of education were criteria to select Wayanad for the state's District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) project. The DPEP operative in the 1990s introduced a few single teacher Multi Grade Learning Centres (MGLCs) (also known as alternate schools) in Wayanad in 1997. They are being continued under the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) of the central government. The programme of the MGLC is primarily meant for the Adivasi communities living in

remote areas. In Wayanad, this programme began with ten centres/alternate schools with 235 students in the age group 5-14 years (Kumar and Parthasarathy 2007). According to the office of the SSA in Wayanad, in 2010, there were 55 MGLCs with 1525 students in Wayanad.

The *padanaveed* (study centre) is another initiative that began in November 2008 under the SSA project to create a favourable atmosphere of learning for Adivasi children in their own colony/settlement eliciting community participation. The selection and organisation of *padanaveed* is entrusted to the panchayat education committee and to the schools near the Adivasi colonies. In 2009, there were 26 *padanaveeds* in selected Adivasi colonies in Wayanad. This initiative envisions extension of the programme to all Adivasi colonies in the district. One case of closure of *padanaveed* was reported in the study area during the study period. In this case, a Paniya house was used as the location and a non-Adivasi instructor was appointed to help children in their studies between 5 pm and 8 pm. A school teacher who lived nearby was to supervise the programme. Soon, the classes were shifted from the Paniya house to the supervisor's unused cattle shed. Though there were 14 children in the colony, the daily attendance ranged from three to eight children. There were no benches or desks, except for a mat to sit on the floor. Reading materials were not bought, but snacks were provided. The instructor was changed thrice in three months and they were irregular. Thus this poorly organised *padanaveed* was closed down after three months. The *padanaveeds* in other colonies, as reported by panchayat members, were functioning.

Admission to the MRSs is based on an entrance test conducted at the state level. Not surprisingly, the Kurichia students with a better socio-economic background out-perform the Paniya students in the test and are in much greater numbers in the MRSs. Generally the MRS and Ashram schools meant for Adivasi students lack facilities. The government ashram school in Thirunelly, specially meant for students from the 'weaker' Paniya and Adiya communities, was found to lack even basic facilities. There was no hostel for girl children and they stay in the teachers' quarters sleeping on the cement floor even during the winter. As reported by the warden, the poor hygienic conditions cause scabies and infection. The government Ashram school at Thirunelly did not have permanent teaching staff and when the students and teachers get acquainted with each other, the teacher is transferred. Despite these limitations, the overall performance of the Adivasi children is

better in the MRSs and Ashram schools than in the general schools (Centre of Excellence 2006).

In the study area, all the Adivasi residential schools reported that Adivasi children are excellent in extracurricular activities. For instance, Ambedkar Model Residential School Nalloornadu won the district level championship in school sports continuously for the last nine years (Malayala Manorama, Kozhikodu, March 21, 2011). They have also won prizes in drama competition and in Malayalam poetry recital at the district level youth festivals. In Thirunelli Ashram School, a Paniya student and his group won prizes in district and state level competitions for their project on Adivasi medicine.

Further, it was observed that in MRSs, there was no noticeable difference in the participation levels of Paniya, Kurichia and non-Adivasi students. Paniya and Kurichia students came forward to write and draw pictures on the board and explain it to their peers without shyness and they were very enthusiastic to show their drawing, painting and art forms unlike in other government and aided schools where non-Adivasi students form the majority (photo 16). A non-Adivasi teacher from a government aided school who was very observant and empathetic towards Paniya children stated, "I find Paniya students intelligent and smart when they join the school. Slowly they lag behind as they cannot adjust with the dominant culture of teachers and other students". MRS and Ashram schools provide a comparatively better atmosphere for Adivasi children than other government and aided schools.

Even though the performance is better and the apparent disparity is less in MRS and Ashram schools, one non-Adivasi teacher from an MRS suggested that teachers be thoroughly acquainted with the Adivasi culture and trained in the use of Adivasi language to teach Adivasi students. He realised that they are taken away from their culture and kept in a jail like atmosphere. He reported that in residential schools and other Adivasi hostels, children are reluctant to return to school after the holidays. Every year, one or two children disappear after the holidays, but teachers go and get them back if possible. The Adivasi students are not allowed to go out of the school premises to make a phone call or to buy stationery. One of the Headmasters reported that the collector had suggested that the children should not be sent to their settlements even during holidays in order to control the rate of drop outs and absenteeism. The headmaster found this suggestion impractical as it violated the basic right of the child. The Centre of Excellence study

(2006) also reported that there is an environment of severe restriction in MRS and Ashram schools.

According to a study by the District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), Wayanad, the pre-matric hostels were overcrowded and without the minimum facilities. They failed to provide the necessary educational environment and neglected the students' physical, intellectual and psychological needs. This study brings out many critical findings regarding the attitude of the government officials and teachers. They consider the facilities extended to the Adivasi children more as a favour than as a right, and are of the view that the Adivasi students deserve only the minimum facilities and comfort, as what they are provided is comparatively better than what they have in their homes (DIET 2007). Stating shortage of staff as a reason, students in these hostels were made to assist in cooking and cleaning. In Kunnil colony, parents reported that they sent four children to the nearby Adivasi hostel and they came back when the warden was not there due to the strict rules and hesitated to go back again. Fewer Kurichia students use the facility of the pre-matric hostels as compared to the Paniya students. The MRS hostels meant for all Adivasi communities were found to be in a better condition than the ashram school hostels and the pre-matric hostels mainly used by the Paniyas and the Adiyas in Wayanad (DIET 2007). Thus the state provision of educational facilities reproduces the internal division among different Adivasi groups.

The increase in the number of schools and hostels and the sanctioning of MRSs, Ashram Schools and MGLCs indicate better access of educational institutions to Adivasi children. However, the infrastructure is poor in the schools meant for Adivasis and the facilities are graded, which reinforces the Adivasi/non-Adivasi differences and also the intra Adivasi group differences. Further, the special provisions for Adivasis are considered a favour and this curtails their individual right and dignity. Instead of introducing Adivasi language and culture, strict discipline is imposed and Adivasi children face alienation in the government and government aided schools, and even in the schools specially meant for them.

Religious Organisations and Adivasi Education

Indigenous knowledge and their development initiatives were considered backward by colonial thinking and its educational institutions. The post-independence educational agenda gave much importance to modernity grounded in the scientific and the rational

paradigm of development with a focus on national integration neglecting local identities and regional differences in culture. According to Sharma (2003), the school borrows its cultural paradigm from the socially dominant groups, either rejecting or seeking to modify all other forms of cultural expressions. She points out that colonialism extends to our mind as in the case of territory and hegemonises indigenous systems of knowledge. The structural functionalist and developmental paradigms in education treat education as the means for social change, personal development and nation building. This notion of education revolving around growth and development ignores the multiple dimensions in which the process of education has to be understood. The absence of a cultural critique and an analysis of the micro politics involved in the educational institutions and in the process of schooling are major limitations of this perspective. The cultural alienation in schools begins with the negation of Adivasi identity. The general lack of respect shown towards them forces Adivasi children to try and disown their 'Adivasi' identity from the very start of their schooling. Among Paniyas, the younger generation is found to be reluctant to own their identity and at times, they try to escape the discrimination by identifying themselves as Hindus. Nima aged 36, from Kunnil colony defended stating,

> If we categorise different religions as Hindu, Muslim, and Christian we fall under the Hindu religion. In school registers they are giving our religion as Hindu/Paniya. But god has not created any division and human beings are creating division among different religions.

Nima considers the school register as an official document and as providing the rationale for perceiving themselves as Hindus. When the *Bhajan mandali* (devotional songs sung in groups before going to the *Sabarimala* temple - initiated with the support of Hindu groups in the area) was conducted in one settlement with loud speakers and illumination, I asked the reason for conducting it elaborately as it was not a practice earlier. One of the Paniyas replied, “When we live in a modern society we have to show people that we can also do it. We struggle a bit, but our children will get credit for that”. And he added, “But we have not changed our core traditions, values and rituals”. It emerges that worshipping Hindu gods and adopting Hindu rituals is one way to escape the label of being primitive. As Bindu (2003) points out Kurichias with their claims to higher ritual status among the Wayanad Adivasis are more susceptible to the Hinduisation process in comparison to the Paniyas.

The Kurichias show a greater tendency towards sanskritisation and claim Hindu identity as a symbol of their modernisation. In a government school when a Kurichia girl

was asked in which category she belonged, she immediately whispered something to her friend next to her and then told me, 'I am from *Ambalam* (temple)'. The entire Kurichia students in the class then repeated the same. There are temples attached to the Kurichia *tharavads* in that area and the children thought associating themselves with temple give them a special status as high castes. As Bindu (2003) points out, the trend among Kurichias to adopt vegetarianism perceived as a 'high culture' is to make a claim to modernity. In the case of Vaishnava Kurichias of Wayanad, she argues that religious conversion among them is a negotiation with modernity.

According to Cheria et al (1997), the Catholic church on the other hand focuses its educational interventions mostly among the migrant Christian population. The educational facilities helped the Christians among the migrants who encroached Adivasi land to become even more powerful by enhancing their economic and cultural capital. Even though the church occasionally expanded their services to include Adivasi people, their approach was charity based and with a mentality to redeem Adivasi culture (ibid). However, in Catholic educational institutions in Wayanad, conversion is not seen as an agenda in recent times and religious practices are not forced on students from other communities. Even though Catholic Schools are not found to be propagating their religious ideology explicitly as was the case during the British period by the missionaries, the underlying ideology that views Catholic values as superior and Adivasi cultures as backward continues to prevail. For instance, even though Adivasi children are well versed in their folk songs, their songs were not sung as prayer songs in schools or at other common cultural festivals. These subtle ways of practices are not seriously taken by the teachers or school authorities. But I felt that it was a serious issue when Adivasi children showed shyness and reluctance to sing their *nadan pattukal* (folk songs) but sung other Christian and Hindu prayers without hesitation in the schools as well as in their colonies. When I started singing a Paniya song, they started laughing but slowly joined with me and taught me new songs. It was observed that Adivasi children were lagging behind in educational achievements and cultural activities unlike the other children in Catholic schools. There were no efforts reported from the school authorities to teach the Adivasi children in their language in the study area. Rare initiatives are reported like in Eachome, a Catholic school where a Paniya teacher is appointed to explain the lessons in Paniya language.

The Pentecostal churches (a sect of Christian church) are active in orienting the Adivasi children through their preaching and night classes. Converted Adivasi pastors are used to conduct religious orientation to the Adivasi children and adults. It has been observed that Paniya pastors who are illiterate instruct their children using very attractive teaching aids like colourful cubes depicting pictures symbolising Jesus (photo 18). The Paniya pastor's illiteracy is not a teaching block. They also conduct group games and dramas to teach them how to spread religion to others. The instructions began by creating a feeling of backwardness in the children saying that they are in darkness and Jesus invites them for enlightenment by confessing their sins. The innocent children immediately closed their eyes and started asking pardon for their naughty behaviour at school and home. In Kaloor, Bathery there is an institution run by the Pentecostal mission, where they conduct tuition classes for the children. Adivasi children and their parents attend many of their prayer services and counselling sections. One pastor from that organisation married an Adivasi girl in the locality.

To resist the cultural imperialism projected by colonial education and the Christian missionary efforts to save Adivasis from continuing the ideology of the white man's burden, Hindu organisations were active in spreading Hindu revivalism through educational institutions. In Kerala, under the Vanvasi Kalyan Ashram (VKA) (Kerala office at Kozhikode and All India office at Jaspur) there were forty Rural Study Centers, four Hostels and fifteen Bala Sanskara Kendras (Children's Cultural Centers). The Vanvasi Vikas Kendra registered as a cultural organisation (Reg.61/79) was involved in the education of Adivasi children in Wayanad. In one of their tuition centres in a Paniya colony, it was observed that the class began with the *Gayatri Mantra* and the Hindu instructors taught them using Hindu Purana stories. In Valli colony they insisted the Adivasi instructor celebrate *Sreekrishna Jayanthi* in the settlement and the Adivasi instructor rejected it. She stated,

> The Temple is very near our settlement and they celebrate *Sreekrishna Jayanthi* elaborately in the temple and our children participate in it. I am against another celebration in the settlement according to their suggestion. In the colony we like to celebrate our traditional cultural festivals.

When I enquired about the reason for Hindu gods occupying the worship place in one Paniya house, Nellan from Kunnil colony replied angrily… "Do not try to test me. Without becoming modern nothing is possible today. At least our children need acceptance in the wider society". It emerges that worshipping Hindu gods and adapting to

Hindu rituals is one way to escape the label of backwardness attributed to Paniyas. It appears that a two way process of invasion and adaptation of Hindu culture is happening among Paniyas. The Hindu revivalist movement initiated this change among them and included them in the lowest rung of Hindu religion by calling them *Vanvasi* (forest dweller).

In Lakshmi Smaraka Girijan Sadanam at Kaniyampatta, a boy's hostel run by a Hindu organisation, the daily routine begins with *Pratah Smarana* (prayer in Sanskrit language worshipping Hindu gods) at 5.15 am. After school hours, there is *Sakha* (bowing down before the saffron flag and then doing mass drill and prayers before the flag) at 5 pm, *Bhajan* and *Arati* at 6.30 pm, *Ekatmata Mantram* at 9.45pm. When few of the student inmates were asked about the meaning of the prayers, they were not able to explain. There was a temple next to the building and students actively participated in temple worship.

Dhuni, a former resident of Lakshmi Smaraka Balika Sadhanam (Hostel for Adivasi girls run by Hindu organisation) said,

> We have to jump out of bed when we hear the word *Uthishta* (A Sanskrit word meaning wake up). Every child is compelled to participate in the prayer services and the *Shakha*. It is taught that bowing before the saffron flag is similar to bowing before *Mathrubhumi* (the Nation) and they have their own National Anthem for that. I was advised to join their organisation after passing SSLC to serve other children. But I did not go back.

It emerges that in these hostels, the everyday routine for the Adivasi child is planned to expose and attract these children to Hindu religion. The strict discipline and religious practices followed in these institutions have no connection with the Adivasi spiritual practices of ancestor worship and nature worship. This clearly indicates the Hindutva agenda of right wing politics to spread cultural nationalism with its ideological inclination towards Hindu philosophy and Hindu Nation building neglecting all other voices. But the government gave sanction to these institutions and the Adivasi department gave grants and scholarships to these children. One tribal development officer in the study area reported that the government's enquiry before giving sanction is only to make sure that these institutions are not anti national and there is no forceful conversion into Hindu religion.

It appears that government and educational institutions run by religious agencies work together to redeem Adivasi culture and help them join the 'mainstream'. They ignore if it

is religious ‘mainstreaming’ or ‘mainstreaming’ through development programmes. However, everyday coercive religious practices in the institutions which destroy Adivasi culture and religion are not taken into consideration or challenged by any agency. As Cheria et al (1997) points out, the Hindus not only civilize the Adivasis but also teach their religion, customs and traditions through their institutions. According to Sunder (2009) the State’s act of omission and commission are central to the enterprise of religious mobilisation in educational institutions.

It emerges that the crushing of Adivasi culture and religion by these organisations are not addressed by the government. However, the religious organisations cannot be criticised harshly until the Adivasi children and their adults are given enough space for their own cultural evolution in educational institutions through policy reforms and its effective implementation in consultation with Adivasi people. However, few alternate government programmes like MRS and Ashram Schools are not able to produce much change in the educational inequalities and marginalisation faced by Adivasi students and especially by the Paniyas as the teachers and the entire system support the idea of ‘mainstreaming’ rather than affirming specific cultures. Sunder (2010) warns against the serious danger of education becoming a means for individual alienation from the community in the absence of factors that affirm cultural pride in Adivasi identity in schooling processes. The following section discusses the complex micro processes that perpetuate and reproduce the inequalities and alienation in the school site through every day teacher student interactions and peer interactions.

Schooling and Reproduction of Socio-Cultural and Educational Inequalities

Several studies have reiterated that poverty, lack of parental motivation, ill health and insensitivity of teachers/peers to the Adivasi situation result in high drop out rates; this combined with absenteeism and failure are the major reasons for the educational backwardness of Adivasi children (Centre of Excellence 2006). As Nambissan (2006) points out, mere quantitative indices of school enrolment, attendance and completion rates are not enough to assess equality in educational opportunities, but more complex processes that position social groups differently in knowledge, skills, cultural attributes, self-worth and social respect need to be addressed. Following are some of the processes of schooling that continue to reproduce social and educational inequalities.

School Enrolment, Absenteeism and Drop out

As against the official claim of 100 per cent enrolment, school visits, especially during the rainy and lean economic seasons, showed many Paniya children out of school. Teachers from the government and aided schools confirmed that the Paniya children remained absent for nearly fifty per cent of the school days. However, teachers marked them present on records to receive children's grants and also to secure their own jobs. It is well known that teachers try to ensure maximum attendance in class on the sixth working day of the academic year when the headcount in class is done by the state education officers in order to determine the enrolment figure.

Poverty continues to be a major cause of poor enrolment, absenteeism and early drop out. Landlessness and irregular employment place the Paniya families in a vicious cycle of poverty and their children are expected to supplement the meagre incomes of their families. Girl children were often sent for paid domestic work or had to stay at home to look after younger siblings. In a Paniya settlement in Thirunelly panchayat, one boy was reported to be waiting for his grandmother who had gone to Kodagu (earlier called Coorg), a district in Karnataka for wage labour in order to procure a shirt for him to wear to join an ashram school. His father was an alcoholic and mother was too anaemic to work. The Kurichia children do not face severe vulnerability as land provides them the minimum economic security. No Kurichia child remains absent from school due to lack of necessary material for schooling or household matters like lack of firewood at home. Among Kurichia children, there was no drop out due to child labour. Poverty affects the schooling of children in many indirect ways too. For instance, poor economic conditions of the Paniyas stretch puberty rituals of girls over a month, which keeps the girls away from school and many of them drop out subsequently. The Kurichia community, in relatively better economic conditions, completes the puberty rituals within a week and sends the girls back to school.

With regard to the relative educational disadvantage of the Paniya community, an Adivasi promoter from Thirunelli panchayat reported that a Paniya settlement of 42 families had 25 drop outs among children in the age group of 5-18 years. This settlement had no Paniya student who had passed Standard X and many children discontinued schooling after Standard IV as the UP school was 8 km and the High School was 18 km away from the settlement. The Kurichia children have the means to travel to school by

bus and therefore the distance does not deter them from schooling. Mary (2002) shows that prolonged poverty and non-accessibility to the school continue to be the major reasons for drop outs among Adivasi children and especially among Adivasi girls in Wayanad.

In a personal interview, a Deputy Director of Education from the Kuruma Adivasi community reported that during one of her official visits to Chenadu school, she found that 16 Paniya students had dropped out in Standard X. As an outcome of this experience, she reported that in the academic year 2008, she introduced a programme in which the education department divided teachers into squads who did home visits and they found 1520 students in the school going age were at home and they managed to enroll 1420. In Valad, the government high school and Government Board School Mananthavady teachers reported that they did home visits and enrolled Paniya students in different classes, but majority of them again dropped out due to lack of family support and other personal reasons.

There were no drop outs from 2005 onwards among the Kurichia students in the settlements selected for study except for a few who failed in Standard X. But some of the school drop outs of this community resumed their studies. For example, a boy from the Kurichia community, who dropped out from Standard VIII in 1999, started working on his own land by cultivating paddy and bananas, and earning an income. He resumed his studies later and in 2009 passed the *thulyatha pareeksha* (examination equivalent to Standard X). He applied to a polytechnic and also appeared for the Public Service Commission test for acquiring a salaried job.

Further, it was observed that during the Sabarimala season, Paniya children quit classes as the community participates in the pilgrimage to Sabarimala, sometimes family members go or they are busy helping organise *Bhajan mandalis* (photo 21). Besides, they are very strict about the purity/pollution taboos during these days and Paniya girls quit classes for a minimum of one week saying that there are *swamis* (boys who have taken vows to go to Sabarimala) in their class. The Hinduisation process happening among the Adivasi communities impose more restrictions and strict purity/pollution taboos among the Paniya girls. However, during their own festivals and rituals also they quit classes and parents seldom object as they perceive it as the minimum exposure they receive to learn about their own culture.

The DPEP in Wayanad seems to have had some positive impact on the schooling of Adivasi children. A few teachers from government and aided private schools reported that the DPEP has improved the Adivasi children's enrolment and attendance in primary classes. The MGLCs/alternate schools have improved the enrolment of Adivasi children especially in the interior Adivasi areas. However, there is uncertainty about the continuance of the MGLCs, namely, whether the state government will finance them when the central government funding under the SSA ceases. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2009 provides for the right of every child to have formal education in LP school within 1 km and UP school within 3 km. But the MGLC teachers find this provision impractical in the interior localities of Wayanad, where the number of children is not viable for formal schools and the existing MGLCs may have to be continued. In addition, these alternate schools have the advantage of being sensitive to Adivasi culture and language, an important aspect of their retention in school.

Adivasi parents in the study area appreciated that there is little more child friendly atmosphere in the primary classes now than in previous years. They were happy about the entertainment included in the primary classes, and at the same time were worried about the fact that they were not even learning to read and write properly even after reaching the upper primary classes. Even though the change into DPEP has brought in a more child friendly atmosphere, they reported stronger expressions of alienation by Paniya children especially when they reached the UP and high school classes. In one of the Paniya settlements, an Adivasi promoter Eva reported that one Adivasi girl picked up a cloth to hang herself and threatened her parents saying that she would commit suicide if she were compelled to go to school. In another settlement, the Mooppan said that her daughter was adamant that she would not go to school even if she were cut into pieces. Eva shared that now parents are fearful to be strict with their children as they are exposed to all kinds of misbehaviour projected through television channels. These instances are indicative of the acuteness of cultural alienation that Paniya children undergo during schooling. A Kurichia student from Tulsi *tharavad* reported,

> In Kalpetta SKMJ school while interview and admission to the archery training centre was conducted, a Paniya student came with her mother to give the Standard X exam for failed students. But seeing the interview outside, both of them stood there expecting their turn. When the teacher enquired the purpose of their waiting they said that they had come to write the Standard X exam. The teacher explained to them that the examination was being held in another location and by that time the exam time was almost over. The girl started crying and they went back without appearing for the exam.

These experiences of Paniya students clearly indicate the severity and complex nature of alienation they face in modern educational institutions.

The financial support offered by the state or the proximity of school to children's homes do not seem to compensate for the alienation that the Paniya children experience in formal schools. For instance, in one of the Paniya colonies, there were only 13 families and the school was only half a km away. Out of the 14 school going children, six had dropped out during 2005-2010. The school's insensitivity seems to have been the reason for the drop outs. For example, Ruha's daughter, Thansa passed Standard VII in 2010 and Ruha took her to join the nearest HS. Thansa was very embarrassed at her inability to write Malayalam when the clerk handed over the application form to her. Seeing this, the clerk teased her, "She will have to study hard or pay money." Even though Thansa completed the admission procedure, she became adamant that she would not go to school again. She narrated her humiliating experiences in the previous school where teachers continuously exposed her lack of knowledge in front of her peers.[18]

Ruha, a sick widow, could not change her daughter's decision. As she was enrolled in the school register, the Adivasi department put pressure on the school authorities to give the financial aid given by the state to Thansa. Even though the school clerk informed Thansa and the family about the grant, they did not go to collect it. When asked why she was not going to take the money especially when they were struggling for their daily survival, Ruha just shrugged her shoulders and hesitated to talk. School authorities and teachers commented, "The Paniya parents are interested only in the monthly grants and not in their children's education." While they value education and make efforts to avail themselves of educational facilities, such humiliating remarks by non-Adivasi teachers are far more difficult to face than their debilitating poverty conditions.

Parental and Community Participation

The general perception of the teachers is that Paniya parents are not motivated to educate their children. The Assistant Education Officer as well as the Deputy Director of

18 It was also found that Adivasi children especially the Paniya children faced difficulty in doing their homework, following what is apparently a simple requirement of maintaining a separate notebook for each subject neatly due to the poor household facilities and illiteracy of their parents. The teachers' unrealistic expectations, expressed in the form of scolding, punishment and public remarks make the Paniya children feel humiliated.

Education who hailed from the Kuruman Adivasi community accepted that the system failed to motivate and conscientise Adivasi parents especially the Paniya and Kattunayakan communities about the need for education. The Deputy Director from Kuruman Adivasi community stated,

> Adivasi people are satisfied with the minimum in their life and they do not accumulate. But they cannot live in their old pattern and culture as they are in the midst of another culture of exploitation. They have to earn for the day to day survival and they are not able to give much attention to their children's education. But it is very urgent that Adivasi people realise the needs of the time and move forward and education becomes the most important aspect of their development.

The parents of Adivasi children rarely participate in the Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings. They give many reasons for not going to meetings such as loss of a day's work, ill health and so on. One PTA committee member among them stated, "We go, sit there, sign or give a thumb print and come back. If I have education, then others listen to what I say, otherwise they say that I am drunk". In comparison, there was better participation by Kurichia parents in the PTA meetings. Duna, a PTA executive member from the Kurichia community said that at PTA meetings, she enquires about her children's education. She also commented that Paniya parents neither ask teachers anything about their children nor respond to teacher's queries.

One Paniya parent, Lavan reported that nowadays teachers show more understanding towards their children in the primary classes and so they are interested in sending their children to school and enroll them at the age of six. According to Lavan,

> Before, my children used to beat their chest when they were compelled to go to school. It was so painful for me and I did not compel them to go to school till they became eight years old. In our colonies small children were not taught toilet habits. In the school, teachers did not understand their language and children sometimes did it in the class. Earlier teachers used to scold the children as well as their parents for their untidy habits in the classroom.

Nellan (36 years) from Kunnil colony reported that earlier, both Kurichia as well as Paniya community faced severe punishment by the teachers. He as a child had fainted with the beatings of one teacher for his lack of cleanliness and running nose. He felt that physical punishment is less now and children experience more freedom in primary classes than ten years ago. However, they expressed that lack of knowledge about the Adivasi way of life acts as a block for the teacher in reaching out to the Adivasi child.

Parental apathy in educating their children is perceived by school authorities as one reason for the Paniya children's absenteeism and drop out. However, some of the stories

narrated by children show that parents expect their children to attend school regularly. A few Paniya children narrated their story of bunking school and hiding in forests and coffee gardens to escape scolding from their parents. Four children from the Kunnil colony who were sent back by the headmaster of the school for being late at school were found trying to hide themselves in the gardens to escape their parents' anger. One girl shared a story of hiding with her elder sister "….that day instead of going to the school we went to the coffee garden and collected coffee seeds which had fallen down, sold them in the market, bought some eatables with that money and slept till evening. When the school time got over we went home and nobody came to know about it." It emerges that, at least some of the children are caught between the apathy of the school and punishment from their parents.

The non-Adivasi teachers' and officials' construction of the Paniya parents' apathy towards their children's education was not reflected in the study area. It was observed that even if the male head was an alcoholic, the female head in Paniya family took the responsibility of children's education if their survival needs were met. The Paniya parents' inability to participate in the schooling of their children is misconstrued as lack of interest in their children's education. The eagerness of the parents to obtain the available educational facilities for their children reveals that the Adivasi parents are not apathetic towards the schooling of their children. For instance, one of the hostels for the Adivasi children had 56 students against the official capacity of 45, and 19 cots were adjusted in the space meant for only 10 cots in order to accommodate the 56 students. The congested dining room was used for also keeping their clothes and school bags. Despite the poor conditions, there was great demand for seats in the hostel.

In a MGLC specially meant for Adivasi children near their settlement, the teacher was found successful in incorporating their cultural specificities and variations (photo 17). When that school faced a threat of closing down due to lack of funding, the teacher called a PTA meeting and all the parents gathered to discuss the issue in spite of their work load. The discussion went on from 3pm to 5pm and one parent expressed her anxiety to return through the forest late evening as there were elephants. An old *Mooppan* responded immediately, "To escape from elephants in future we have to hear and discuss these issues today."

Classroom observations and casual talks with teachers in the study area revealed that many teachers are not equipped to deal with the constructivist methodology and elicit participation from Adivasi students and parents. Often teachers thrust difficult assignments and projects on the students. Most of the Paniya children being first generation learners cannot expect any support from their parents to do the assignments. Krishna, an educated Kurichia from Thulsi *thravad* in Thavinjal panchayat reported that even he felt helpless when his daughter studying in Standard IV approached him with a difficult assignment. The student was asked to write about *Veerakkallu* (A special stone installed to commemorate the Kings, military officers and Chief). Krishna had to take the assistance of a history lecturer to help his daughter with the home assignment. Being a government employee, he could discuss with the teacher the issue of giving difficult assignments to the students without providing any assistance. Paniya as well as Kurichia parents reported that they were not able to assist their children with much of their homework. However, Kurichia parents were able to help if the assignments dealt with their traditions, customs, cultivation practices, Adivasi medicine or topics of this nature.

Labelling, Peer Segregation and Teacher Apathy: Schooling Experiences

The view that Adivasi people are inferior as they lack cognitive abilities necessary for acquiring modern knowledge and skills is pervasive. The following view of a leader from a left political party who is also a panchayat president is indicative of the deep rootedness of these stereotypes in Kerala society. According to him, the Paniya community is 'underdeveloped' because "they are less intelligent. There may be some genetic reason for their backwardness. They could not catch up with modern society." He considers the Kurichia community as forward looking like the non-Adivasi people. Such essentialising comments are echoed by the non-Adivasi teachers too.

The practice of treating Adivasi people in general and the Paniyas in particular as inferior, goes on in the schools and classrooms too. As Balgopalan and Subrahmanian (2003) point out, teachers have a crucial role in influencing the Adivasi children's self-constructions as learners and in transforming the school as an inclusive space for them. On the contrary, non-Adivasi teachers perceive that the Adivasi children, especially from the Paniya community have low IQ and that they cannot be on par with the non-Adivasi children. When permission was sought to observe a classroom in a government aided

school, one teacher's response was, "Oh, what is there to observe? Majority of our children are from the Adivasi group!" Similarly, the principal of a college of education in the study area reported that his students hesitated to go to the Adivasi majority schools or to the MRSs for their training, because they believed that it might adversely affect their performance and evaluation. Even teachers of the MRSs, meant for Adivasi children, were not free from these demeaning constructions.

In schools, the Kurichia children have a more respectable social and cultural identity. The Kurichia children are more accustomed to the disciplined atmosphere and the hierarchical structure of the school as they socialise within the authority structure of the *tharavad.* The Paniya children on the other hand are found to be passive and frightened. The situation could be different in the alternate education centres for Adivasi children. For instance, George (2005) has pointed out the diverse learning spaces and methodologies in *Kanavu* - an alternate education experiment for Adivasi children. He observes that the experiment recreates the Adivasi children's loving commune by promoting their culture, life skills and values, and thereby challenges the hierarchical structures and the competitive, individualistic values in current education. A student of Kanavu from the Paniya community, Leela (2010), points out that it is Kanavu's dream to pass on the wisdom of their ancestors to future generations of their people rather than follow the common trend of 'mainstreaming' through education. However, the value conflict can be perceived from the everyday instructions in schools. A non-Adivasi teacher expressed her concern by encouraging the Adivasi child to become modern and stylish… "Are you not interested in travelling by a scooter and shine like others? Study well…!" Even though she was trying to motivate the child, the underlying comment was against the Adivasi world view.

In the government and aided private schools in the study area, children from the Paniya community reported that they were labelled as *Paniyante makal* (Paniyan's daughter) and *Paniyante makan* (Paniyan's son) in a derogatory manner. Wright (1987) on the basis of her study of multi-ethnic classrooms argues that the practise of labelling children from marginalised ethnic background contributes to their underachievement in schools. A Paniya warden in a MRS reported that her non-Adivasi colleagues constantly made comparison between the Adivasi and non-Adivasi children, and complained that the Adivasi children were not hygienic and emitted a foul smell, and were not competent. The non-Adivasi teachers, despite sensitisation and training, see the Paniya children as

less capable, expect little from them by way of educational attainment, and label their language, culture and etiquette as 'poor' or of 'low standard.' Teachers' negative attitude and insensitivity towards the Adivasi children, and refusal to engage with their lives and problems have serious adverse effects on their learning. As Kundu (1990) observes, teachers from the dominant society need to understand and appreciate the cultural knowledge and language of the Adivasi children in order to teach them. However, with regard to the Kurichia children, comments from the teachers were more encouraging,

> They are very clean, orderly and well mannered in their interaction with others. Their elders used to practise untouchability. In olden times, their *pittan* (head of the joint family, now known as *karanavan*) would not allow their school going children to enter their house without taking bath.

While reaffirming the cultural practices of the Kurichias, teachers unknowingly valorise them and thus perpetuate a hidden curriculum of dominant caste practices. Many of the discriminatory and alienating practices go unnoticed, but labelling one group and positive affirmation of the other seem routine in school interactions.

The Paniya students do not interact with non-Adivasi or even their Kurichia classmates. They prefer to sit separately in the classroom and play separately, and were found not participating in the classroom activities and group discussions. In a government school, during a game with Standard IV students, it was observed that a non-Adivasi boy was hesitating to hold the hand of a Paniya boy who stood next to him. In a government aided school, a Paniya child from Standard III reported that if he touched his non-Adivasi classmates, they might beat him up. So he would not play with them and instead went to play with his elder brother during the school interval. Peer interactions in the classroom as well as in the playground not only reflect the social hierarchies but actively reproduce these inequalities. As argued by Kumar (2006), children's curricular and extracurricular activities in school are not just about achieving academic success but are about producing and negotiating social differences. The discussion of Das et al (2001) on how the everyday experiences of violence shape the subjectivities and affect the capacity to engage in everyday life helps to understand the Paniya child. In the interactions in school, the Paniya children experience violence not only from their non-Adivasi peers but also from their teachers. In the context of the *Dalit* identity Guru (2009) suggests that

essentialising a particular identity as inferior has to be changed first, as essentialisation leads to the exclusion of some and hegemony of the other.[19]

De-Legitimisation of Language

According to Bourdieu, culture is unthinkable without language and language cannot be analyzed or understood in isolation from its cultural context and the social conditions of its production and reception. Teaching Adivasi children through their native tongue and culture is stressed by many studies (Kundu 1994, Nambissan 1994). The Constitution of India as well as the national policy on education affirm the need for introducing primary education in mother tongue. Article 350A of the Constitution suggests imparting primary education in the native tongue, but as far as the Adivasi languages are concerned it has not been implemented, except where the Adivasi people are politically assertive or have representation in the political power structure. *Nayam,* a booklet prepared by the DIET, Wayanad to introduce Adivasi culture to the teachers admits that although the DPEP and the SSA have created a more child friendly atmosphere in schools, they have not succeeded in making them Adivasi friendly. While language becomes a stumbling block for the Paniya children in their learning experience, historical advantages like parental education, bilingualism at home and better chances of interaction with wider society help the Kurichia children to overcome this block.

The Adivasi parents are acutely aware of the significance of the native tongue in learning. A Paniya PTA committee member reported that his community's native tongue and art forms were neglected totally in school and that if they were given importance, their children would be enthusiastic and fare better in studies. This was also evident from the fact that Paniya children eagerly awaited and enthusiastically listen to the only programme in *Paniya bhasha* (Paniya's language) aired on their community radio. An Adivasi activist from Richur settlement insisted that in schools they needed trained Paniya teachers to teach the *Paniya bhasha*. Even in the institutional spaces created exclusively for Adivasi students, they were often denied the right to speak their own language. For instance, in the MRSs and Ashram schools, Adivasi children were not free to use their native tongue. Use of the native tongue was viewed as a deterrent to mastering the dominant language of Malayalam. In contrast, some of the Kurichia

19 For example, the ideology of purity-pollution essentialises the *Dalit's* identity as inferior, while it generalises the identity of the 'twice-born' (non-dalit) as socially superior (Guru 2009).

students of a school in Thavinjal panchayat expressed that they enjoyed the freedom of speaking to their friends in their own language. This school is popularly known as the Kurichia's school. They are a majority in this school, which is built on land donated by the Kurichia community and it is situated near Kurichia *tharavads*. However, teachers reported that even there, Kurichia students feel shy to talk in their language in front of non-Adivasi teachers. As Nambissan (1994) points out, the home language of children is vital to the development of their culture, identity and self worth, and the continuous and total rejection of it can cause harm to the child's natural desire to learn as well as the community's attitude towards learning.

It is now well established that early education in the children's native tongue provides the impetus to pick up concepts fast. A few teachers seem to be aware of the fact that the new constructivist method of teaching despite its child centeredness blocks a Paniya child's learning because they use Malayalam as the medium of instruction. In the new method of teaching, they begin with an idea, then introduce sentences, words and alphabets all transacted in Malayalam. Here the child's familiar settings are discussed but in a language unfamiliar to the child. Some teachers were of the view that in the new methodology of the DPEP, they could at least participate in drawing, singing, painting that can lessen the alienating effect, while neglecting the fact that these children seldom learn to read and write. Adivasi promoter Eva's response affirmed this reality as she stated that the reading and writing skills of Adivasi students are poor even after they pass Standard VII. In a workshop conducted by the DIET of Wayanad, teachers did not seem convinced about the legitimacy of using Adivasi dialects in classroom learning. Their own unfamiliarity with the Paniya and the Kurichia dialects and their inability to convince the non-Adivasi children and parents about the legitimacy of such pedagogic practices were seen as major difficulties. In a workshop conducted by DIET Wayanad, teachers expressed their difficulty in writing a word pronounced in Paniya or Kurichia language on the board because non-Adivasi parents and children perceived it as a 'wrong' language and besides, they would be confronted for the same. Here it is relevant to note Apple (1979) who criticises the possibility of depoliticisation of knowledge creation as teachers do not enable the students to question the inequalities in society.

In a MGLC for the Adivasi children, when a Paniya child stated that her native tongue was Malayalam, the teacher applauded her for that answer. As Nambissan (1994) observes, the attitudes and expectations of teachers are communicated to children as part

of the hidden curriculum and influence children's learning. Even though this teacher seemed to appreciate Adivasi culture, her action affirmed the illegitimacy of Adivasi languages in school. As Bourdieu (1977) argues, the reproduction of culture through pedagogic action and the symbolic violence exerted on its pupil is thus not pre-planned in its contents or formed by an arbitrary power.

Adivasi communities approach modern education in the hope of finding a sustainable source of livelihood especially in the current context of fluid labour markets. While they are aware of the significance of education in the native tongue and desire a legitimate space for their dialects in schooling, they do not want this to marginalise them further. A section of the parents feel anxious as they know the value of the dominant language in employability. Teachers reported that some of the parents said, "We send our children to school to learn 'good language' not our language." "If you are going to teach my child in the *Paniya bhasha* I would like to put him in another school." The situation of the Paniyas is somewhat similar to that of some of the non-Adivasi people of Kerala with regard to English medium education in preference to Malayalam, their native tongue. Referring to a study conducted by the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishat, Aravindan (2006) reports that 44.6 per cent of the people in Kerala who send their children to English medium schools believe that education in the native tongue is preferable for better grasping of the subject. However, the current anxiety about higher education and employability forces parents to enrol their children in English medium schools. While non-Adivasi children are making efforts to make the shift to English education and cope with its demands, Paniya children in Wayanad are struggling to make their shift to schooling in Malayalam. In the current scenario, English medium education, whether disirable or not, seems, a distant dream. In a social and political context where the majority of non-Adivasi population perceive Adivasi dialect as primitive, where it is not accepted as the official language and not included in the school curriculum, Adivasi people are forced to disregard their language so as not to lag behind in the pursuit of socio-economic development. This is true even in the case of the Kurichias who have made significant progress with education through the dominant non-native language.

However, some of the Kurichia parents have pointed out that exclusion of their dialect in school not only alienates the younger generation from their dialect but also prevents them from developing their language and culture further. According to them, loss of their dialect is also loss of the wealth of their ancestral knowledge, value system and rich

culture. They are of the opinion that their *nadanpattukal* (folk songs), traditional wisdom about the ecosystem, and vast knowledge of Adivasi medicine, agricultural and food practices are losing credibility and acceptance among their educated members. Introduction and use of Adivasi dialects in schools along with Malayalam especially in early schooling may create a school environment that not only enables Adivasi children's cognitive understanding but also provides a formal space that accords legitimacy and dignity to Adivasi language and culture. It is indeed true that the Kurichias have been able to achieve a level of schooling higher than that of the Paniyas and their proficiency in the dominant Malayalam language has contributed to this achievement. This differential achievement of the two Adivasi groups from the same region, has demonstrated, what Bernstein, Bourdieu and others have shown, the key role played by language in the reproduction of the dominant class and cultural relations.

Neglect of Art and Culture

Not only the language but also the art of the Adivasi communities are neglected in schooling. While the state government organises Adivasi *melas* (fairs) showcasing their arts in order to promote the tourism industry in Kerala, especially in Wayanad[20] and spends crores of rupees on school youth festivals every year, Adivasi art finds no place in school youth festivals. While attempts are made to revive and represent the art form of various communities, including those that are forgotten, tribal music and dance find no place in the much coveted school youth festivals. Students, who win prizes, in these festivals are eligible for grace marks in the board examinations. This denial of opportunity to Adivasi students prompted the Deputy Director of Education, who hailed from the Kuruman Adivasi community, to initiate a separate Adivasi festival, the *gothra fest,* for the primary school children in 2010.

The Kurichias have however partly succeeded in mobilising support for their archery skills (photo 19). For instance, the Kurichia youth from the Thulsi *tharavad* stated that they were able to form archery teams with the support of the Kerala Institute for Research and Training and Development of Scheduled Tribes (KIRTADS). They are not only members of the Wayanad but also of the Kerala archery teams. The secretary of the Archery association reported that he has formed archery clubs in all the existing Kurichia

20 Tourism occupies the central position in the development strategy of Wayanad when the agricultural sector fails to meet the revenue demands of the state.

tharavads. And his team became state champions for six consecutive years and participated eight times in the national level competitions. In 2009, the government sanctioned an Archery Academy in Pulpally, Wayanad but according to this secretary it is enmeshed in corruption and bureaucratic hurdles. However, archery competitions are included in the school games and the Kurichia students participate at the school, state and even national level competitions and win prizes. They are awarded grace marks for their achievements. At the same time, they are aware that they may not be able to keep pace with the sophistication of the current archery competition without funds and support.

While the State denies recognition and legitimacy to the contemporary art forms of Adivasi communities, the school environment routinely reproduces the illegitimacy. Paniya parents are reluctant to visit school and even if they go there, they stand outside like outcastes until somebody enquires the reason for their visit. The Paniya children do wish that their parents visit their school, but they are made to feel ashamed of the way their parents dress as they often hear remarks such as, "Why do you dress like a *Paniyichi* (Paniya woman)?" Much of the time of the Paniya children in school is spent not in learning, but in coping with a situation that discriminates them in every way possible. While interacting with modern institutions such as schools, the Kurichia parents follow modern dress codes which help their children escape this symbolic violence. A Kurichia clerk in a government college was annoyed when his friend suggested that he preserve his cultural tradition in dressing. He reacted, "I am accepted in the college and among my friends because I wear a pant and shirt like them. If I go in my traditional dress they will treat me like a primitive." Even though the historical advantages helped them to enjoy a higher status, their traditional dress code could not escape the stigma of primitivism and they adopted modern styles faster than the members of the Paniya community. The systemic nature of discrimination that exists in wider society creeps into school through cultural mechanisms and thus imposes symbolic violence upon groups or classes in such a way that they are experienced as legitimate (Bourdieu 1997).

However, the Kurichia teachers attempt to legitimate their cultural knowledge through what may be considered subversive pedagogic strategies. They make efforts to introduce their culture in the classroom transaction of the formal curriculum. For instance, for teaching a lesson on cultivation, a Kurichia teacher, proud of her agricultural traditions, took her students to a Kurichia *tharavad* to participate in their *Vilanattiutsavam,* the paddy transplanting festival. The Paniya community traditionally known for their skills in

paddy cultivation had no history of ownership of paddy fields. They planted paddy for their masters with their traditional dance accompanied by *thudi* (musical instrument used by the Paniya community) known as *Kambalanatti,* a Paniya art form in which they do the work with rhythmic movement of the body and hands. Despite the rhythmic beauty of Paniya dance (photo 20) which they enjoy, its association with bonded labour until the 1960s makes it difficult for a Paniya teacher to be proud of it, unless accompanied by an understanding and critique of the history of the exploitative production relations in the region. School becomes sites for alienating and marginalising the Adivasi culture through covert and overt interventions and subtle pedagogic actions.

Gender and Education

Adivasi girls are doubly alienated for their 'gender' and 'tribe' identity. The dominant constructions and their adaptions are reproduced by non-Adivasi teachers, staff and Adivasis themselves. In Kunnil Paniya colony, out of six school drop outs, five were girls. There in many of the Paniya households it was observed that girl children have to support their mothers in cooking and fetching firewood and water. When women have no work, girl children studying in Standard V onwards go for domestic work in the nearby houses on Saturdays and Sundays for small payments ranging from Rs. 10 to Rs. 50 and at crucial situations, they send their children to distant places for domestic work. It is also noticed that Paniya girls go for domestic work after class hours when there is difficulty in surviving and they slowly become drop outs. Their special context of unemployment compels the Paniya women to seek their girl children's support to run their families.

Poverty and disempowerment have led to the sexual exploitation of girls especially of the Paniya community. One Paniya colony reported several cases of 'unwed mothers' due to sexual exploitation when they go for domestic labour to support the family. Adivasi communities generally do not terminate these unwanted pregnancies nor do they disown the pregnant girls/women. Jitha, who worked as a village officer pointed out the patriarchy existing in the reservation policies and criticised the Supreme Court verdict to consider father's caste for educational grants, reservation and other benefits, which restricts the educational opportunities of children of 'unwed mothers' in Wayanad. The village officer was of the opinion that considering father's caste for caste certificate was unjust in a place like Wayanad where Adivasi people even hesitate to approach the village officer to get a certificate. She also mentioned that the Kerala Government has made

some modifications, for instance, if the children are living according to the mother's customs and if they are socially and economically backward, they can be given the benefits of Scheduled Tribe children. She stated that this modification in policy was not helping much at the practical level, as the Adivasis were hesitant to reveal the story in case of 'unwed mothers' and even if they revealed it, village officers were not keen to verify these cases and give them caste certificates. However, we cannot forgo the fact that higher caste men marry Adivasi women to accrue the reservation benefits and in such cases, consideration of social and economic backwardness may be of help to prevent misutilisation of the benefit. In the Kurichia community, if a Kurichia girl marries a man from another caste and if the father dies, the father's family or mother's family may not accept the girl. Jitha reported that in such cases the children suffer and this can cause drop outs. However, there were no such incidents reported during the study period.

The responsibility of a housewife in a Kurichia *tharavad* is much more than in a nuclear family. In Kurichia *tharavads,* girls have the responsibility in helping their mothers in the kitchen as well as for drawing water and collecting firewood. Boys were found to be engaged in feeding cattle and going to the shops for buying stationery and food materials. In the Kurichia community, the division of labour between girls and boys is more visible as the girl's mobility is restricted. Girls are mostly bound to their houses but boys go out to play, shop, read, and for archery practice and this give them more opportunity for socialisation. In the case of girls and women, there are restrictions to reach home before 6 pm. Until 20 to 30 years ago, the girls' mobility was very much restricted due to their strict observance of pollution rituals and this affected their schooling. Today also in Kurichia *tharavads* there is restriction in sending their girls to other cities for higher studies and it affects their opportunities for higher education compared to boys. However, there is considerable negotiation happening in their communities and the restrictions are becoming less.

In Paniya and Kurichia cultures boys are not kept away from doing household chores like fetching firewood and water and looking after their younger ones. But boys are comparatively free and are not entrusted with responsibility as in the case of girls in doing household work. However, a Paniya girl and a boy enjoy equal mobility in going to the shops and surroundings. Paniya men of age 30 and above reported that when they were small, they were sent for cattle rearing by non-Adivasis and they could not go to school. Three to four decades ago, Paniya boys were assigned to keep watch of paddy fields

during the harvesting season to keep away birds from destroying the produce. Now there are no grazing lands available and Paniya boys are not needed for such jobs. Large scale paddy cultivation is also very rare today and there is no need to assign children for such work. So school going Paniya boys are comparatively free from domestic labour both at home and outside. However, there are incidents of boys going out for wage labour and consequent drop outs. However, a Paniya girl and a boy enjoy equal mobility in going to the shops and surroundings.

In Kunnil Paniya colony, two girls dropped out as a consequence of their friendship with boys. One girl while studying in Standard V fell in love with a boy who was doing vocational training. Both of them dropped out, but the boy continued his studies after a gap.

The difference in the sexual and social norms between the Adivasi and non-Adivasi people also causes alienation and drop out of Paniya students. In Kunnil Paniya colony, Yarah, a Standard VII drop out from the Paniya community states, "…it is because of 'that' teacher and my friends that I discontinued my studies and now I regret not going to school". One teacher saw Yarah changing her dress in a coffee garden and in her view it was very indecent. She came to know that Yarah was friendly with a boy with whom she went out the next day cutting classes. This teacher reported the incident to her class teacher and headmaster and Yarah was scolded by both of them and they advised her not to repeat this 'indecent' behaviour. Yarha reported,

> My classmates came to know about the issue and they started teasing me saying that 'We have studied in this school till Standard VII but nobody in this school has created such a bad reputation, only this girl became like this. When my classmates started blaming me, I could not bear it and I came to my house and cried and said that I would not go to school. My father and mother went to the school because the headmaster called them and asked me to go to the school next day. According to their advice, I went to the school and again my classmates started teasing me. I cried and came back home and I did not go again to the school. That teacher and my friends ruined my future.

According to the non-Adivasi teacher, she just tried to correct the child from her early 'love affair' and wanted to inculcate in her a sense of 'decency'. According to Yarah's father this was not the way to correct an adolescent relationship between a boy and girl. He said… "that teacher is my neighbour and she could have told me a word before reporting it to the headmaster". According to him, the teacher had the moral responsibility to discuss and clarify this issue with the parents and counsel the child if necessary. However, what the non-Adivasi teacher perceived as indecent behaviour was not indecent

in Paniya culture. There was no stigma associated with changing the dress in a coffee garden. It was observed that when they go for wage labour, they change their clothes in the garden. During puberty celebration, they take the girl to the garden, her kith and kin surround her and they remove her old clothes and make her wear new clothes and ornaments. Even though the non-Adivasi teacher was her neighbour, she failed to understand Paniya culture. The teacher's abysmal knowledge of tribal values and culture, despite being a neighbour was surprising. The teacher judged her according to non-Adivasi norms about socially accepted behaviour and sexuality. However, boys are comparatively found free from such scrutiny as teachers assume less moral responsibility in correcting their 'indecent' behaviour.

Paniya girls experience more cultural alienation in schools as their community has tremendous freedom in sexual expression, which is alien to non-Adivasi culture. For instance, during my field work I have observed a Paniya Mooppan allowing her daughter to live with her proposed husband three months before marriage. However, the structural and cultural oppression of women through dominant constructions of gender and sexuality are invisible in the school curriculum and its pedagogic actions. The discrimination and oppression is promoted through a hidden curriculum and its pedagogic practices. Yarah's friend's comments reveal that the tendency to interpret the natural sexual attractions as immoral is widespread in the school atmosphere and children perceive and cognise it when they are young. The award winning Malayalam film '*Mathilukal*'(1989) (based on a short novel written by Basheer in 1965) symbolically represents Kerala culture which create a thick stone wall between opposite sexes in the cognitive territories of the Malayali mind. However, the Paniya and Kurichia culture did not assign labels of immorality to the attraction between their girls and boys and this may be one reason for the absence of rape cases and sexual crimes by Paniya and Kurichia men in the study area unlike non-Adivasi cultures. On the contrary, non-Adivasis who describe sexual attraction as immoral, sexually exploit the innocent Adivasi women and abandon them, which causes immense suffering to the women and their children.

One Kurichia elder expressed that their strict discipline in the community helps their girls from forming early relationships and the consequent dropping out from school. It emerges that the Kurichia community's norms about sexuality has more similarity with non-Adivasi norms and they keep strict discipline and segregation after menstruation. Thus, Kurichia girls were projected as decent and disciplined in their behaviour and they

were not criticised in the public or by the teachers for deviant behaviour. At the same time, Kurichia nuclear families were found to be more liberal in their norms about sexuality. In the study area, there was one case where a Kurichia girl had a relationship while studying in Standard X, but she did not drop out and they married later. She was not interested in continuing her studies.

Menstruation and the concept of pollution resulted in the absenteeism of Kurichia as well as Paniya girls from school. Until ten years ago, Kurichia girls used to be secluded for seven days during menstruation and this affected their studies. The number of days has been reduced to three in recent times and there are also liberal and educated parents in the study area who did not have such strict rules and sent their girls to school during menstruation. Through education, Kurichias became more liberal but there were those who observed purity/pollution rituals less strictly due to modern hinduisation trends among them.

The gender disparity is reinforced by assigning works such as sweeping and cleaning to the girls in schools. However, the initiative taken by the government to distribute cycles to Adivasi girls who are from distant areas studying in high schools can be considered a positive move. Gender deserves a very elaborate discussion in school curriculum, but the pedagogic practices are not efficient enough to give a liberative interpretation on gender relations and sexuality.

Marginalisation of World Views and Strategies of Resistance

Adivasis' experience of marginalisation and resistance extends to their world views, values and culture. Adivasi teachers, leaders and activists continuously counter the ideological domination by constantly referring to the virtues and values of Adivasi world views and way of life as not only legitimate but even as a superior alternative. They see the tremendous potential in Adivasi children and feel strongly that, if schooling provided them a chance, they with their knowledge and experience of environment, and their patience and practical skills would contribute in no small measure to the scientific and technological world. In a group discussion, Adivasi and Dalit leaders expressed that according to modern science and philosophy, ecology is understood more theoretically negating the practical experiences of people.[21] They expressed that environmental studies

21 Interview with Geethanandan, Janu and Thankachan on 29/5/2010 at *Sikshak sadhan* during a training programme for Adivasi people and Dalits.

are included in the category of science education. The Adivasi people have an overall vision of environment and they can perceive it holistically and intuitively instead of compartmentalising it into different science topics. According to them if this experiential wisdom is properly integrated in the environmental education and development activities it can show a way forward to answer the environmental issues of today. A Dalit activist, Geethanandan said that if the Adivasi way of looking at nature is integrated with scientific findings it will be a leap in consciousness and a liberating experience.

Nellan, a shaman from the Paniya community reported that traditionally they recognise a person as knowledgeable on the basis of her/his ability and the extent of service to their society and the ability of a person to mobilise and coordinate the goodness and talents of its members for the well being of the society. While discussing this point, one Paniya youth remembered their ancestor's advice to the youngsters "Do not say that I do not have enough and quarrel ….whatever we have is for all". In all the Paniya and Kurichia settlements in which I have stayed or visited, their old Mooppan or leader was described by the members of the community as the most service oriented person among them without seeking any profit or returns. He is happy to receive if they shared anything out of their generosity. Thus, the Mooppan, their headman is bestowed with honour and respect.

The egalitarian philosophy is present in their oral traditions and practices. The small children are taught to share equally among their peers. I have observed that a culture of sharing as against the culture of accumulation is taught at home especially by the grandparents. However, we cannot deny the fact that the Paniya community is not insular from non-Adivasi values and that they also engage themselves in reproducing the 'mainstream' ideas. For instance, during my stay in a Paniya house, the parent was advising his children to study, "Now we have to bow before officers to get things done for us. But if you study well and become employers, others will bow before you to get things done".

The Kurichia elders too shared their nostalgic feelings about equitable sharing and self reliance that existed in their joint families and criticised the erosion of these values in today's education. A Kurichia Karanavan claimed that without any education our ancestors looked after the *tharavads* (its members ranging from 50 to 150) with equity and fairness. He brought out the contrast by pointing out that today's educated youth is

inefficient and that he can hardly look after himself and his own small family and pointed towards the increasing strife among the community members. According to him, cooperation is becoming impossible and competition and violence have crept into their society; he attributes this decline to the quality of education today He also held the education system responsible for the cultural deterioration and challenged the value of their schooling. He asked, while Adivasis had many folk songs in their culture "how many of their students in school are able to write their own folk songs or poems on Adivasi culture and life?"

Teachers from the Paniya and Kurichia community however stressed their children's strength instead of their weakness. In a Model Residential School in Thirunelli, the warden who was from the Paniya community pointed out that Paniya children were very talented not only in studies but in sports, arts and drawing too. Children also try to devise strategies to counter their marginalisation when they get a chance. A Kurichia school-going girl said, "Paniyas are the naughtiest children in our school. When non-Adivasi students mock at them by calling them derogatory names, they try to retaliate by forming their own groups during the interval, knock down the non-Adivasis from behind and then they bunk classes to escape punishment".

Adivasis have to be vigilant always and by mobilising their individual and collective resources, resist exclusionary designs of the state and the dominant social groups. The Kurichia leaders said that they resisted the move by the government to exclude their children from reservation and school grants by labelling them as a forward community. They fare better in getting jobs as they have representatives in the Panchayat and Block administration unlike the Paniyas who have little or no representation in these bodies. One panchayat member from the Kurichia community challenged an ICDS officer for removing the application of a Kurichia woman for the post of *Anganwadi* teacher from the file. The ICDS officer tried to give the job to a non-Adivasi who had applied for the same post, ignoring the fact that the land for the *Anganwadi* was donated by the Kurichia community located near the Kurichia households. This reveals that non-Adivasis try to oust even the relatively powerful Kurichias, but the latter resist and sometimes succeed partly.

The Paniya's resistance is mainly passive and therefore does not reach the authorities due to lack of political representation and mobilisation. The only B. Ed degree holder

among the Paniyas whom I came across was very upset that she, who desired to become a teacher, was turned down and was selected only as a Warden in a Residential School. Her case depicts that even the best (she is a first class Degree holder) among them are not recognised by the authorities. Also, she was not re-appointed in the following academic year even though a higher authority promised her a teaching job during the *Paniyasadas22* (Deepika, June 26th, 2010). She believes that her Paniya identity is the cause for her plight and questions the purpose of the reservation laws and special privileges for the Scheduled Tribes. Another Paniya teacher Masi reported that even after becoming a teacher in a school, the children called her by her name, as she had worked as a wage labourer on their land. However, the symbolic power she achieved with the title of a school teacher equipped her young niece to challenge the previous employer's children, "My *mami* (aunty) is a teacher now, call her teacher instead of calling her by name". As Scott (1985) argues social agents are not passive bearers of ideology but active appropriators who reproduce existing structures only through struggle, contestation and partial penetration of these structures. He criticises the concept of 'false consciousnesses' of the subordinate classes and the ideological consensus secured by dominant groups and its legitimisation using culture as an instrument of power. According to him not the false consciousness of the marginalised but the awareness about practical consequences and their dependency on upper classes for survival keep them back from resisting the injustice.

Even though Kurichias are accepted in the area, in the larger history of India, Kerala or even Wayanad they are marginalised like the Paniyas. Their historically significant fight against the British known as the 'Kurichia revolt', which is the first ever agrarian struggle in India, has not been given due importance in school textbooks or even in the local classroom discussions. But the possibility of an inclusive curriculum is articulated by alternate education centres such as *Kanavu* where the history class for Adivasis start with the history of the independence struggle in Wayanad and a description of the Adivasi's participation in it. Even though the curriculum and classrooms erase their history, the Kurichias began their mobilising by recalling their historic fight. With their continuous pressure on the power structures, they succeeded in building the monument of Thalackal Chandu, the renowned Kurichia fighter against the British. However, under

22 Conference organised by Centre for Development studies and University of Montreal to discuss Paniya's issues. During the meeting, Paniya Warden shared her touching experience of her achievement and neglect of the authorities.

modern development, Adivasi communities are forced into another culture without any preparation for the transition, and this contributes to their marginalisation (Fernandes 2008). As this study shows, schooling certainly does not prepare these communities for such a transition.

Land as Material and Symbolic Power in Schooling

Historically, the Kurichias owned land while the Paniyas were landless and bonded labourers. Over the years, the Kurichias lost most of their land and today they own only small tracts. In addition to providing some economic security, land is a source of prestige and power which has given better social acceptability to the Kurichia teachers and students in the context of schooling. In contrast, landlessness has translated itself into powerlessness for the Paniya teachers and students. Besides the status and power associated with land, ownership and agricultural produce gave Kurichias historically more opportunities for physical mobility and social interaction with non-Adivasi groups, village officials and also the market in connection with selling and buying of goods. The elders in one of the Kurichia *tharavads* stated that they were the ones who provided rice, ghee and wild meat to the officials in the British and early independence period. One elderly Kurichia leader said that the *adhikari* (village officer) needed their assistance in collecting and measuring coffee seeds as the produce was directly bought by the government department from the coffee gardens. The narratives show that many of these officials maintained friendly ties with them and exhorted them to send their children to school. Today, most of the Kurichia parents in the study area have basic education and a few of them are even employed in government services.

Further, land ownership and the economic and social status associated with it were seen as indicators of their capability to acquire education and this prompted teachers to approach Kurichia elders to motivate them to send their children to school when schools were first established in the area. Kurichia children are second or third generation learners like the non-Adivasi students in the area. However, their 'subsistence farming' is not enough to maintain even a middle class standard of living, much less to send their children to cities for higher education. The Paniya children are mostly first generation or second generation learners. Having been bonded labourers, their grandparents did not have the opportunity to school. The restrictions on their physical mobility imposed by the *jenmi* (land lord) severely restricted their interaction with others. However, ownership of

even a small plot of land seems to change the educational aspirations of some of the Paniyas in significant ways. In a small Paniya community under the Richur settlement project in Ambalavayal panchayat, 9 families possess 10 cents to one acre of land.[23] There was a perceptible difference in their attitude to education and their ability to access it. The *Ooru mooppan* (headman appointed by the Panchayat) of that small settlement reported that there were no school drop outs among their children and the one child who had discontinued education was again enrolled in school. Land and its resources are integral to the Paniyas' and the Kurichias' culture and livelihood, a positive condition of their habitus, and the possession of it enables them to respond positively to modern education.

It is important to note that when the Kurichia students are taken out of the local context, their generic identity as 'tribe' becomes more prominent than their specific identity as Kurichia. For instance, a Kurichia student from Champa settlement, who joined a college outside Wayanad district for a degree course, was rudely shocked to find the perceptions of the other students about Adivasi people as primitive. He said, "I want to be looked upon as any other person in the world and do not want to be a museum piece for the media." The historical advantages and the special habitus of the Kurichias are recognised only in their immediate locality and not in the wider social context. Thus land as symbolic capital operates here in a very limited manner and the Kurichia identity fails to transcend the Adivasi identity which is perceived by the larger society as 'backward' and 'primitive'. The Kurichia community has been able to use its cultural capital in education mainly at the level of basic schooling as indicated by their low participation in higher education (see Table 5.2). However, the spread of schooling within the Kurichia community has been a transformative process gradually getting converted into political power. A member of the Kurichia community, elected to the state assembly in the 2011 elections, became a state minister, while the Paniyas find it difficult to become even a panchayat member. Both the Paniya and the Kurichia community members stress the need for at least one acre of individual land or having common land as a prerequisite to be able to educate their children, in addition to the free provisions that they get from school.

23 This project was started in 1958 as part of the programme of rehabilitating 100 bonded Adivasi labourers in the land bought by Kerala from the Tamil Nadu government. Even though they have fought for allotment of the project land from 1995 onwards, distribution of the title deeds to a few of them happened only after the historic *Adivasi* struggle at Muthanga in 2003 (Local Support Team 2010).

The Adivasi leaders and activists, aware of the material and cultural security that land provides, stress the need to reacquire access to their land in order that their children can approach formal education with courage and confidence.

In the current development discourse, education continues to be propagated as one of the most important means for the development of Adivasi people. In their continued emphasis on the importance of education for the well being of the Paniya community, the state officials and political parties have overlooked the association between access to land and education of Adivasi people. This is in spite of the fact that it is the land owning communities of the Kurichias and Kurumas who fare better in education and despite the longstanding demand of the Paniyas for land for their survival and 'development'. The recently conducted KILA survey also affirms the importance of land in education. According to their survey findings majority of the students who are pursuing graduation, post graduation and professional courses hail from the landed class. Among the Kurichias of the 261 graduate students, 166 of them belong to the families who have more than 50 cents of land and of the 22 engineering students 15 of the students are from the families who have more than 50 cents of land. There are two graduate students and one diploma course student among the landless Paniyas. The seventy five graduate students and four engineering Paniya students belong to families who hold land up to 50 cents. Nearly 12 per cent of the students belonging to Paniya families hold more than 50 cents of land and there are sixteen graduate students and two engineering students from that category. However, the State repressed the Adivasi struggle for land and has not yet fulfilled the agreement signed on 16 October, 2001 to give one - five acres of cultivable land to the landless Adivasis.[24] This seems to be the minimum prerequisite, as the present study has shown, to address the inequalities existing in educational experiences among the Paniya and Kurichia communities. In an interview, Adivasi leader C.K Janu said that the main reason for Adivasi children's lack of education is landlessness and according to her the main concern of an Adivasi parent is to address their children's hunger and it is impossible for them to have a vision of education, especially higher education without land (interview by Rekharaj 2008). However, from the time of independence, the promise of the government to give land to the landless Adivasi people has been repeatedly broken.

24 Bijoy and Raman (2003) provide the major components of the agreement.

As Das and others (2001) argue, such a breach of promise is an extreme form of violence, which can result in the slow erosion of their trust in the State and its institutions.

Conclusion

Inequality ingrained in society gets transferred to the school through non-Adivasi teachers and the school community trained in the inequitable social system. The educational system has evolved a performance evaluation system entirely based on the non-Adivasi student's performance, to evaluate the Adivasi students. Establishment of the MRSs or special schools does not address the issues of social and cultural alienation they face without changing the dominant discourses on what constitutes legitimate knowledge and finding legitimate space for Adivasi perception and their knowledge within the formal curriculum. The mismatch between formal schooling and the everyday lives of Adivasi children resulting in their intrinsic exclusion is not addressed through the state's policy reform processes. An inherent limitation of Adivasi identity vs. national citizen's is projected and perpetuated through the hegemonic institutions of the state. The National Curriculum Framework Review reports that the organisation of the Indian education system reflects clearly the caste, class and tribe stratified structure of society and its hierarchical ideology (NCFR 2005). A wide range of issues such as cultural hegemony of the dominant groups/classes, the identity as tribe, the identity as slave caste in the feudal and colonial periods, and the complex interface of all these play their role in perpetuating inequality in the education of Adivasi children.

The two communities, the Paniyas and the Kurichias cope with or resist the process of education in different ways. The Kurichia students are more resilient. They too experience exploitation in different degrees, but they respond differently due to their material, social and cultural advantages and the consequent assertion of power as a community. Both the communities undergo different degrees of violence and conflict that form their subjectivities differently, interfering with their learning and curtailing their cognitive capacities.

Along with a critical understanding of social structures as well as their ideological reproduction through educational institutions, understanding the subjective experience of violence and exclusion in everyday schooling is very important to explain the differential educational experiences and outcomes among Adivasi communities. In the case of the Kurichias, land provides them a better identity as it acts as a social, cultural and symbolic

capital in Wayanad context where Brahmin *jenmis* were considered the sole owners of the landed property. Also the landedness and subsistence built on it reduced the dependency of Kurichias on dominant classes and the government, and provided them with better bargaining capacities unlike the totally dependent Paniya wage labourers. This provided better acceptability of Kurichia children in schooling in their local contexts. However, their generic identity as tribe gets crystallised in the broader context of National citizenship. The responses of the communities reveal that systematic violence can cripple the individual's and community's ability to resist domination and even to access policies and programmes purported to 'empower' them. In fact, in many ways it exacerbates their marginality by rendering their knowledge and culture illegitimate and their bodies and subjectivities sites of overt and symbolic violence.

The state supported hegemonic social and cultural constructions of knowledge negate the specific culture of the Adivasi communities. Instead of pluralising the learning spaces, the State, through its policies and programmes, tries to consolidate the inequitable mono culture by legitimising and reproducing the inequalities and dominant cultural practices. The education system and the pedagogic actions resist recognising and legitimising Adivasi knowledge, perhaps because it carries elements that contest the dominant mono cultural trends of society. However, this mono culture trends are not limited to education but extend to the entire life situation of Adivasis and their habitats. For instance, the spread of mono culture cash crop and the resultant deforestation and degradation of environmental resources have far reaching effects on the indigenous knowledge systems as well as on their survival and health. The next chapter discusses how resource depletion, knowledge depletion and the resultant poverty, hunger, malnutrition affect their health.

CHAPTER VI

Health, Healthcare Seeking and Notions of Well-being

Health Development as Marginalisation

This chapter analyzes the Paniya's and Kurichia's perceptions of health and illness and their experiences of various healthcare services. It is not about the mortality and morbidity patterns but about conditions that produce ill health and loss of well-being. Adivasi views and experiences illustrate how their conceptualisation of well-being is quite different from the dominant biomedical/developmentalist notions and how the latter marginalises the former. However, health seeking by the Adivasis is partly influenced by biomedical developmentalist notions and partly by their culture and the necessities of their living conditions. According to Bury (1998), the powerful mechanisms of modern practices of healthcare with its objectifying processes and rise of professional expertise had separated key areas of knowledge from the 'life world' of people to rationalise, colonise and homogenise everyday life. While the Adivasis struggle to avail themselves of modern healthcare facilities, they continue to rely on their cultural resources and make efforts to reaffirm and recreate their knowledge and continue to offer a critique of modern healthcare practices. Even though Adivasis are constantly in tryst with the capitalist commoditisation trends in their everyday life, the present mode of development and progress are alien concepts especially for the Paniyas as they are people living for the present without amassing wealth for the future. The Paniyas and Kurichias have no definition for 'development' in their culture but they always connect a healthy and self reliant life as a preferable condition. Adivasis consider health as one of the most important assets in life, and for marginalised groups like the Paniyas it is the only asset for their survival and livelihood. Exploring the experiences of marginality and their every day struggles is important in delineating the health and illness of the Paniyas and the Kurichias.

The first section of this chapter discusses the conceptualisation of health and illness of the Paniyas and the Kurichias and the conditions that produce ill health. The latter part explores their experiences of seeking healthcare through different systems of medicine, the developmentalist state and its approaches to Adivasi health as well as Adivasi

responses and critique. The cultural constructions of modern medicinal practices of the Paniyas and the Kurichias and their own systems of belief and practices are given importance in understanding their world views and the factors affecting their health and illness. More than a conventional biomedical approach which dominates the current discourse on health and illness, the material, cultural, ecological and political factors affecting the health status of the Paniyas and the Kurichias are given importance in this analysis.

Conceptualisation of Health, Illness and Well-being

In the study area, the Paniyas and Kurichias perceive health as their most precious asset and grace from god[25]. As people who live for the present without accumulating much for the future, health becomes the most precious resource for their everyday life. The concepts of health, illness and healing for Adivasis are much broader in perspective than the biomedical concepts. When they talk about health and well-being, the Adivasis are not only concerned with the direct causes and effects of health and illness, but are also concerned about the loss of rich sources of food items, conversion of paddy fields and the loss of rich reservoirs of food, pollution of food, air, river and soil and destruction of fish in the river. They also give importance to their rituals, customs and values which help preserve unity in the community and consider their neglect as the cause of the wrath of ancestral spirits and gods, which results in ill health. When they attribute the main reason for their illness to the wrath of the gods, sorcery or the evil eye, they also include lack of food and unhealthy food habits and lifestyle changes due to the alienation from their habitats as causes of ill health. The displeasure of spirits and gods are not brought on merely by disrespecting cultural and normative systems but also by the inability of the Adivasis to protect their natural environment. As Eder and Gracia Pu (2003) point out, the indigenous healing practices are not centred on the biological aspect alone, but are concerned with reordering the social, environmental and spiritual balance. According to this perspective, the individual is not diseased but is in a state of imbalance. So the treatment also takes into consideration the family, community and combines characteristics of physical, social, environmental and spiritual therapies.

25 Kurichias use the word *Thambai* and Paniyas use the word *Padichavan* for God. But while talking with me they used the word ‘daivam’ as I am not familiar with their traditional usage.

In the study area, the Adivasi's traditional belief is that different deities and ancestral spirits are responsible for causing health and illness. According to their belief, mistakes committed while propitiating their ancestral gods is one of the main reasons for illness and they adopt ritualistic healing practices thus reinforcing cultural practices and traditions to please their gods to get rid of the illness. Elders among the Paniyas and Kurichias believe firmly in the 'supernatural' basis of ill health. For instance, one Paniya mother stated, "My son is sick as we could not attend the traditional rituals of my father's *kaakkapolai.*[26]" A Kurichia elderly woman said, "If boys touch the girls during *theendari* (menstrual cycle), boys will get sick as their ancestral gods will get angry with them for violating their tradition and girls will get sick if they do not follow the traditional norms". Paniya and Kurichia elders also mentioned the use of herbs for healing along with rituals. Thus, supernatural causes are also treated with natural remedies.

The Paniyas and Kurichias reported that they perceive and give importance to the bodily causes of illness and use many herbs in their healing practices. At the same time, they perceived their healing as a divine mission unlike other systems of medicine and its commercial trends. Elders reported that initiation into this healing mission and their gift and abilities to be healers is revealed by god through dreams and practical expertise through apprenticeship. Nair (2002) reports that after death, the mentor's soul gives divine sanction to his successor for practising their medicine. He notes that the involvement of the dream in the initiation of practising medicine often prompts it to be labelled as an inefficient and irrational practise. However, one Kurichia *vaidyan,* Vellan negated the involvement of the dream in the initiation of Adivasi healers. Even though he negated the relevation through the dream, he stressed the need to protect it as sacred and consider it as god's gift. Majority of the Paniyas and Kurichias still emphasise the need for knowledge revealed through dream for initiation as a healer and it becomes a strategy to keep their wealth of knowledge within the healer's family or community.

However, educated members in both the communities are in a transitional stage of disowning their belief in supernatural causation due to its being labelled a superstition by

26 Ritual on the 7th day after death when the spirit of the dead joins the ancestors.

dominant cultures and modern medicine. At the same time, it has been observed that when misfortune hits, they resort to ritual and spiritual healing centred on ancestral worship along with medication. For instance, the death rituals are strictly followed by youth in both the communities. Thus, the critique of traditional and spiritual healing put forward by some of them has to be interpreted as attempts to negotiate the demands of modernity. Badami (2011), in his study on agency and identity in Paniya health, points out that their negation of traditional medicine and use of modern medicine is an attempt to avail themselves of development aid, an opportunity to renegotiate their marginality and to project a new identity. However, their pragmatism in choosing different methods of healing and following a pluralistic approach in health and healing cannot be interpreted as an instrumentalist approach to health. Rather, it can be seen as an internally consistent world view or cosmology that is integrative and not structured along the binaries of natural/supernatural causes and ritualistic treatment versus herbal treatment. The dominant biomedical discourses and the ethnographies of medical anthropologists impose binaries that are neither observed in Adivasi life nor are analytically useful in understanding their world. The science of medicine forces people to disown the experiential wisdom on health and healing gained by Adivasis through ages by labelling it 'primitive'. However, nobody can ignore the Adivasi healing principle as it is re-emerging in different forms of healing like *Nattu Vaidyam* (indigenous medicine), 'energy healing', pranic healing, shamanic healing and so on. Generally, all the *Vaidyars* among the Paniyas and Kurichias have a strong belief that it is god who has entrusted the gift of medicinal knowledge to them and they do it as a service to both god and humanity. One of the traditional practitioners said, "We do not claim that we are healers". He added his logic, "We give medicine only for *deenam* (ill health) and not for *Ayus* (life). If we give medicine for *Ayus*, only birth will happen and death will not take place". This reveals how much they align themselves to the cosmic principle of life and death as a natural process and their limited role as 'care givers' not as 'life providers' in contrast with the hegemonic discourses of 'medical power'. Some of these points will be elaborated in the discussion on tribal healing practices.

Conditions of Health and Well-being among Paniyas and Kurichias

The deteriorating health condition of Adivasi communities is a growing concern in Wayanad. According to the Centre of Excellence study (2006), poverty, genetic issues leading to sickle cell anaemia, high consumption of tobacco and alcohol, low nutritional intake, unhygienic surroundings and excessive exposure to chemical fertilisers and pesticides are the main causes for ill health among the Adivasis.

The major health problems among the Paniyas reported by people, primary health centres and Asha workers in the study area were general anaemia, underweight, tuberculosis, gynaecological problems, sickle cell anaemia, cancer, chicken pox, jaundice, meningitis, pneumonia, repeated infections, bronchial infections, body aches and scabies. Rare incidents of high blood pressure, diabetes and heart attack among the Paniyas were also reported from the study area. The main problems reported during the field work period among the Kuruchias were rheumatism, high blood pressure, diabetes, heart diseases, paralysis and rare incidents of cancer. However, an epidemiological sample study conducted by Mahadevan et al (1995) reported that there were no ischaemic heart diseases and diabetes mellitus among the Kurichias and this was attributed to the relative longevity among their elders. Even though, fever, cough, cold, stomach ache, headache and other respiratory diseases are common in both communities, the Paniyas face frequent attacks unlike the Kurichias. As reported by the PHC staff, anaemia and tuberculosis is less among the Kurichias compared to the Paniyas, but more than that among the non-Adivasis. At the district TB centre at Manathavady, 77 Paniyas and 7 Kurichias were registered for Directly Observed Treatment (DOT) in the year 2008. In 2009, 57 Paniyas and 3 Kurichias were registered for DOT treatment (computed from District TB centre files, Mananthavady).

Anaemia was reported as the most prevalent sickness among Adivasis and especially among the Paniyas by the health personnel in the study area. Sickle cell anaemia was reported among the Paniyas but not among the Kurichias. The number of sickle cell patients among the Paniyas in Wayanad is 161.[27] Even though sickle cell anaemia is reported as a genetic disorder, Devi's (2006:20) question seems relevant in the Wayanad

27 Collected through RTI from the office of Arogya Keralam, Wayanad.

context, “Is it perhaps possible that malnutrition for generations has imposed this condition of perpetual anaemia on the Adivasis?” Food security ensures that all people have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to maintain a healthy life. But in 2001, more than 30 starvation deaths were reported among the landless Adivasis in Wayanad and the Government interpreted it as undernourishment deaths (Jacob 2006). According to Nair (1995), tuberculosis, scabies, worm infestation and malnutrition are reported more among the Paniyas than among the Kurichias and he attributes the difference to the resources available to them. However, according to Adivasi understanding all illnesses are interlinked and a biomedical interpretation is not sufficient to understand Adivasi health and illness. Poverty, exploitation, unemployment, alcoholism, food availability and change in diet practises are closely related to their health and illness.

Poverty and Ill Health

Wayanad has the highest level of poverty among the Adivasis at 60.4 per cent (Chathukulam and John 2006). However, there is difference in the extent of poverty among different Adivasi groups like Paniyas and Kurichias their daily food intake and thus in their health conditions. For Paniyas it is observed that there was inconsistency in daily food intake. Ruha a Paniya woman said,

> If we have money to buy from the market, we prepare food; if not we remain hungry. If my neighbours have, they give some rice gruel. After my husband’s death we survived because of my brother’s and neighbours’ support. They also lack money and how long will they be able to support my family?

While staying with them I noticed that drinking black tea without sugar at regular intervals during the day has become a habit even for their children and they use this to tackle their hunger when food is not available. Kurichias had regular meals, three times a day, and there was more variety and nutritional value in their diet which perhaps contributed to their relatively better health.

The relationship between poverty and anaemia is well understood. But this abstract understanding does not convey the subjective experiences of anaemia under conditions of poverty. A Paniya woman, Nelly’s, experience is not an isolated one from the study area. Nelly with symptoms of shivering of hands, breathing difficulty and giddiness was admitted to the Government district hospital. Her face and legs were swollen and she was

pale. According to the hospital report, her haemoglobin level was 4.3 and she needed four bottles of blood. With one bottle she improved and the haemoglobin level became 6.9. Her mother, Ruha was happy to stay in the hospital because they get free food there. Ruha was a sick widow, and there was no possibility of her giving Nelly good food at home during the treatment. Ruha did not know about the seriousness of Nelly's condition because the doctor did not explain it to her. But she was aware that it was mainly due to lack of food at home and that she was not able to feed her five children properly. Nelly narrated the history of her illness:

> I dropped out of school after Standard VIII and then onwards I was working in a brick kiln till my father's death. Father's sickness and the burden of feeding six members in the family fell on my shoulders. I became very weak and I could not continue my work. My mother is sick and Kantha my elder sister had difficulty in breathing and her whole body was swollen and she was undergoing treatment. No person in my family is healthy enough to go for wage labour. To support the family our younger ones in school going age started working and one was hospitalised due to chest pain. My mother applied for a widow's pension in 2009 but it is not sanctioned even after one year and she has applied for it again.

It was observed that Nelly was not healthy for the whole year and she was hospitalised thrice within a year and she could not do the follow up as suggested by the doctors. During heavy rain and wind she was staying in the temporary shed made with plastic sheets in Karakkuni, Edavaka panchayat where *Adivasi Kshema Samithi* (AKS) promised to give 10 cents of land if they lived there continuously and attended party meetings.[28] Party leaders warned that if they left the shed, others would occupy their land. So without even considering their health condition, they stayed back during the season of heavy rain and wind. As they had no regular employment they did not have enough food and from there, Nelly was taken to the hospital again.

One of the Assistant District Medical Officers, with many years work experience in the district hospital, Mananthavady where many Adivasi patients visit, reported:

> The Adivasi's blood situation is very poor and they cannot stand even a small post partum bleeding. And this cannot be corrected by giving iron tablets during pregnancy period. It will create gastritis if they do not take proper food. Even though they include leafy vegetables in their food, the total nutrition content is not enough for them. Most Kurichias have land and they have enough food to eat. Their health condition is better than that of the Paniyas and anaemia is less among them.

28 A left party oriented Adivasi organisation engaged in land struggle and land acquisition for Adivasis by occupying and erecting huts in surplus lands, revenue lands and vested forests.

Swelling of face and body, weakness, pale colour of lips, eyes and face due to lack of blood were common among Paniya adolescents as well as pregnant women. The PHC staff in the study area also reported that almost 75 per cent of the Paniya women approaching them for healthcare needs were suffering from anaemia and underweight. A visit to the district hospital in 2009 revealed that there were many pregnant Paniya women waiting for blood transfusion to treat anaemia as there was no stock of blood in the hospital blood bank. Their stay in the hospital for long in turn affected their children's health and education. While visiting Yarah, a pregnant woman from Kunnil Paniya colony in the district hospital, she introduced me to three other Paniya pregnant women, who were also waiting for blood transfusion to treat their anaemic condition in the same ward. Soumya, eight months pregnant was waiting for two weeks for one bottle of blood, Santha for 25 days for one bottle, Ammini for ten days for five bottles in the district hospital. There was no dearth of analysis or understanding among the medical officer and the PHC staff about the 'real' cause of Adivasis acute anaemia. Yet, all they could offer was only intermittent blood transfusion for the Adivasi bodies weakened with inadequate food and excessive labour demands.

The Paniyas are fully aware that lack of facilities and poor living conditions due to poverty are the main reasons for their repeated infections, scabies and skin problems in their colonies. Because such illnesses are comparatively less among the Kurichias, the PHC staff immediately conclude that it is due to the unhygienic practises of the Paniyas and praise the Kurichias for their hygienic practises and better health. The Arayal colony is situated at a 100 metre distance to the PHC and the Paniyas reported continuous incidents of scabies and infectious diseases among their children. In their colony, there was no place for waste disposal and they reported experience of water scarcity during the dry season. Except for four or five houses out of forty, they had no latrine facility also. As Zurbrigg (1984) points out, the overriding emphasis on individual factors like germs, unhygienic behaviour and lack of particular nutrients in disease causation is ideologically compatible with the structure of western capitalism which overshadowed the earlier traditions of understanding health as primarily determined by social and economic conditions.

Labour, Exploitation and Violence

Focusing solely on poverty will not unravel the health issues of Adivasis without addressing the underlying structures of exploitation and violence at different levels. Reducing work opportunities have increased the indebtedness of the Paniyas and have recreated bondedness and exploitative labour relationships. Kodagu labour, wage labour while experiencing ill health, multiple pregnancies, sexual exploitation and increasing alcoholism among men make Paniya women more vulnerable to health problems. Kurichia women are more protected at the cost of their sexual freedom.

Unemployment, indebtedness and the resultant bondedness in terms of money or employment again lead to the vicious cycle of poverty, malnutrition and ill health. Many Paniya people take advance wages during lean seasons of employment and in return are forced to go to Kodagu for hard labour. The 'Kodagu labour' is a form of bonded labour and is often compared with their history of slavery. For the money advanced to them, they owe labour in return, thus falling in the trap of bondedness and slavery. Paniyas who worked in Kodagu from the study area reported that no safety measures are provided in Kodagu and they are vulnerable to all kinds of physical, mental and sexual health problems due to the unhealthy and exploitative conditions. Women face more vulnerability due to lack of staying and toilet facilities. Women and men stay together in sheds and they fall in love and have sexual relationships, but in many cases men do not take the responsibility of looking after them. Men and women are forced to handle all kinds of pesticides and chemicals without taking any precaution. The New Indian Express reports,

> 'There is a small pool of pesticides at every ginger farm. Workers, including children are forced to work without gloves and masks.... They end up as cancer and TB patients as they got to dip ginger suckers in the pool prior to planting them exposing them to the pesticides...'(The New Indian Express, 8 December 2008, page 5).

Out of the four selected Paniya colonies, three colonies reported the death of Paniyas in Kodagu or after coming back for lack of proper treatment at the work sites as the hospitals are at a distance. For instance, in Arayal colony Paniyas reported that Raja, who came back from Kodagu, vomited blood and died the same night. These deaths are counted as natural deaths and no action is taken by the state authorities. The Kurichias seldom go to Kodagu and therefore do not face similar health risks.

Mani, a counsellor from the Kurichia community working at the TB centre Mananthavady reported,

> It is really pathetic to note that the TB patients undergoing treatment were taken for wage labour by the non-Adivasi ginger cultivators to Kodagu to make profit. Since there is no other way to give them regular medicine, the TB centre at Mananthavady entrusted the medicines to the person (agent) who takes them for ginger cultivation on behalf of the employer. One TB patient in Edavaka panchayat is taking medicine for the third time and he goes to Kodagu while taking medicine. Now tablets are not working, so he is taking injections.

Mani called this inhumane and brutal as they make profits by playing with the life of the Paniyas. He mentioned that even for healthy people, the Kodagu migration and work is very hard. From Arayal Paniya colony, women too reported that TB patients went to Kodagu for wage labour in between treatment and due to irregular intake of medicine, the tablets were no more effective and they had to switch over to injections. Due to labour scarcity, Paniyas were forced to go to Kodagu for work even after knowing about the unsafe and exploitative work conditions there.

As described in the earlier section, Paniya women are forced to work while facing acute health problems like anaemia and infections as they assume the responsibility as caretakers. This led to serious health problems. Further, it is observed that if there is shortage of food women remain hungry after feeding the husbands and children. While distributing food, preference is given to the man who goes for wage labour and women who sit at home and indulge in household work due to lack of employment opportunities remain on an empty stomach. Very recently, a thirty year old woman died in Valli colony and she was suffering from acute anaemia. First, she was infected with TB and she completed the full course of DOT treatment. As Eva, a tribal promoter from the area conveyed, the strong medicines cured her from infections but lead her to acute anaemia and death as she could not eat healthy food while taking the medicine.

Child labour and the resultant health problems were rampant among the Paniyas as described in the case of Vitha's family. For instance, in Kunnil Paniya colony, a Standard VI dropout, Vitha was admitted in the hospital for blood stain in the sputum, chest pain and anaemia. Her neighbours reported that it was due to hard work to support her family. Her mother's pregnancy and delivery in the intervals of one and a half years forced Vitha to take on the responsibility of housework while her elder sister (18) went for daily wage

labour whenever it was available. Their mother, Urha with eight children gave birth to the ninth child when the youngest one was only one and half years old. Urha was interested in undergoing sterilisation, but the doctor discouraged her due to her severe anaemic condition and weakness after delivery. Her husband suffered from back pain and was not able to go for wage labour and the only option was to send her children for work and they also became anaemic. Thus, multiple pregnancies lead women to health risks as well as their children to child labour.

Paniya women experience various kinds of exploitation such as lack of employment and more importantly sexual exploitation due to their economic dependence on non-Adivasi people and thus they experience the double vulnerability of exploitation and ill health. Ellan Mooppan said that their women were sexually exploited by the government employees in the past (in 1970s) and this trend is continued by the non-Adivasis even today. Ellan Mooppan exclaimed,

> The people who were appointed by the Government to serve us started exploiting us. What can be done if the fence itself starts eating the crop!

However, Paniya women's free movements and sexual freedom is misinterpreted as the reason for their sexual exploitation. A Kurichiya youth commented,

> Paniya women have no shame to dance on the roads. Such indecent behaviour is the cause for so many 'unwed mothers' among them.[29]

In Arayal colony since they do not have even a big yard to dance during their festivals and ritual practices they danced on the road in front of the colony. Paniya women experience comparatively more freedom than Kurichia women and other non-Adivasi women. Their intermingling with the opposite gender is not controlled strictly in their colonies. During their festive occasions, men and women dance and they express their sexual attractions while dancing through gestures, comments and songs. However, the dominant culture decides the appropriateness of other cultural practices and the tendency is to homogenise the practise of control on women's sexuality in the guise of safeguarding them from exploitation. It appears that the constructions of Paniya sexuality and identity are based on the power relations existing in the society. The patriarchal

29 According to KILA survey report there are 392 'unwed mothers' among Adivasi women in Wayanad.

notions and the demeaning constructions about their sexuality in a way helped to exploit them without assuming any responsibility and their sexual freedom is depicted as a reason for their exploitation. Being 'unwed mothers', women experience social stigma as well as double vulnerability as they face lack of support to bring up their children and unemployment. It is reported that their children go for paid domestic work to survive and get into the vicious cycle of exploitation.

However, there are few reports of violence against Kurichia women. An elderly Kurichia said,

> Unlike your (researcher's) community, dowry deaths and violence on women are not reported among Kurichias. We still hold on to our traditional values regarding these matters and respect our women.

While the Kurichias attributed the reason for less exploitation of their women by non-Adivasis as strict sexual restrictions, a non-Adivasi neighbour of Tulsi *tharavad* shared that Kurichia women were not exploited like Paniya women by outsiders as Kurichias were experts in using the bow and arrow. Their history as warriors and their skill in using their traditional weapon gave them special power and saved their women from exploitation. However, there were rare incidents of exploitation of Kurichia women. Two incidents were reported among Kurichia women from Thirunelli panchayat.

The brutality of non-Adivasis did not spare even blind women from sexual exploitation. A blind Paniya woman from Arayal has undergone sexual abuse and her children also were born partially blind. During a visit in 2009, I observed that one blind Adivasi man married this blind Adivasi mother and they were struggling to live. One day I saw him picking up food from the hotel waste bin with the help of the hotel owner. The *anganwadi* helper said that there were seven 'unwed mothers' in that colony of 42 families and that their life was miserable, but they were hesitant to talk about their experience. The label, 'unwed mothers' hides the severity of violence and social suffering Adivasi women experience through sexual exploitation. Without addressing the sexual exploitation and the violation of a person's integrity, the State and authorities gave them a special label 'unwed mothers' as if it were the women's fault and tried to transfer the stigma to Adivasi communities to alienate them further.

During the interactions with sexually exploited women in Arayal colony, their aversion towards the non-Adivasi community was visible on their faces and they seldom spoke to non-Adivasi outsiders. However, fearing the stigma and dishonour attributed to sexually exploited women by non-Adivasis they were hesitant even to accrue the benefits promised by the Government for unwed mothers. In an initiative by the People's council for social justice, a factual study was arranged on February 7 1994, and out of 300 sexually exploited women identified in Thirunelli panchayat only three victims appeared before the study group (Local Support Team, *Paniyasadas* 2010). The sharing of their experiences started with an appeal not to make them actors in the political drama in the media for political gain (ibid, cited in Mangalam Daily, February 8, 1994). Even though the State Assembly Judicial Committee headed by Balan *vaidyan* recommended that the victims be given full financial support to prove the parenthood of their illicit children through DNA test, nothing worthwhile happened other than settling three cases by reconciliatory discussions (ibid).

It appears that these inhuman sexual assaults on them create alienation which affects their mental as well as physical health. They reported the continuation of these sexual assaults in recent times (during 2000s). Ippy from the Paniya community said,

> Duni an *anganwadi* helper from the Paniya community in Valli colony was sexually exploited by a Muslim, who is married with three children. He started living with her as her husband but after having a child he went back to his previous wife. As Communist Marxist party insisted he did register the marriage but deserted her and later again with party insistence he gave her compensation. After this traumatic experience when the girl started going to the *anganwadi* for work he exploited her again and she gave birth to a second child. He started visiting the colony again during late evenings. One day, the entire colony caught hold of him and started beating him but immediately the party people and other non-Adivasis got involved and called the police to keep him safe in the police station. Next day he was released.

The Paniya community was furious about visiting Duni in the late evening. At the same time they were not against visiting her during the day time as he was supporting her for daily expenses when the children got sick and she had nobody else to depend on. Duni was infected with TB and she was undergoing treatment in 2009 (Field notes, March 2009). However, people who practised the values of sexual freedom are now forced to restrict their children due to the experiences of continuous exploitation and labelling by the same community who exploit them. According to them the reason for restriction was, "It can become a bad model to the younger generation in our colony" and I felt that it was

a typical non-Adivasi construction. It appears that these experiences contribute to their feeling of fear and alienation and affect their psychological and physical health in manifold ways.

With the influence of non-Adivasis, the freedom and support that Paniya women enjoyed in their natal family is reducing. For instance, Nimi from Kunnil colony reported that when she came back to her natal home leaving her husband's house, her family insisted that she go back as their *jenmi's* wife advised them to do so and she took poison to escape from their compulsion and scolding. She was hospitalised and after recovery they never insisted that she go back. The Paniya elders said that if a woman comes back to her own house leaving her husband, there was no stigma attached to it. With the influence of the non-Adivasis, the Paniyas too started worrying about a deserted woman's stay in her natal home, adapting values from the dominant culture. And the suicide attempt reveals the mental trauma of the Paniya women undergoing these value conflicts.

On the contrary, the Kurichia community's sexual restrictions were appreciated by their own community as well as by the non-Adivasis. However, in Kurichia *tharavads* if women break the sexual norms, they become outcasts and even very recently (in the year 2010) there was an incident of a woman from a Kurichia *tharavad* eloping with a person from another caste. They reported that this couple could not enter the *tharavad* again and that there would be no further support from the *tharavad* for their living. Even though this practise help to keep the Kurichia culture intact, it can create harmful effects including illness to the girl, her family and the community as peaceful coexistence is disturbed for a long period. The paradox is that severe restrictions on women seems to help Kurichia women from outside exploitation and Paniya women's freedom makes them more vulnerable.

Before the age of marriage itself women undergo violence. Yarah, a student of Standard VI had a love affair and to escape the scolding from school teachers and from the dehumanising comments of her peers, she ran away with the boy even though she had not intended to marry so early.[30] She came back after one year as her husband and father

30 When teachers caught Yarah for her love affair, non Adivasi peers started teasing her saying, "We have studied in this school till Standard VII but nobody in this school has created such a bad reputation".

in law harassed her after drinking alcohol and she was then three months pregnant. In between her haemoglobin went down to 3.8 but with blood transfusions she could survive. She was suffering from severe infection in the genital area and even passing urine was very painful to her. At the age of 15, she delivered a baby but the baby died after one and half months due to weakness and malnutrition. While undergoing the pain and trauma, she burned all the hospital documents and discharge sheets as a symbol of her anger towards the system which was insensitive to her and nobody at home could stop her from doing that. She was a very intelligent girl and expressed her desire to study but again she returned to her husband's house, when the husband's family members came over for a compromise. In 2010 she was pregnant again and had come back home to escape her husband and his family's harassment. It appears that the pre-conceived norms about sexuality and sexual behaviour of the non-Adivasi community see the Paniya children's sexual attractions and their free expressions as intolerable and in this case Yarah escaped the shame and control by running away from school. Her father became more addicted to alcohol with this incident and was irresponsible in family matters for a while. There was no person/institution that she could turn to for help.

Increasing alcoholism and drug use among Paniya men also affect their women's health in manifold ways. Paniya women are victims of ill health and violence as their men spend their daily wage for alcohol instead of buying food items. Sexual exploitation and wife beating by Paniya men were reported by Paniya women. Thus, a double alienation is being faced by Paniya women which has serious health implications. In the case of the Paniyas, alcoholism destroy their values of special respect for women in their communities. One old woman, Thapi from Kunnil Paniya colony reported,

> Even though we slept under trees in the past, we were peaceful. In recent times, men's drinking habit has increased and women cannot even sleep peacefully.

The Adivasis were described as people who live in the culture of self sufficiency and thus had less anxiety about the future (Kalathil 2004). However, there were women among them who lived in constant anxiety as their men folk were addicted to alcohol. There were Paniya men who used *ganja* for momentary enjoyment leading to ill health and strife in the family. In one Paniya colony in the study area, women reported that non-Adivasis make money by selling illicit liquor and *ganja* in the colony. While women could prevent the man from selling liquor to the colony, they could not prevent the sale at his own

house, which was near their colony. However, selling *ganja* was more secretive and when women found it in their men's shirt and pant pockets, they destroyed it. In Arayal colony, Ellan Mooppan reported that the Paniyas were preparing illicit liquor in the colony itself with the help of non-Adivasi people. The non-Adivasi perception in the area is that Paniyas will go for wage labour only to those employers who distribute alcohol at the work site. Unlike other Adivasi communities, the Paniyas do not have a culture of liquor consumption and the non-Adivasi migrants in the area started distributing it to them to exploit maximum work.

Women in all the Paniya colonies in the study area reported that Kodagu labour makes their men more and more addicted to alcohol since the employers distribute it in the workplace. In Kunnil, Raven an alcoholic brought three girls one after another and he did not look after them after having children. In such cases, the community gives some support but during pregnancy and the breast feeding stage they face various health problems. His first wife, Nimma lost five children and second wife Dhuni lost one child due to poor health and premature delivery. His third wife also lost her child during delivery and Raven's family members and relatives reached her home and convinced her family members that Raven would not look after her. Now his first wife also went back to her natal house with her sixth girl child who survived. Dhuni, the one who is staying with him is unhealthy and she has two children. At times she was agitated towards her husband for not looking after them and for harassing her after drinking alcohol. However, Kurichia's experience of alienation and addiction to alcohol was much less compared to that of the Paniyas. They prefer to go for wage labour in their own locality if there is dire need and keep away from Kodagu labour.

After knowing about the brutal treatment of labourers at Kodagu, opting for the same also indicates the alienation that Paniya people experience in their own locality. For instance, one youth in Arayal colony expressed that he would prefer to work in Kodagu to working in his locality. Paniya youth facing alienation and becoming addicted to alcohol is a common phenomena. Lampan from the Paniya community reported,

> When I was a youth we used to gather in small groups and play *thudi* and dance and relax. But today we have no gatherings like that. Today Paniya youth drink alcohol and sometimes spend all night in watching TV and the community bond is diminishing among us.

As Lampan reported, various kinds of cultural alienation make their people alcoholics and drug addicts. Alcoholism has increased among the Paniyas especially among their youth due to the alienation and strife they face in the colonies and they become victims of physical and psychological illnesses due to addiction. According to a newspaper report,

> 'Joggi, a native of Thirunelli, who recently returned from a ginger farm said that hooch packets reach the farms as early as six in the morning. Workers, both male and female, start the day at the farm with a pouch of hooch. Drunk always, they lose sense of time and thus they work without confining to a time schedule' (*The New Indian Express*, December 8, 2008, page 5).

The traditional social organisations of the Paniyas and Kurichiyas are becoming weak, since the Mooppan and the religious functionaries are considered to be part of a 'primitive culture' according to the dominant cultural constructions; besides, they are becoming less acceptable to the youth. Paniya elders reported that their youth started disobeying their Mooppan. However, they learn through association and education that assimilation to the dominant cultural practices is considered part of modernity and progress. But it was observed that their traditional authority is not completely eroded in performing their cultural rites such as funeral, marriage and puberty rites. However, they are aware that they are alienated from their material, cultural and spiritual grounds by dispossession of the land and nature which was the base and binding force for centuries.

Depletion of Food Sources, Change in Diet Practises and Loss of Health

Whenever the Paniyas and Kurichias were asked about their health, they connected it with the availability of food and change in food consumption patterns. They affirmed that food is medicine more than any other medicines produced by pharmaceutical companies. They believe that through regulating food substances and by consuming pure food they can improve their health. According to Antony (1995) the food practises of Adivasis depend on their culture, ecology of the habitat and their income.

The Paniyas believe that their older members were healthier than the present generation and many elders among them stated that it was easy for them to carry 100 kilo sacks with ease when they were young. They explained that it was because of the type of food intake which itself was medicinal in the past. They had plenty of leafy vegetables, wild roots and fruits available in forests and common lands, which were not contaminated with chemicals and fertilisers. As a result, illness such as swelling of the body due to lack

of blood and anaemia were less compared to the present. If anybody suffered from due to swelling and lack of blood, they were provided with leafy vegetables such as *Vayalchully* (Hydrophyila Auriculata), *thazhuthama* (Boerrhavia Diffusa) and *thaal* (leafy stalk of colacasia) which are medicinal and very effective for healing. *Ponnamkanni* (Atternanthera sessilis) leaves, pumpkin leaves, *churli* (Diplasium esculantum) leaves, colacasia leaf and stem, *thakara* (Cassia tora) leaves, different varieties of *cheera* (Amaranthus dubius), bamboo shoots, bamboo seeds etc. were very common in their diet. In one colony they reported that they followed *ragi* (Eleusine indica, millet), *thina* (Setaria italica, a kind of millet) and *chama* (Paniculam sumatrease, a kind of millet) cultivation in the fallow lands available for cultivation and that supplemented their diet. However, they have lost their traditional food sources, which resulted in the deterioration of their health. Thanan Mooppan from Valli Paniya colony stated,

> During slavery we used to get paddy as wages and we husked the paddy and made rice gruel for dinner and what was left after dinner was given to the children the following morning. Whenever wild tubers, bamboo shoots, field crabs and fish were available, we used to add these to our meals. Pumpkin was plenty and we used to boil and eat it when there was no rice. Today we have to buy everything from the market and our younger generation prefers market items to tubers and leafy vegetables.

In complete contrast to the idea of Paniyas being the healthiest people during slavery and early independent period, during the field work they were found highly malnourished and susceptible to many illnesses (photo 23).

It was observed that during the lean season, the Paniyas may not have anything to eat the whole day. When they have money, they buy rice and fish, tomato or dal-gram from the market to prepare curry and if money is not enough then they eat rice with chilli and salt. Non vegetarian items are bought by Paniyas only when they have regular work. Once when two Paniya girls went to the paddy field to get some crabs to make curry to eat with rice, they found that their toil was futile. And they said that from the 1990s, crabs have become very rare in the paddy fields as paddy cultivation had changed to banana and ginger cultivation. Also their traditional sources of fish – ponds, streams and rivers, are alienated from them or do not give them any catch. According to a study by Aerthayil (2008), fish which is a major source of protein for people in Kerala is not affordable to the Adivasis in Wayanad in recent times.Vellan Vaidyan from Kurichia community said,

> Adivasis were healthy as they ate wild food from forests and leafy vegetables from their surroundings. We have *Nadibalam* (physical stamina) because of the food we ate. If somebody hits me with a 50 kg weight nothing happens to me. Non Adivasis eat meat and bakery items excessively, which creates all kinds of illness.

The Kurichias also reported that their elderly people were very healthy and lived longer lives than the younger generation. The pharmacological analysis of the leafy and root vegetables they used in the past found the beneficial influence of cardiac protection, slowing down the aging process and prevention of diabetes mellitus (Mahadevan, Subramaniyam, Viswanathan 1995). The Kurichia elders too reported that their traditional food habits in the past were 'pure' and nutritious. *Ragi (Muthari)* was a common food item for them. The Kurichias reported that until the 1970s, they ate *ragi* at least once a day and for children *ragi* was used as a supplementary food from the second month onwards. A regular intake of *ragi* maintained their health and infant mortality was very less among them (ibid). Mahadevan et al (1995) observed that their healthy food habits might have contributed to the proper growth of elderly Kurichias, but the change in food habits may have adversely affected the health and longevity of the future generation. According to Aiyappan and Mahadevan (1990) the discontinuation of *ragi* cultivation and its regular use severely affected the nutritional status and health of the Kurichias particularly in Wayanad as they used it as a staple diet for centuries.

Ragi cultivation was traditionally followed under shifting cultivation. They reported that fallow lands and forest lands were used for *ragi* cultivation but were not available after the new Forest Acts for conservation and land reforms here implemented during the 1960s and 1970s. The Kurichia women reported that their vegetable cultivation had reduced and *ragi* cultivation had stopped due to conversion of their remaining land into coffee, pepper, and cashew nut gardens. For the Kurichia community, this loss and change was not that drastic as majority of them had paddy fields and they continued to grow food for daily consumption. In all the four Kurichia settlements in the study area, they have stopped the habit of eating *ragi* and shifted to eating rice. In the study area, one *tharavad* continued the cultivation of *ragi* in a small patch of their paddy field till 2009 and in the other *tharavads* in the study area, they stopped it with the prohibition of *punam* (slash and burn) cultivation and privatisation of land and forests about two to three decades ago. The Kurichias were self reliant in growing food crops and unlike other communities, the Kurichias generally did not buy *ragi* even though it was available in the

market. One Kurichia ASHA worker working among their own people reported that *ragi* is rich in iron content and has less starch which protected them from illnesses like diabetes in the past, but diabetes patients were increasing among them from the last two decades.

The food habits of the Kurichias and Paniyas differ depending on their habitats, which has immense implications for their health. The general health of the Kurichias is reported to be better than that of the other Adivasi population in the area. The diet of the Kurichias contains more variety and richness compared to that of the Paniyas. However, they too explain the reason for their illness mainly in terms of the changes in their food habits and the use of 'contaminated' food items from the market. In the morning, they eat traditional dishes in Kerala like *idly*, *dosa*, *puttu* or *kanji* (rice gruel) with vegetables. They have seasonal supplementary items in their diet like tapioca, yam, elephant yam, colacasia and pulses cultivated in their own land. For lunch, generally they use boiled rice with vegetable curry, butter milk, pulses and fish according to the availability. For dinner, rice and vegetable curry is common among them. In *tharavads* as well as nuclear families, they work hard and eat sufficient food (three meals a day). However, during the field work period, blood pressure, diabetes, heart diseases, stroke, paralysis, and cancer were reported in their settlements. The Kurichias reported that tubers, fruits, milk, milk products and wild meat supplied them with plenty of vitamins and proteins, and after the 1970s, all these became rare in their diet, due to loss of cattle, grazing lands and forest lands when land got privatised and forests were reserved.

Today the Kurichias and Paniyas have started depending on the market for their daily food. While the Paniyas depend on the market almost totally due to the lack of land for growing vegetables and paddy self cultivation by the Kuruchias gives them better self sufficiency in food. However, both communities suffer from the loss of roots, tubers, wild fruits, honey, mushrooms and berries which were available in the forest and common lands. The Kurichias reported that they were non-vegetarians and wild bear, rabbits, birds and fish were common in their diet before independence and during the early period of independence. All the Kurichia elders interviewed claimed that hunting and eating wild meat was part of their culture and ritual practice which has stopped due to strict prohibition of hunting. Wild animals are no more a dependable source for their food and

this change also has implications for their health and nutrition. The Adivasis were well aware of the health issues and their interconnectedness with the broader social and ecological issues but they used the healthcare system as a quick remedy to deal with ill health.

Experiences of Healthcare seeking

Among Adivasis, the spectrum of healthcare varies between Allopathy, Ayurveda, herbal medicine, Adivasi medicine, ancestral worship and ritual healing. There were differences in their preference and actual use for a variety of reasons.

There were Paniyas and Kurichias in the study who reported that they preferred Ayurveda and Herbal treatment as it has similarities with their tradition and were not harmful to the body. However, majority of them opted for allopathic treatment expecting immediate cure which they needed as daily wage labourers or subsistent farmers. It was reported that for rheumatic complaints, majority of Kurichia women in the study area went to the Ayurvedic hospital for treatment as they work in their own paddy fields and cash crop gardens and they can afford rest and more time in the hospital, unlike the Paniya agricultural labourers who had to keep to the timings of the employer. Urha, a Paniya maintained,

> Those who work to earn their everyday meal cannot afford Ayurveda and herbal medicine as it takes time to cure even though we have affinity towards that. Also Ayurveda hospitals have only few medicines in stock and other medicines are very costly and we have to buy them from outside. We know that 'English medicine' is harmful for our body but we go for it as it gives instant relief.[31] We can take the medicine and go for work. But for small ailments like headache, toothache, urinary infection etc., we know effective herbal medicines and we treat ourselves without seeking help from English medicine.

The study by Centre of Excellence (2006) observed that the government hospitals were most favoured by the Adivasi population due to affordability as well as quality of healthcare, besides, occult practises are diminishing among them. Similarly, Dilip (2008) points out that for treatment of diseases like cancer and other tumours, Adivasis prefer government hospitals over private hospitals which are expensive and demand continuous visits and long stay. He opines that economic constraints are important in Adivasi

31 Adivasis as well as non-Adivasis in the study area use the phrase 'Enlgish medicine' to represent modern medicine. Adivasis also use *Asupathri Maunnu* (hospital medicine) instead of modern medicine.

decision making and choice of hospitals. Similarly, the Paniyas and Kurichias in the study area reported that only people with a high economic status can afford private hospital for serious sickness which demands long stay. However, they said that their faith in the services of the PHCs and the district government hospital, especially in the general outpatient section is diminishing. If they have a choice, they even borrow money from neighbours and go to the doctor's private clinic for better diagnosis and better care for ailments like fever, dysentery and scabies. One Kurichia from Champa settlement said,

> It is better to get healed with one meeting instead of going many times. So if we have money we depend on private practise. Their timings are also suitable for us because during the day we work on our land.[32] We are ready to pay if we get better treatment.

It appears that even Adivasis who perceived healing as a divine mission for centuries are forced to depend on the commercial hospitals competing for profit as they find the timings more suitable and it provides better personal care. However, the reality observed was that very few can afford the cost of a private hospital even in the case of one time consultancy for common illnesses. For serious illnesses which need hospitalisation and prolonged treatment, surgery and diagnostic tests, they cannot even think of going to a private hospital. Sarada, an Adivasi promoter appointed in the district hospital for helping Adivasi patients reported,

> From my colony all are approaching the government hospital for treatment. Many of them prefer private hospitals but they have no money to pay. Most of them opt for hospital medicine as they want immediate healing as they are all wage labourers.

Ippy from Paniya colony said,

> We prefer to go to the district government hospital as we get food three times a day. When I was young, there was no free provision of food and even though hospitalised, five of my children and my husband died from TB. There was no food to give them and I used to give them hot water from the tea shop in front of the hospital.

However, there are Kurichias and Paniyas who criticise these free provisions by saying that distribution of bread and rice gruel in hospitals will not help but they have to equip them to cook rice daily to become healthy. The Paniyas and Kurichias believe that as the treatment is free in government hospitals, the doctors provide minimum care. Also they

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32 In Valli Paniya colony also it was observed that an eight year old boy got fever and they waited till evening for his father to bring the wages to take him to a private clinic. Meanwhile the child's grandmother did the traditional healing of cleansing him. Water, silver coin and ash were used for cleansing and the grandmother acted as a *shaman* possessing the impurity in the sick body.

tested and reported that the free medicine they received from the hospital decayed faster than what they purchased from the medical shop. However, it appears that their choice for a different healthcare system was more practical and contextual rather than their degree of faith in each system.

Material Factors Affecting Healthcare

Factors like poverty, distance to the hospital, inconvenient hospital timings and lack of facility in PHCs to provide emergency care are constraints experienced by the Paniyas and Kurichias while seeking healthcare.

An anganwadi teacher in Kunnil Paniya colony said that a six month old child was very serious due to pneumonia and that with the help of an ASHA worker, the child was taken to the hospital at the last stage. When asked for the reason for not consulting the doctor early, Urha from Kunnil Paniya colony said,

> Many children were having *Ancham pani* (measles) and we thought this child also had the same problem and neglected the weakness in the beginning stages and her father did spiritual healing every day.

Since the *anganwadi* was close to the colony, the teacher reported the serious condition of the child to the ASHA worker and the child was taken to hospital. At the hospital, the doctor informed them that there was little chance of cure even if they took the child to the Medical College hospital. Then child's father (Nellan from Kunnil colony), said ... "Give me the child. Let her die in my lap". Even though the people gathered around him criticised him for inaction he explained his disposition later... "That time I did not have even 5 paisa with me. And the only possibility before me was that". He was very clear that his action was not due to lack of interest in the child's life but the acceptance of the inevitable, under conditions of extreme poverty.

However, the *anganwadi* teacher and the people around him collected some money and they were sent to the medical college in hospital ambulance. Nellan told me later,

> Even though the medicine and treatment is free in the medical college we have to pay for using toilet, bathroom, and hot water and to drink a cup of tea. Also when the child started recuperating she started asking for toys seeing the other children playing and I did not have money even to buy tea for her. There was no way to get some money to survive as my family members and relatives were also sick and some of them were admitted in the district hospital. Remembering how they had sent me to the medical college by collecting money

> from the people in the hospital premises, I went out of the medical college and told everybody around that I had no money to survive till the child gets alright. Some people gave money and I managed there till the child was discharged. By that time my brothers could bring some money for us to go back even though they managed it with much difficulty.

This describes the plight of the Paniyas who depend entirely on wage labour to meet the expenses and of course he could not do follow up even though the doctor advised him to return after two weeks. The aid they get from the Government is not enough to meet the necessities if they do not have a material base to survive. In that family, there was only one girl of 18 years to fetch food for the entire family of ten members, as the mother who had an infant to breastfeed and the father who was physically weak were not able to go for wage labour. Their family is caught in a debt trap due to continuous health problems and the girl who dropped out in Standard VI was sent to a nearby panchayat for paid domestic work. Further, if the PHC staff or ASHA was vigilant they could have visited the village early when many children were infected with measles in the colony and the child could have been attended to early.

Even though the PHC was just 100 meters away from Arayal colony, the two wells in the colony were filled with waste thrown by children and they were not in a usable condition and no action was taken against this. A dead rat was found in a well, the water from which the colony people used for bathing and washing. Dhara, a Paniya woman said that they could not clean the well as they could not hire a pump to remove the water and that the non-Adivasi neighbours were not ready to lend their motor pump to the Paniyas. The other well was not used for drawing water by them but leaving it like that could lead to serious health problems (photo 24). Dhara reported that the public tap was also damaged for two weeks and they experienced scarcity of water. When I visited the colony in 2006, I found that there was no public tap and the scarcity was severe. The PHC field staff were unconnected with the life of the people, their feelings, their views about illness and treatment and reported that the Paniyas' lack of cleanliness and alcoholism was the main reason for their sickness. This indicates that they attribute the responsibility of the sickness to the Paniyas without assessing the material, social and cultural context in which they live. However, this approach leads to lack of cooperation on the part of the Paniyas and their disregard for PHC healthcare services. In effect, the PHCs were unable to enthuse and elicit participation from the Paniyas as its functioning seemed irrelevant to

their basic health needs. It was observed that Paniyas do not demand for better care and most of the time it appeared that PHCs were thrusting healthcare on passive beneficiaries.

The absence of doctors in PHCs and their neglect of Adivasi patients, especially Paniyas, were also reported as reasons for the Paniya's lack of interest in approaching PHCs. A pharmacist who worked in Arayal PHC reported that doctors were not ready to stay in the village and that they were not regular; in 2006, after 36 years of its functioning, one doctor was ready to stay there. In the absence of the doctor, the compounder only helped them in risky situations. It was also observed that when non-Adivasi staff were appointed in interior areas, they take long spells of leave and went home on grounds of familial responsibilities and more the lack of facility. During my three visits to the Arayal PHC on working days, the field staff meant for Arayal Paniya colony were on leave and when I enquired, the Adivasis said that she often took leave as her family stayed in another district.

Further, most of the PHCs lack the basic minimum facilities for attending to their recurring ailments. For instance, in Arayal PHC the pharmacist reported,

> Treatment for tuberculosis was offered in PHC for a short period. The lab technician was transferred to a medical college in Alappuzha district without a replacement. Even the microscope was taken away from the PHC. The TB patients in this area have to travel a distance of 26 km to the district TB centre for a routine sputum examination.

If TB checkup was introduced in that PHC, it would be of great help to the Paniyas who stayed in the PHCs as well as in interior places of Thirunelli. Even though DOT treatment was found helpful, there was no mechanism to control the spread of the disease in the thickly packed houses in the colonies. Late diagnosis and lack of facilities for hygienic practises, spread the disease to other colony members.[33]

The pharmacist who worked in Arayal PHC reported that when P.K Kalan, an Adiya Adivasi leader was the Block president they got a fund of Rs. 4 lakhs and used it immediately to set up a gynaecology ward in Arayal PHC. But it never functioned as the Government did not appoint a gynaecologist. An inpatient section needed repairs before it

33 The colony atmosphere is very congested and it is observed that sick people, children and others sit together to watch TV, as only one or two families owned a TV, which perhaps was the only source of entertainment for them. It was also observed that in the same way chicken pox, scabies, *anchampany* (measles) etc. spread to other children in the colony.

could be used. P.K Kalan said that he recognised the need to get pregnancy care in Arayal PHC for the Adivasi women in the interior areas of Thirunelly as the hospital was 26 km away. In an emergency, the Paniyas found it difficult to get a taxi to reach the pregnant women and serious patients to hospital as they may not be having ready cash to pay the taxi fare. However, the then Health Minister decided that there was no need for an inpatient section in the PHCs and did not appoint a gynaecologist. It appears that Adivasis are excluded even in the PHC services due to lack of political will to cater to their urgent needs like pregnancy care and facilities for delivery near their settlements. Even though the state exhorts women to have institutional deliveries, it does little to ensure that institutional facilities are accessible to pregnant Adivasi women.

Even though the economic condition of the Kurichias was relatively better and they were more vigilant in attending to their health needs than Paniyas, the distance to the government hospital and the lack of referral service in the PHC affected them. Swathy (35) from Thirunelli panchayat, Champa settlement said,

> In August 2007, my mother (85) was taken to the PHC for pain in the legs and as she fell down while changing her clothes. With support she could walk to the PHC. She had high blood pressure and she used to take medicines regularly. The doctor gave her five tablets from his quarters and after taking the tablets my mother became weak and in the night she was paralysed and lost her ability to walk and talk.

Even though the case was serious, the doctor did not refer the patient to the district hospital. When they took her to their house for further checkup, his comment was "... let her lie down now, and you take care of her. She has looked after you for long. Now it is your turn to look after her..." This comment made them furious and they lost faith in the PHC doctor, and took her to the district hospital 26 km away. When they reached, the doctors in the district hospital could not do much as it was at the last stage. After 15 days of hospitalisation, she regained her speech partially but they could not cure the paralysis in her legs. Swathy said that they suspected the reason for paralysis was an overdose of medicine and carelessness on the part of the PHC doctor.

Even though the Allopathic system hegemonises the other systems with its universal cause effect relations, Adivasis still perceive the complex nature of health and illness. One retired post man from a Kurichia *tharavad* affected by stroke and recuperating with Allopathic medicine, daily practise yoga and control of food talked about their lifestyle

changes and stress in life as causes of illness. He continuously spoke about the period of change to nuclear families and the stress they had undergone in their *tharavads* during property division among the *tharavad* members. There was no consensus among them as it was a sudden transition. The property laws favoured the nuclear family set up and thus the change to nuclear families was in a way forced on them. The existing joint families still face ongoing strife due to unsettled property divisions during the 1970s and that may have implications for their health too. The general sickness noticed among the Kurichias during field work were blood pressure, diabetes, heart problems and rheumatic complaints, which were not common among them till thirty to fourty years back. The cultural alienation they had undergone was tremendous during their transition from joint families to nuclear families. However, in modern health institutions in Wayanad, the Paniya and Kurichiya culture, the historical transition they have undergone and their subjective experiences on health were not given importance. According to Good (1994: 73), "the person is a cultural construct, a complex and culturally shaped way of experiencing self and other, and cultural "work" is required to reconstitute the person who is the object of medical attention".

In PHCs, separate health records for Adivasis in general or for different groups of Adivasis like the Paniyas and Kurichias were not available as it was not demanded by the state government. As Haddad et al (2010) too point out the Paniyas, a particularly vulnerable tribe, due to their historical enslavement and their poor living conditions have greater health needs compared to other Adivasi groups in Wayanad but no distinction was made between Adivasi groups in social policy. Further, modern health services lack sensitivity to the experiences of diverse groups like the Paniyas and Kurichias and follow a mechanical approach that was conceived in the colonial past. Panickar and Soman (nd) argue that the difference in the socio economic level is related to the difference in health values, understanding and information concerning diseases, preventive planning, cultural expectations concerning health services and feelings of social distance between oneself and health practitioners. Rather than the socioeconomic factors, as Kleinman (1977) argues, culturally constructed health beliefs and practises affect the health seeking behaviour and the healing process of different cultural groups. However, understanding people's subjective experiences of the structural and cultural factors are important in understanding their choices and health seeking behaviour.

Object vs. Subject in Healthcare

In the biomedical system, the patient becomes an object to be treated than a person to be explored with varied experiences of health and illness for correct diagnosis and treatment. Good (1994) highlights the objectification and commoditisation of health and human suffering in modern medicine and argues that within the life world of medicine, the body is newly constituted as a medical body, which is distinct from the bodies with which we interact in everyday life. He says that the anatomy lab is a site where the emergence of the body as a site of medical knowledge happens. Lawrence (1995) points out that the trend of objectification in medicine began with the development of science at the end of the eighteenth century and then progressively in the nineteenth century when disease was separated from the experience of the sufferer and relocated it in a system of thought about the human body based on the findings of pathological anatomy. Knowledge that was once embedded within everyday life experiences and their local setting is thus separated and subjected to the specialist's development in modern system of medicine (Bury 1998). The development of the hospital was important in this process of objectification and as part of modernity, bedside medicine gave way to hospital medicine. Thus, treatment became mechanical and prescriptions were based on diagnosis at first glance as Badami (2011) points out. Nimma (30) from Kunnil colony went with her child for eye checkup when the doctor came to the village clinic. She reported,

> After looking into the eyes of the child with a torch, the doctor scribbled something on the paper without a proper checkup. I did not give the medicine the doctor gave my child. I threw it when I came back home.

Nimma's narration indicates her anger towards the doctor and the doctor's indifference; he neither showed any personal attention nor took any effort to convince her about the child's defect and the capacity of that medicine to heal. However, in the case of an illiterate Paniya, the written slip of paper to list the complaints, diagnosis and treatment further marginalises them as Badami (2011) points out. And giving a slip without proper explanation of the illness and treatment worsens the situation.

In contrast, Veena (18), a Paniya woman from Kunnil colony reported,

> If I get a headache, my grandmother will do the healing for me. When grandmother touches me with her hand itself, I find relief. Unless I am very seriously ill, I do not like to go to the hospital.

Veena's description shows how much she was emotionally attuned to the healer and the healing process in their cultural context. However, the doctor's lack of attention and indifference is a very common complaint among Adivasis and they approach doctor's private clinics and private hospitals expecting better treatment and at least minimum personal care. It appears that Adivasis did not believe in the magical capacity of the object called medicine and often complained that doctors do not take time for checkup especially in government hospitals and village clinics which offer free treatment for Adivasis. More than free treatment, they aspire for quality treatment from Government health institutions with proper care, attention and explanation about the details of the sickness. As Good (1994:71) points out, the world of medicine gets built up as a distinctive world of experience - a world filled with objects that simply are not part of our everyday world, and however, in this objectification process the subjective experiences and feelings are not given importance. The situation of Adivasis is worsened by the class and ethnic differences between them and the medical practitioners. Issues arising out of medical ideology on the one hand and the stratification systems on the other are at best perceived as arising out of lack of sensitivity or as attitudinal problems on the part of service providers.

One of the Assistant DMOs reported,

> There is so much difficulty to give personalised attention to the Adivasis in government hospitals. Also there is lack of link between the PHC, CHC and District Hospitals. In the district hospital if there is a personalised link up system for the Adivasi patients they will not become strangers in the system. If their local doctor refers and informs the District hospital early, they will get special care and they will be happy. Otherwise, they are thrown here and there like a shuttle in the game of badminton. Also doctors are assigned to multiple programmes like immunisation camp, sterilisation camp, non- communicable disease camps, eye screening camps etc. Every month there will be 40 to 50 programs and the task is heavy. To create an Adivasi friendly atmosphere is not easy in an overloaded system like ours. Special management training has to be given to the staff to make changes in their attitude.

An NRHM officer in the district said,

> If there is a personalised link up system through ASHA, PHC, doctors and specialists, the situation may improve. Now there is no warm relationship among them and Adivasi people may suffer due to unfamiliarity with the modern system. They do not know where to go and get things done in the hospital as well as accessing help from different institutions meant for them.

The objectivisation is perceived more acutely in reproductive health practises. The Adivasis who saw delivery as a part of lifecycle phenomena now started perceiving it as

an area that needs medical intervention due to complications which are unfamiliar to them to deal with and through the modern discourses on the importance of hospital delivery. Vellan *vaidyan* from Kurichia community reported,

> Today caesarean operations are very common in delivery cases. During pregnancy, nutritious food and vitamin tablets are given in excess and the child's head grows big and natural delivery become impossible. In our culture, we will not give meat or extra nourishment to pregnant ladies but they eat plenty of leafy vegetables as it is common in Adivasi culture. In the past, Adivasi women's work included removing the husk of paddy grains by pounding with a wooden log (*nellukuthal)* and this help to make the hip area soft and flexible and help them for natural delivery. This also helps blood circulation and safe delivery. Modern medicine advises to take rest during pregnancy and there is a chance for complications and an increased number of operations have been reported in recent years. Before, there were not many complications reported among the Kurichias during delivery and that was due to our lifestyle and diet practises.

The Assistant DMO, admitted that prenatal, antenatal checkups and delivery have became high tech and there were incidents of gynaecologists behaving rudely with the patients and ASHA workers if they go to an ordinary doctor for an initial checkup instead of consulting specialists from the beginning. Devaki from Valli colony narrated an incident that had witnessed while she was admitted for delivery in the district hospital. ASHA workers brought three Paniya pregnant ladies from the village and they were waiting to see the gynaecologist. There were three gynaecologists on duty that day and they called all their regular patients for checkup. These Paniya ladies were standing in one corner and the doctors came and told them that they were not their patients and left without examining them. Even cases were reported by ASHA workers that they were scolded for bringing patients who were not registered for antenatal care.

Members of Paniya and Kurichia community reported that there were safe home deliveries till recent times (2000 to 2010 period) in their settlements. In a group discussion, Paniya women reported that they prefer home delivery but now majority of them fear chances of complication due to various health issues and they were forced to opt for a hospital delivery. From 2005 onwards there were no home deliveries among the Kurichia women in the study area and they said they preferred hospital delivery, as the risk during delivery has increased today and they attributed it mainly to the contaminated and poisonous food they use and lifestyle changes. They expressed there was less complication in the past during deliveries and many middle aged and old ladies among Kurichias and Paniyas stated that they came back from their work place and gave birth to

babies and that after delivery they returned to normal life within one month. For them delivery was an ordinary event and complications like anaemia, bleeding, low or high blood pressure were reported as common among Paniya and Kurichia women.

In recent times, obstetrics has became one of the most important areas for medical intervention and the medical system as a whole objectifies the phenomenon of delivery. The ASHA workers were instructed that there should not be any home delivery and that every delivery should take place in the hospital. The responsibility is placed on ASHA workers and instead of aiming at safe delivery, the health policies were trying to institutionalise delivery care fully through the services of the ASHA worker. Instead of promoting health with a holistic plan from the beginning of pregnancy, the healthcare program is confined to save the life of mother and child and reduce the infant mortality rate (IMR) and maternal mortality rate (MMR). Continuous weakness and ill health of the pregnant and breastfeeding mothers among the Paniyas were neglected in effect. Referring to such tendencies, Oakley (1980) argues that modern medicine increasingly 'sequestrates' childbirth from the everyday world of women and of lay practises and practitioners. She points out that the consequence is that the doctor-patient relationship dominates the women's attitude and experience in pregnancy and the entire focus becomes the medical management of delivery.

Urha from the Paniya community stated,

> After delivery, Paniya women are becoming very weak. After my delivery, I was hospitalised due to lack of blood and they could not do sterilisation due to weakness.

Urha asked her husband to undergo vasectomy but he was not ready for it fearing a health risk. However, the gender differences make the female body more vulnerable to modern medicine and obstetrics. In birth control methods, a clear gender division can be noticed among the Paniyas and the Kurichias. Even though the women were weak after delivery, men were not ready to undergo vasectomy. The hospital staff also advised the women to approach them after improving their health and ignore counselling their male partners to undergo vasectomy. In the case of Urha, before she could become healthy enough for the operation, she conceived the next child. During my last visit, she had given birth to her ninth child. This indicates the patriarchal values existing in the community as well as in

the medical field. These women who were medically unfit for tubectomy are found to be bearing several children.

Eva, another Paniya woman from Valli colony reported that her husband was ready to undergo vasectomy when he came to know that there was no health risk involved and that he could go for wage labour as usual. This indicates that awareness building and change in the patriarchal notions of medical institutions may lessen the gender disparity in sterilisation. However, perceiving the threat of Adivasi extinction, the government policy insists that the sterilisation operation can be done among Adivasis only after they had three children and after the second child was of age three. Generally, the Paniyas and Kurichias were found to be very pragmatic towards sterilisation. Pachan, a Paniyan from Richur settlement said,

> Today we are not against sterilisation operation as we have no money to bring up more children. Three to four decades ago, we could fetch food items from forests and common lands and the children had only minimum needs and there was the possibility of bringing up ten to eleven children.

It was reported by the PHC staff and ASHA workers that prenatal and antenatal checkups were not done at regular intervals by Paniya women, but the Kurichia women were very regular. The Centre of Excellence (2006) study reports that prenatal medical checkups are not practised by about half of the respondents in their survey (213 out of 436) but they visit PHCs or government hospitals in case of sickness. Their study also reported that half of the cases of delivery among the Adivasis are not with the assistance of a doctor. In their survey, out of 404 delivery cases, 46 were assisted by the traditional midwife, 146 by relatives or friends, 194 by the doctor and 18 by nurse midwife. However, the appointment of ASHA workers was reported as a small relief but even they showed reluctance to follow up with Paniya pregnant ladies as they did not remember the correct dates of checkup and their due dates of delivery. If they failed to reach pregnant women to the hospital on time for delivery even after having taken them for the minimum three checkups and injections during the initial stage of pregnancy, they may even lose the small remuneration of Rs. 200 (at the beginning phase it was Rs. 600). One ASHA worker reported that to follow up a Paniya woman from the beginning of pregnancy till the end and reach her to the hospital for delivery was a very tedious job. In the case of Kurichias and non-Adivasis, they themselves take responsibility to go to the hospital on

time and there was no 'risk' for the ASHA worker. On the contrary, even the literate Paniyas find it difficult to remember the dates of the Last Menstrual Period (LMP) and due date of delivery. For them it was difficult to think chronologically as they follow nature's cycle to remember the events rather than use a calendar.[34] If a date is given to them for follow up meetings or awareness programmes, they seldom remember it. Again, the tendency of the system was to blame Paniya women, as extra efforts were needed to include them.

Even after the appointment of ASHA workers, there were Paniya women who did not receive essential and emergency obstetric care from skilled health workers. There were incidents of chronic weakness of mothers and infant deaths in the study area due to lack of timely assistance. For instance, in Knnil Paniya colony, Neena's blood pressure suddenly increased when she was seven months pregnant and she was seriously ill when they reached her to the hospital. From the District hospital, she was referred to the Medical College at Calicut and she delivered two still births. Meena also became very weak and she took almost six months to recover. At times Paniya women meet with complications like sudden delivery at home or on the way to the hospital. Even during 2009, they reported incidents of still births as well as death of the child after delivery. In Kunnil Paniya colony, one mother lost five of her children and for the sixth delivery when she reached the hospital, the doctor sent her back as there was time left for delivery. When she reached home she delivered and the child died.

Delivery was previously attended by traditional birth attendants from the Paniya and Kurichia communities. The Paniyas called them *eettukarathy* and the Kurichias called them *vetti*. *Eettukarathys* and *vettis* are becoming extinct today as hospitalisation is projected as a must by the state and allopathic medical institutions. However, Paniya women from the study area reported that if there is any complication, they find it difficult

34 Even now calendars are rare in their houses. The Paniyas were not seen rushing to save time and money and I experienced it with other Adivasi groups also. While staying with an Adivasi family in Attappady, I saw that one child was seriously ill and I rushed to the hospital with the child and mother. We did not have enough money for the expense and eagerly waited for the child's family to come. Somehow we managed the money in the hospital by giving the name of the organisation that we were in contact with. When the child's family reached it was late evening and when we enquired they explained that on the way they found a rabbit, caught it and cooked it and came to the hospital. Neither the past nor the future holds any concern, but the timeless dimension, the present, is more alive in the Adivasi mind and it is against the capitalist culture of speed and progress.

to reach them to the hospital because taxi drivers were not ready to go with them as they have no guarantee about the payment of taxi charge immediately. Further, there were no trained midwives among them to attend to complicated cases and the babies were born without enough protection and care.

The two higher officials in the health field who were interviewed were aware that causes of illness among Adivasis were not well addressed in the health field. One official (The assistant DMO) reported that there was resistance from the Government to address the root causes of ill health and there was lack of political will to intervene in their health issues holistically. However, the Public Health Centers (PHCs), did not stress enough their lack of land, lack of clean water facility, lack of food availability, lack of space for proper sanitation and drainage system and lack of employment as major reasons for their ill health even though the concept of public health envisage intervention in all these areas. The PHC programmes remained at the superficial level and included the immunisation programme, family planning, distribution of iron and folic acid, other curative measures and awareness programmes. The Assistant DMO, Wayanad district criticised the depoliticisation of health and stressed the need for redistribution of resources and said,

> Without an integrated approach to look into the multiple causes of their illness starting from nutritional deficiency, they could not improve their health status. Their land issue also has to be addressed for improving their health status and Kurichia people's better health is due to their access to land and to the organic food items they produce. To improve the health status of the Adivasis, their general status has to be improved and for that a multipronged approach is needed. Those who are in power are not sensitive to look into this issue holistically and their preference is curative care than preventing illness among Adivasi communities.

There are health officials who agree that the material condition of the Paniyas and Kurichias has to be improved first for improvement in health. However, their perceptions still fall in the developmetalist perspective and they do not envision a pluralistic approach to health which promotes the modern as well as traditional systems according to the specific context. The health professionals still believe that modern medicine is superior and that the healing culture of the 'other' is backward and treat them as objects rather than subjects having a distinct language, culture, experiences and feelings. The experience of discrimination and violence faced by the Paniyas and Kurichias is another consequence of the processes of objectification.

Discrimination and Violence

There were incidents that even in the private clinics Paniyas were neglected and humiliated. An ASHA worker from Thavinjal panchayat reported that a Paniya family wanted to consult the gynaecologist at her private clinic expecting better care and they were scolded and sent back to the out patient department (OPD) in the government hospital. The pregnant Paniya woman wore a *chudidar* when she went for checkup and doctor mockingly said to her, "....you are fashionable enough to wear chudidar, but do not know to give answer to the questions I ask. Now it is time to remove the *chudidar*". When the ASHA worker asked why she was not treated in the private clinic, the doctor said that they did not know the LMP and that it was risky to treat such patients in the private clinic. The ASHA worker also reported that the Paniyas generally did not remember the LMP and they were always scolded by the doctors for that. Even ASHA workers who were committed to their work, find it difficult, as they do not remember the date but they remember events according to the environmental calendar. For instance, even now they say "when paddy was plucked, while sowing the seed, when coffee seeds were plucked, during the last rain etc." to denote the month of beginning of pregnancy and for a non-Adivasi ASHA worker it is difficult to calculate the date accordingly. The Kurichias, being more educated and market oriented than the Paniyas did not face it difficult to remember dates and going to the hospital on time. However, there were incidents of neglect and discrimination faced by the Kurichias too. Swathy, a Kurichiya woman from Champa settlement maintainted,

> I took my mother, a paralysed patient to the district hospital when puss formed due to catheterisation and the resultant restlessness. Since the doctor we consulted previously was on *Sabarimala* duty she waited for a long to get some assistance and care. The doctors did not checkup and according to some nurse's advise, I went to the pay ward and gave fifty rupees to an assistant in a blue sari and brought her to remove the catheter and fix a new catheter. She was so angry when I called her and warned me, "Do not bring her again to this hospital". I did not say anything to her thinking that I may have to go to the hospital again. I did not report this to my relatives who were waiting outside the room fearing the consequences. The catheter fell off after two days and I did not take her again to the hospital and preferred to clean the bed rather than listen to their insults."

Krishna from Tulsi *tharavad* recounted his friend's wife's experience in the District Hospital. Since his friend had some 'influence' in the hospital he could get a pay ward for his wife. When she was admitted in a private room for delivery, a female Muslim doctor shouted at her for occupying a private room... "Why do you occupy this room? For

Adivasis there are general wards, why don't you get admitted there? Oh you are Brahmins among Adivasis no?" When the Kurichia woman asked for water after delivery, she was scolded and was told, "chicken biriyani would be served for you instead of water". Even though they felt deeply hurt, they were reluctant to fight with the doctors fearing their vulnerability at times of illness and delivery and future repercussions. However, the class and medical power that the medical system and the doctors hold is difficult to break through. Even the Kurichias being a comparatively powerful group among the Adivasis, they could not challenge the system or the doctor who misbehaved with them. The medical power, class, and ethnic background of the doctors are clearly reflected in their inhuman behaviour towards the Adivasis.

The discrimination is not only limited to the patients but also to the Adivasi employees in the health system. For instance Tribal Promoters are appointed in the government hospitals to help out the Adivasis. Though the work load is more for the Adivasi promoters working in the hospital they were paid only Rs. 2500 (recently increased to Rs.4000) like any other Adivasi promoter in the Tribal Development Department. And the other hospital staff, working in the same room doing almost similar duties got a better salary and other allowances. Despite this, they were used by the other non-Adivasi hospital staff for doing their duties such as writing slips for admission and giving passes for collecting patient's free share of food. Further, officials of NRHM said that non-Adivasis were not ready to accept the Adivasi ASHA workers and sidelined them saying that they were not efficient. NRHM officials reported that to avoid this discrimination they have planned to call the Adivasi ASHA workers first to give them initial training before beginning the training officially. A non-Adivasi NRHM coordinator of the area said that Adivasi ASHA workers were not efficient. About Paniyas, the construction was worse and he said that if we appoint Paniya ASHA workers, they will not achieve the target. This stigma was reflected in the selection process. Out of 785 ASHA workers in Wayanad district, there were only 79 Adivasi ASHA workers constituting 14 Kurichia and 11 Paniya ASHA workers, and the remaining were from other Adivasi groups.[35] Even though the Paniya community is the group that needed the most support to approach modern medical institutions, the number of ASHA workers was

35 Information obtained through RTI Act from the district NRHM office at Mananthavady.

fewer among them. In the four Paniya and four Kurichia settlements selected for study, there was one Kurichia ASHA worker and none from the Paniyas. However, we cannot deny the fact that the Government is providing free medicines, free mobile clinics and assistance in terms of money and the following section delineates the experience of the Adivasis regarding government aid and free services.

Health Related Government Programmes

Apart from hospital facilities there are different ways in which the state extends its healthcare support to Adivasis. For instance, there are health benefits in terms of grants from MLA fund, panchayat and tribal development offices for treating tribal patients in emergency cases. There are other health protection schemes like Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) which benefits Adivasi women. In government hospitals, there is free provision of medicine and food and an amount of Rs. 50 for attendants to Adivasi patients. As a recent development, mobile clinics are arranged for free checkup. The following section will look into their experiences in availing the support from the Government.

Kanni, a Paniya women from Kunnil colony reported,

> In our colony only two families received help from the MLA fund for health needs and they were party supporters. One among them is educated and she knows to read and write but she did not inform others early and therefore, we could not get the necessary certificate from the village office and reach on time when the minister came and distributed the money.

There was concern about Adivasi unity being destroyed by the divisible politics of the development programmes and its discrimination of benefits. The Paniyas and Kurichias complained that party leaders recommend only a few people among them who were party supporters for health benefits. However, meagre amounts like reimbursement of money for medicine and diagnostic tests are availed by the Paniyas and Kurichias occasionally if they get support for filling the application and approaching the respective offices.

Tulsi Kurichia *tharavad* in the study area reported that they had a say in deciding the beneficiaries for health or other welfare programmes as they have more than 100 voters who are connected to their *tharavadu* property and affiliated to the same political party and because they have representation in the panchayat. However, in general, the Kurichia community also reported that their socio-political institutions and the power of their traditional leadership were diminished due to the intervention of local panchayats and

most of the time they were not included in decisions regarding their health needs. Naran from Chathavari *tharavad* suggested that instead of party leaders and administrators deciding the beneficiaries for government grants, they should be entrusted to their own community leaders which will help maintain unity and a healthy relationship in the *tharavad.*

There were Paniya and Kurichia women in the study area who reported that they got Rs.1000 (it is reduced to Rs.700 in 2010) for delivery through Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY) programme with the help of doctors and ASHA workers. At the same time, the Kurichias and Paniyas said in no uncertain terms that if they needed better care during a delivery, they had to meet the doctor privately and give money in advance. Krishna from Kurichia *tharavad* said,

> For a delivery case we get better care and treatment if we give Rs. 2000 by meeting the doctor privately. We need care at that time. So we become ready to do that.

This indicates that the benefit they get from government is again reaching the well paid doctor through private practise. However, while visiting the district hospital to meet a Paniya patient from the study area, Chandhan, another Paniya patient's relative reported... "Since my wife did not go to see the doctors privately for prenatal checkup the doctor hesitated even to recommend her for the JSY amount Rs. 1000 meant for Adivasis for delivery expense". He told the doctor that he would lodge a complaint and thus forced the doctor to recommend and sign the application form.

They have different health benefit schemes from the panchayat even though they are the last ones to know about these benefits. But, the Paniyas and Kurichias who have experienced repeated rejection or inhuman behaviour from local panchayat institutions, were reluctant to seek help from local government and health institutions. Even though a clerk in the village office reported the possibility of support available for health needs from the village office, Chaman a Paniyan from Valli colony, whose legs were almost paralysed, hesitated to avail of medical help. Chaman reported his experience of continuous rejection,

> The agent who sells lottery tickets in our colony informed me about the help from the Block office for few diseases like paralysis, cancer, etc. He recommended me to one congress block member for help by seeing me in this condition and the member asked me to approach the Block panchayat office. After trying a few times, my wife stopped going for help to the

> block office as we have no money to go repeatedly. My wife studied upto Standard VIII and even then she found it difficult to access available help from the offices. Our people are wandering in the offices for help.

Chaman's wife Birdha went with the application thrice, but she could not meet the member who promised help and dropped the idea of going again. Since Chaman was suffering from weakness and paralysis and was desperately seeking some treatment, I encouraged Birdha to come with me to the Block office once again. We met the member and enquired about the help promised by him and submitted the application and asked him to check for missing details. The 'trip sheets' for travel expense were not signed and he promised to do it for her and submit it later. He said that we could go and collect Rs.5000 within a week. Birdha went to the office after a week and she could not get any clear answer from the office and she returned. Again on enquiry, the Block member informed us that we could go and collect the money within a week. But when we reached, the member was not there and from the G.O section in the Block office we found out that the application was not selected on grounds that there was no BPL certificate and the 'trip sheet' was not signed even though the member promised to collect the missing documents and submit the application when we met him first. We insisted that we would not leave the office without getting it done and both of us sat on a bench in front of the Block president's office. When a Kurichia panchayat member came, I asked him why the Adivasis met with difficulty when Adivasi leaders were there to support them. He communicated it to the president who was also a Kurichian. The president called me and enquired about the problem and promised that he would ask the member to do it immediately. We proceeded to the panchayat to get the BPL certificate and we had to find out the BPL number to fill the form to get the certificate. On enquiring, one panchayat member said that the ward wise BPL numbers were written on the registers kept on the table outside. When we checked, there were few papers of Ward IX list and the required number was not in those papers. Again, on inquiry, we came to know that by contacting the panchayat member of that Ward we will get the number and we had to wait for a long time to get it from him. After resubmitting the application and contacting the president and member, she could get the money after two more weeks.

Having been with Birdha to get this benefit, it was easy to understand why they hesitate to go to offices to seek help. She was a Standard VIII dropout and she knew how to read

and write. Despite this she did not know the procedure to get the BPL certificate. This became difficult for me as well since the records were not kept properly. This revealed the time, effort and support needed for Adivasis to access different schemes. It was noticed that nobody was there to give the complete information about this health support scheme to the Adivasis. Even though Chaman's family support the CPI (M) party and the block member of that area was from the same party, he did not help him. It was possible that the Congress block member was reluctant to follow it up knowing that he was a CPI (M) supporter. It was observed that Chaman's father-in-law was very cautious in negotiating party allegiance by trying to hide the financial help they received while talking with some left party people, so as not to lose the chance of meagre support from them in future.

During the interviews, it was also revealed that they were the last one's to know about the programmes and policies which were supportive to them due to their alienation to the whole health system and the local panchayats. At the same time, it was surprising to hear raging comments from non-Adivasi friends about the extra benefits for Adivasis, especially the Paniyas, which supposedly makes them lazy, irresponsible and non-responsive to their demand for wage labour. However, suppressing information from the Adivasis is also an important exercise of power over them and they are deprived of even the health benefits especially meant for them. The appointment of two Adivasi promoters in 2008, one from the Paniya and another from the Kurichia community to help Adivasi people was an instant relief to the people approaching the district hospital at Mananthavady to know about the health benefits and the procedures to access them. They reported that it was difficult for them to reach out to all Adivasis as the needs were plenty and that they needed special attention as their culture was different, and as they were ignorant about the hospital system of medicine. However, they expressed that in a general hospital it becomes difficult to give them special care.

One illiterate Kurichian from Champa colony reported,

> The Adivasis are wandering for help in Adivasi offices and Panchayat offices. They are treating us like insects and not concerned about our plight. It is a dehumanising experience to go for financial help.

Even though illiterate Kurichias reported difficulty in accessing help from tribal development and panchayat offices it was observed that Kurichias were far better in accessing help from the offices than Paniyas. During one visit to the Tribal Development Office, Mananthavady it was noticed that a Kurichian was helping out a Paniyan for accessing help for healthcare support.

Naran, a Kurichia elder from Chaampa colony reported that introducing mobile clinics and grants for treatment would not address their health problems holistically. He maintained,

> Even after continuously meeting the same doctor for a long time, sometimes we are not getting healed and in mobile clinics new doctors come and how can they diagnose and prescribe medicine within a second? It takes a long time for a doctor to find out the exact illness. More than conducting mobile clinics in our villages, we seek better care in government hospitals and PHCs. Doctors have to take time to understand the problem thoroughly instead of hurrying from one clinic to the other.

The treating of doctor as god and the symbolic power attributed to modern medicine is challenged by them. Badami (2011) also observes the practise of doctors hurrying from one clinic to the other as they have target to finish the assigned areas within one day. However, the Paniyas and Kurichias health culture of giving personal care to the patient without calculating the time and money was neglected by modern health institutions. Hurrying from one clinic to the other will defeat the purpose of arranging mobile clinics in the Adivasis own cultural set up, but if it is to understand the economic, socio-cultural and environmental factors that affect their health in deciding the treatment in consultation with the people and if it is to give them enough personal attention, it can be an alternate model.

Other than these benefits, the state runs many social protection schemes like old age pension, widow pension and agriculture workers pension. However, there were sick Paniya women in the study area who were eligible and yet not able to access those benefits during emergency. These schemes were not of much help to them as they did not know the procedures and when they accessed it through someone's help, it became very late. They reported that even the Adivasi promoters were not giving them enough help to access these benefits and half of the elgible people were not accessing the benefit in the study area.

National and state policies have to play a major role in the alleviation of malnutrition and related health risks. The free provisions, social security measures and the distribution of food through the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) give them a small relief. However, these free provisions are not the remedy for addressing Adivasi's marginalisation in health status. In *anganwadis*, there is food distribution of nutritional cereals, green gram and oil but it is limited to children, pregnant ladies and adolescents and this is the main programme to prevent nutrition deficiency. The health condition of the Paniyas described earlier shows that this is not enough to maintain a balanced diet. For the Kurichias, these provisions were reported as helpful to maintain their health as they have land, a minimum prerequisite for an Adivasi to maintain health and well-being even though they too lack access to forest and natural resources. However, broader policies affecting food prices, employment opportunities, resource depletion are more important than promotion of healthcare through institutions. As food patterns and health practises were very much connected with the culture and ecology, location specific and culture specific plans and programmes have to be formulated to meet the nutritional needs of different Adivasi communities like the Paniyas and Kurichias.

However, the only hospital for Adivasis in Wayanad which was established in 1994 was converted into a general hospital in 2007 as the Adivasi department was not able to run it properly due to lack of doctors and funds. Hence it was transferred to the health department, and NRHM provided more staff and the in-patient section started functioning. When it was under the tribal department, the in-patient section furnished in 1994 was unutilised and wild plants and birds occupied the ward when I visited it in 2006. However, the hospital staff was happy that it was converted into a general hospital. They reported that when it was under the tribal department, they were not able to provide enough doctors, nursing staff, medicine and other facilities. The staff working there were temporary and when the health department took it they were given permanent posting. However, the health department did not take initiative to maintain it as an Adivasi hospital and provide more facilities for Adivasis. There were five posts for doctors. Even after handing over to the health department, they had only one permanent doctor and one temporary doctor appointed by NRHM. There was no laboratory facility, a dire need for the Adivasis as there were many TB and sickle cell anaemia patients among them. The

staff reported that the in-patient section was again dysfunctional by the middle of 2011.[36] However, taking away the only hospital which was specially allotted for Adivasis was discriminating instead of giving needed support from the health department to renovate the hospital with more preventive and promotive interventions in healthcare. This indicates the reluctance in using general health funds for the Adivasi cause giving all the responsibility to the Tribal Development Department which is not equipped with necessary personnel and infrastructure to run a hospital.

According to Rao and Sexton (2010), the neo-liberal approaches in health reduce the state's commitment to health and neglect the structural factors that govern and shape health or the ecology of disease. According to them, the interventions are constrained by cost benefit considerations and thus the focus is on the delivery of single healthcare interventions that are not integrated with other health activities and thus incoherent and fragmented. They point out that the emphasis on medicine rather than food, depending on ORS to treat diarrhoea rather than emphasising on water supply and sanitation, focus on anaemia during pregnancy rather than anaemia in general are examples. Vertical health programmes like immunisation, control against tuberculosis and family planning were still found to be the main thrust of community health programmes. Even PHCs and government hospitals are found alien to them with their vertical health interventions without political interventions such as initiating redistribution of resources. The voices of Paniyas and Kurichias affirm that health cannot be equated only with healthcare facilities and free provisions. According to Zurbrigg (1984), the very concept of health came to be equated with 'health care' and is thus commoditised. However, it is a 'reductionist view' equating health with healthcare (Zurbrigg 1984) neglecting the structural issues, the specific cultures and voices of the people. It emerges that there is lack of initiative from the health personnel to incorporate the local health skills and traditional health practises and cultural specificities of Paniyas and Kurichias in healthcare. However, in spite of the lack of recognition of Adivasi healthcare practises by the dominant medical systems and the State, Adivasis continue practising their traditional medicine, which is delineated below.

36 There were also promises to make this Adivasi hospital into a research centre for cancer and sickle cell anaemia.

Paniyas and Kurichias and their Traditional Healing

Adivasis healthcare practises are far more complex as they have retained the Adivasi healing traditions while attempting to use the biomedical services both public and private. Health seeking is therefore deeply influenced by pragmatic considerations as well as the Adivasi cosmology of health constituted by physical, social, environmental and ancestral influences. Hence any member of the community cannot take up the practise of Adivasi *vaidyam;* they have to be chosen or approved by the ancestral 'gods'. However, the traditional healing practices of the Adivasis are marginalised because they are constructed as 'primitive' and 'superstitious' and get minimum support from the Government unlike other systems of medicine. Aerthayil (2008) reports that the traditional Adivasi medicine and treatment are fast disappearing in Wayanad except for curing minor illnesses and majority opt for allopathic treatment. However, in spite of lack of space to evolve, the Adivasi agency is visible in challenging the values of dominant systems of medicine utilising their limited chances of practicing traditional medicine and by documenting it.

According to Nair (2002), lifelong association is needed for learning the techniques of diagnosing illness, therapeutic recipes and its administration. He notes that only persons with good character and sound mind were instructed the recipes as they believe that giving medicine require personal character. A Kurichia *vaidyan,* Vellan from Thirunelly panchayat reported,

> I learned *vaidyam* from my father and I did not get it in dream. According to our tradition, only those who can continue it with faith in god and who follow our traditions and values to keep it a sacred mission will be initiated into this traditional medicine. Among the four children in my family, I had a special interest to learn *vaidyam*. I had love and respect for the plants more than the other children had and my father sensed it. Even though I learnt and memorised the medicines, I started practising it only after my father's death in accordance with our tradition.

However, these strict observances were lessened in rigour and Kurichia *vaidyars* reported that they give more importance to protect their knowledge by passing it on to their next generation. A Vellan *vaidyan* reported,

> Now out of fear of losing our knowledge we started teaching more youngsters. The knowledge for this is passing on through oral tradition from one generation to another. We often take our children to the places where the herbs are available, make them collect it and learn the names and then use it for the relevant illness. They have to learn the colour, smell, thickness of the leaves etc. when they collect it as there is possibility of mistakes due to

> similarity in appearance and difference in the quality and healing power of these herbs which can affect the patients very seriously. Also youngsters assist in the preparation as well as distribution of medicine. They learn through observation, prolonged assistance as well as through the oral communication during treatment by the *vaidyan*.

Marginal government support was reported by Kurichias for training and practising their *vaidyam.* Kurichia *vaidyans* attributed the credit to Viswanathan Nair, one of the previous directors of KIRTADS, for the support they received and after his retirement they experienced lack of further initiative. According to Nair (2002), the establishment of a certificate course in Adivasi medicine after the launching of the Centre for Tribal Medicine (CTM) in Valad, Wayanad helped the revival of Adivasi medicine in Kerala. State level healers workshops conducted from 1994 to 2002 also helped to revitalise Adivasi medicine. The training has stopped and Adivasi *vaidyars* hope that it continues and there will be new initiatives from the Government to support them.

Vellan *vaidyan* reported,

> Even though I got a certificate from the Government for practising Adivasi medicine I could not receive any other help from government to develop my centre. I rented a small room for treatment in Thirunelli as my house is not accessible to the patients especially during the rainy season. The room is very small and there is not enough facility and there are almost 100 patients daily visiting my healing centre. Some patients need a long stay and as there are no rooms available in Thirunelli, I managed to get few rooms on rent in Kattikulam, 16 km away from here. I do not take any fees for my service and patients keep their small contributions in a small basket. The Government used to give me a yearly grant of Rs. 7,500 from 1995 to 2002, and they have stopped even that meagre support.

Rajan *vaidyan* from Kurichia community reported that he has benefited from the CTM and the Certificate Course in Tribal Medicine (CCTM) initiated by KIRTADS in 1993. The Government recognised the centre in 1993 and today it has developed into a government sponsored registered society called Indian Indigenous People Service Society (IIPSS).[37] Kurichiya *vaidyars* reported that even though state support was less for the promotion of tribal medicine, it survives and flourishes through popular support in the local context and the voluntary efforts of the people who experienced healing from such centres.

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37 Dr. Rajan from the Kurichia community is the secretary and Achappan *Vaidyar*, another Kurichian, is the President of IIPSS during the study period. Around 150 indigenous medicinal practitioners of Kerala are members. In the directory of Adivasi healers, there are 37 Kurichia healers and only 9 Paniya healers in Wayanad (Nair 2002).

The IIPSS received funds from state government to run a three year certificate course in Adivasi *vaidyam* from 2003 to 2006. Twenty students were selected for the course, five each from Palakkad, Idukki, Wayanad and Thiruvananthapuram districts. They selected students from Kurichia and Kuruma community in Wayanad, Kani from Thiruvananthapuram, Chola Naikkar from Attappady and Naikkar from Idukki. Paniyas were not included in this course even though there were practitioners among them and they form the majority population among the Adivasis in Wayanad. However, according to Rajan *vaidyan*, there were 37 popular healers among the Kurichias whereas there were only nine Paniya healers in Wayanad (see also Nair 2002). There were no further initiatives or support from the Government or other agencies to develop Adivasi medicine after the initiative taken by KIRTADS. However, all of the respondents from Kurichia and Paniya communities in the study area were of the opinion that their traditional healing practices should be accepted and promoted by the Government.

Referring to organisations that showcase Adivasi knowledge and art, Rajan *Vaidyan* challenged,

> Why all are asking for our knowledge? Adivasi*kku Mannum pennum poyi* (Adivasis lost their soil and their women). At least we want to protect our knowledge on traditional medicines and we started documenting it. What we expect from the Government and other organisations is their support to develop our knowledge and market it by ourselves so that it can be a source of income for our community and our unemployed youth.

For its efficiency and value of science, Rajan *vaidyan* suggested Adivasi medicine as an alternate model which can effectively challenge the commoditisation and profit motive in other systems of medicine. Rajan *vaidyan* stressed the need for documentation of their knowledge pointing out the possibility of other agencies acquiring Intellectual Property Right for tribal knowledge.

Rajan *vaidyan* however, appreciated the openness of Tropical Botanical Garden and Research Institute (TBGRI) in Kerala to share 50 percent of commercial return for the drug *Jeevani* with the Kani tribe as they produced it using the traditional knowledge and resource base of Kani Adivasis.[38] He saw it as a recognition for Adivasi knowledge. Anuradha (1998) reports that the idea of profit sharing is a step forward, but highlighted

38 *Jeevani* is an anti stress drug produced by tropical botanical garden and research institute from a local plant using the indigenous knowledge of the Kani Adivasi group in Kerala (Anuradha 1998).

the objections raised by KIRTADS that Kanis have got an unfair deal and TBGRI did not involve Kani's in the decision to give licence to the Arya Vaidya Pharmacy Coimbatore for a period of seven years fixing a licence fee of Rs. 10 lakh. According to KIRTADS, TBGRI should consider ways and means to impart technical knowhow to the Kanis to manufacture the drug and thereby involve them further in the process instead of agreeing for 2 per cent royalty from the laboratory and sharing 50 per cent of it with the Kanis. According to KIRTADS the only way Adivasi medicine can survive is by preserving its original form and premises, otherwise it can be appropriated as a convenient resource base for other systems of medicine (ibid).

Even without government support, Vellan *vaidyan* can continue his practise without commodifying it. Paniyas, Kurichias as well as non-Adivasis were happy with Thirunelli Vellan *vaidyan's* treatment and appreciated him for holding on to the traditional value of not demanding money for treatment in the midst of commoditisation of health services. Vellan *vaidyan* reported that he accepts only free contributions by the patients according to their financial situation. One Paniya woman from Arayal colony recollected with gratitude that sensing her poor economic condition, the *vaidyan* offered her bus fare to them for going back to their village. Another Kurichia patient, Jayanthi (49) from Thirunelli panchayat mentioned that her cancer was completely cured by Vellan *vaidyan* when she had lost all hope in allopathic treatment. Her daughter Pasha said,

> We were advised by allopathic doctors to go to the Medical College at Calicut twice a month for radiation and injections. During difficult times, we collected money from our neighbours and relatives to go to the medical college for treatment. We tried Ayurveda medicines also for a while to get some relief. At last when Vellan *vaidyan* agreed to heal my mother after checking the *nadi* (pulse) it was a great relief. He did not even take the full expense for the treatment sensing our difficulty but only received the small donations we gave. At present, doctors certify that my mother is completely cured.

There were Kurichias, Paniyas and non-Adivasis who resorted to Adivasi medicine when Allopathy and Ayurveda could not cure their sickness. They narrated stories of curing different kinds of allergies, paralysis, lumps on the body, kidney stone, tuberulosis, kidney stone, jaundice, ulcer, diabetes and piles. People in Thirunelli said that around 100 people from different areas approach the Vellan *vaidyan* every day even though he is practising *vaidyam* in a small rented room in Thirunelli town. People from other states also approach him for healing and he reported curing patients of cancer from Bangalore.

While Vellan *vaidyan* practised with minimum facilities, Rajan *vaidyan* could develop his centre more systematically with government support. Rajan *vaidyan*, the first rank holder of the three year course in CTM conducted by KIRTADS, could make use of the government support to develop his healing centre. In his centre, Adivasi medicines and different types of Ayurvedic massages were practised for curing patients from Adivasi community as well as non-Adivasi community. He was proud that 34 Adivasi families from Kurichia, Kuruma and Paniya community are working in his centre in various sections beginning from collecting herbs to making medicines and assisting him in healing and earning their livelihood. He has his own building for practising *vaidyam* and so could give training to his assistants. However, a health system based on Adivasi principles, customs and values can be developed as an alternate to the dominant models in the medical fields. The Adivasi *vaidyam* developed in Thirunelly by Vellan *vaidyan*, in Eachom by Rajan *vaidyan* in Valad by Achappan *vaidyan*, in Kaniyampetta by another Rajan *vaidyan* are examples of successful initiatives of Kurichiya community managing the entire process of patient care and medication. The minimum resource base of the Kurichias due to their landedness and their better relationship with the forest department helped them to preserve some of their knowledge and skill and to practise their traditional healing using herbs[39]. While, Kurichias use more herbal medicines, the Paniyas give thrust to their traditional spiritual healing with minimum herbal medicines as their sources of collecting herbs are completely alienated today.

Nair (2002) divides the Adivasi illness causation beliefs into two categories, naturalistic and supernaturalistic. Naturalistic causes include food, social and environmental related and supernatural include mainly the spirit related causes. They do *daivam kanal* (literally mean seeing god) and other traditional ritual practices to please the god and to be relieved from illness. A healer can be a religious functionary but not the other way. The Paniyas call their healer *daivakkaran* (spirit medium communicating with god) and the Kurichias call them *komarakkaran* or *marunnukaran pooppan*. *Panam*

39 One Kurichia *tharavad* in the study area reported that earlier they had good relationship with the forest officials and guards and they used to prepare wild meat for them when they go for hunting. As Kurichiyans were hunters the forest guards and officials made friendship with them to enjoy the delicacy of wild meat. Thirunelli Panchayat president's father, a Kurichia karanaavar told in olden times forest guards used to go to their houses asking for *chutterachi* (meet fried in fire) and they used to treat them with wild meat and black coffee. This reveals that Kurichiyans have experienced more friendly relationship with the foresters.This historical background helps them even today to negotiate with forest guards.

nokkal (tossing coin) is a method used in the Paniya as well as in the Kurichia communities to check whether the ancestral deities are pleased for curing an illness. Cleansing of the body using different mediums such as different herbs, water, silver coin and ash are practised by the Adivasis. However, one Kurichian elder negated the possibility of healing diabetes, heart disease, blood pressure and environmentally induced diseases through their spiritual healing practices and said that these are related to the lifestyle and food habits, and that without changing these habits, healing becomes impossible.

Agaisnt the backdrop of their slave history, Paniyas developed more spiritual healing practices. *Nadugadhika*, the ritual healing practice of the Adiya community is written in a dramatic form by K.J Baby (1993), that depict exorcising the evil spirits which they daily confront through that ritual. However, today to confront the evils of 'modern development' they may have to search for more creative ways of spiritual healing practices as they initiated the ancestral worship and '*daivamkanal*' in Muthanga by proclaiming 'we are here to heal the environment which is spoilt by a paper company .....". Similarly, Lawrence (2001:180) introduces the Amman cult of oracles to heal the injury, trauma and violence of military attacks in Sree Lanka. She observes that "the agency of the oracle centres upon dissolution of a previous sense of self and identification of the body self with the Amman". Rajan *vaidyan* from Kurichia community expressed "the negative energy which is accumulated due to various reasons is removed through Adivasi spiritual healing practices". However, their spiritual healing is not limited to physical and mental problems but social evils are also dealt with.

The Kurichias have the custom of *Koottam parachil* (asking pardon to each other) for removing their ill feelings among themselves and to reunite each member with the community before beginning their agricultural work, life cycle rituals and festivals. They reported that these were occasions for renewal and healing in their life and for good yield there should be unity with fellow beings, nature, the animals and tools they use for farming. In the case of Paniyas during their life cycle ritual ceremonies like puberty, marriage and death and other festivals like Vishu there is an important custom where the entire community come together for *thettu theerkkal* (getting rid of all their mistakes) ritual to negotiate with god and community to receive blessings from their ancestral gods.

Kurichia elders and youth are also seen in trance in their festivals conducted in the *tharavad* temples and believe that they are guided by supernatural powers possessing them to remove all the ills of the community and larger society. They perform martial arts which infuse deep faith in the community members.

Paniyas combine their spiritual healing with herbal healing and massages. Lavan Mooppan from Kunnil colony who treat ailments like headache, fever, toothache, allergy, sprain, body pain, family conflicts, conflict with neighbours and so on. He narrated one experience of healing a non-Adivasi patient,

> A non-Adivasi woman was fearful to walk due to pain on her back and legs. Allopathy medicine was not effective. I healed her mainly using our traditional spiritual healing and by massaging with oil and applying herbal medicine. Even though they were grateful and gave me money for healing, they advised me to not reveal their identity as it may tarnish the patient's social status and religion.

However, in the selected settlements there were no Paniya healers who practise *vaidyam* with a government certificate. They conveyed that lack of herbal medicine in their surroundings is a block to continue their healing effectively. It was observed that in the Paniya tradition there were healers who practise 'energy healing' and other rituals to heal people from their own community. Touching and pressing on pressure points, application of oil on affected parts, massaging, cleansing using silver coin, use of ash and water as cleaning agents, possessing the evil spirit in the sick body in a trance and giving positive energy by reciting *mantras* (chants) with rhythmic to and fro movements were observed as ways of healing practised by the Paniyas for ailments such as fever, headache etc. As Badami (2011:117) points out, the *pena pattu* (song of the spirit sung during death ritual) and the entire ritual after death is an agency which infuse healing to the Paniya community as it reinforces their culture and 'breathes life into a community that is believed to be slowly dying'. However, Paniyas and Kurichias continue ancestor worship and healing practices through ancestor spirits through the mediation of spiritual functionaries among them even after a long period of cultural interaction with other groups and which affirms their cultural diversity.

Thosha from Valli colony was undergoing medication for a serious illness in the district hospital. Simultaneously they treated him using their traditional spiritual healing, herbs and also taken him to a non-Adivasi astrologer for prediction. Then they took him

to a private hospital and they suggested doing scanning and there they diagnosed liver cancer. They used all the available treatment, spiritual and medical to heal their illness according to the context. When it became very serious again they depended on spiritual healing by their own *daivakkaran*. It appears that Adivasi medical practices are plural and they try to understand the health problem holistically. Badami (2011) observes parallels between the rituals of Paniya spiritual healer and the medical encounter. When the Paniya healer gives *prasadam* or blessed food to facilitate the internalisation of the healing process the doctor prescribe medicine after the consultation 'ritual'. He points out that these parallels facilitate the movement between 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of healing but the power relationship they encounter between the healer and patient in these systems are different. As Eder and Gracia pu (2003) observes the tradition and modern are not opposite poles and there is a tendency to consider these poles as historical reality rather than methodological constructions. It emerges that Adivasi culture is against universal models or universal cause effect relations like the western medical model which is centered around the antagonistic biological perception neglecting their culture and environment.

Cultural Alienation and Exclusions

Medical institutions are alienating people from their cultures and it is much more in the case of marginalised groups like Adivasis. In a study on indigenous Maya medicine in Guatemala, Eder and Garcia pu (2003) point out that in western medical practice, the patient is isolated from the family, normal environment, psychic and cosmic perception and place them in specialised institutions like hospitals or health centres. On the contrary, the indigenous Maya medicine places the patients in the cultural context and resolves their health problems in accordance to their cultural identity.

The organisation of hospital and other health facilities like PHCs and CHCs and the daily routines of healthcare did not suit the Adivasi culture, especially the Paniya culture. The CHCs, PHCs and rural dispensaries are envisioned to ensure increased accessibility to health services for the rural population and their participation and self reliance. PHCs are considered core institutions of the rural health service infrastructure but it was reported that Paniyas still experience alienation from such institutions and show indifference to services of PHC unless there was an emergency. One day while visiting

Arayal PHC one Paniya men was struggling with a stomach ache and the nurse gave an injection and asked him to rest for a while. But, immediately after the injection he was trying to get up from the bed and go back home.

Alienation of the health professionals from the Adivasis is cultural more than economic. Their complaints about Paniyas as 'unhygienic' and 'illiterate' reveal their distaste to treat the Paniyas. The field staff reported that community participation was less among Paniyas compared to Kurichias in PHC activities. However, Nayak and Babu (2003) point out that community participation is advocated as a main tool for attaining the WHO's health for all goal by 2000 AD. They criticise the centralised, bureaucratic, over professionalised and the top down approach of the existing system which neglects the health problems of vulnerable sections like Adivasis.

Routine programmes such as immunisation and DOT treatment happen in the colony. It is also reported that there is no regular follow up of the field staff or ASHA worker from the PHCs that could have avoided many deaths related to pregnancy and ill health, such as the death of Yarah's child one and half months after delivery, that was discussed earlier.

It is observed that there are long queues in front of the OPD in the government hospitals and doctors rush to finish the consultation within time. It is reported by people in the study area that majority of the doctors run private clinics after their duty in the hospital. The Paniyas and Kurichias expressed that after this long waiting doctors prescribe medicine without a proper checkup in the general OPD in government hospital. So most of them prefer to work for the day and by evening go to doctors private clinics with the money they earned expecting minimum care and patience from the doctors.

The Paniyas reported that in government hospitals even serious patients from their community were not attended to and sent for scanning to diagnose their sickness. Most of the cancer cases among Paniya communities were detected in the last stage due to lack of needed attention from government hospitals.

> Bemi from Valli colony was suffering from chest pain, stomach pain, burning sensation in the stomach and lack of appetite. She was having severe stomach ache and vomiting when she ate food. She was consulting regularly and taking medicine from the district government hospital for six months from the OPD section. As there was no relief they went to a private

> doctor for a checkup. Doctor advised scanning and a lump was found in the stomach and as she was very weak she was sent to the medical college for operation. In the medical college, they diagnosed cancer and since her liver was seriously affected they could not do the operation and she died within three months.

However, such incidents force Paniyas to go to doctor's private clinics instead of going to the general OPD in the district hospital.

In the official narratives, there was emphasis on the low health seeking behaviour of the Paniyas. Lack of education, lack of information about health problems and superstition are pointed out as the reasons for neglecting modern medicine and its services. *Anganwadi* teachers and ASHA workers also reported that the Paniyas were reluctant to reveal their sickness unless they were very seriously ill and even pregnancy cases were not reported on time to the ASHA worker. PHCs reported that Paniyas were reluctant to do follow up but Kurichias were very prompt in follow up and taking medicine till they get completely cured. In awareness programmes too, the participation of the Paniyas was very low compared to that of the Kurichias. According to Mohindra et al (2006) the Paniyas show resignation to their situation and report better health in spite of their vulnerable health condition, which he attributes to their extreme deprivation and exclusion.

Even for very serious cases, the Paniyas did not rush to the casualty, but waited outside to be called and attended to by the hospital staff. Even in the case of life threatening diseases, they were not seen to panic and so to capture the seriousness of their condition and to save their lives, the doctors had to develop more sensitivity towards the Paniya culture. As the assistant District Medical Officer reported,

> Paniyas and Kurichias approach the hospital when they are very serious and are not like the other non- Adivasi patients who approach the hospital even for a cold and cough. But in the OPD special care cannot be given to the Adivasis as there will be a lot of patients.

With many years of experience in the district hospital, the assistant DMO acknowledges that Adivasis internalise their illness as their tolerance level is higher than non-Adivasis. In general, it was observed that Adivasis were not reactive to their illness and they had enough tolerance at the face of illness and death. But this cultural specificity of Adivasis is not given importance by majority of the doctors and in the hospital wards also they were given least consideration as they do not pester them for care, or scream or make noise like the non-Adivasis if not attended to. Being an experienced person, the assistant

DMO recognised the Adivasi culture of seeking hospital facility only during emergency and the need to provide special care. However, Adivasi voices revealed that generally doctors are insensitive to their culture and thus their tolerance leads to further neglect and reproduction of inequality.

Majority of the hospital staff are reported to be insensitive to this cultural speciality of Adivasis. They usually complain about their etiquette and social relationship. Beginning from the security guard, the Hospital staffs' sharing, revealed the cultural alienation, the Adivasis especially the Paniya community experience in the district government hospital. Security Guard reported,

> For them it is difficult to approach us face to face. Paniya's language and culture is different and they will not understand what we say. They mingle only with their own people. They have no cleanliness. *Murukku* (chewing betel leaves, tobacco leaves, pieces of arecanuts and lime) and spitting is their habit and the hospital premises become dirty. They will not keep the timing and there will be clash between us if we do not allow them to go inside during doctors ward visit. If we scold them for that some of them will shout at us and give complaint in the police station.

Paniya culture and mainly their language became a barrier in utilising the hospital facilities. Doctors, nurses and hospital watchmen at the gate often complain that the Paniyas did not understand and could not stick to their prescriptions and treatment, but the Kurichias responded more positively. What was observed was that the Paniyas find it difficult to explain their illness due to lack of fluency in Malayalam which is the medium of communication in hospitals in Kerala and that was an important cultural barrier especially for the Paniya elders. Naturally to diagnose their illness, it demanded more time and understanding from the doctor but generally they experienced negligence. The Kurichias are fluent in Malayalam except for the very old members and they were seen free and less fearful in the hospital atmosphere. However, to avail minimum facilities and benefits in biomedical services and to understand each other's meaning, the Paniyas need minimum skills, which they lack.

The security's narration revealed the extent of cultural alienation experienced by the Paniya community even in a government hospital which was meant for poor people. The lack of cultural space experienced by common people in the modern medical institutions was much more in the case of Adivasis, and especially in the Paniyas. Their habits, language and dress were not accepted by the common people and hospital staff and they

were generally described by hospital staff as unclean, illiterate and ignorant. It was observed that Paniyas were very often lost, both in the practical and metaphorical terms; they wandered in the modern medical institutions to find out x-ray, laboratory, scanning facility etc. since they could not read and were seen perplexed by the technology and the bureaucratic procedures. According to Barucha (2001) any illness involves an alienation from one's normal self producing and uncomfortable sense of being entrapped in someone else's body. One has to work through this alien body in order to reconnect to one's own. According to him, this condition become scary when one falls ill in a foreign country where without knowing the language, gestures, or cultural codes, one could be doubly alienated from one's own body, and from the environment itself. In the hospital situation, Adivasis especially Paniyas were observed in such a doubly alienated situation as they were not accustomed to the cultural codes and language of the non-Adivasis.

The voices of the Adivasis expose the insensitive approach of the health system towards their specific cultures, language and ways of survival. When the Paniyas are asked to follow the rules, they get annoyed and there were incidents of the Paniyas registering cases against the hospital guard for misbehaving with them. In another case, early morning a Paniya woman admitted in the district hospital disappeared without anybody's notice. The Kurichias behaviour was reported as decent by the hospital guard, but even he admitted that the dominant culture attributes a lower status to Kurichias too as they fall in the category of Adivasis.

In Valli colony, Chaman was first admitted in the hospital for retention of urine, sudden onset of lower backache and weakness. First it was diagnosed as spinal meningitis and the treatment was started. Again with the recurrence of symptoms and weakness and numbness on both legs he was admitted and the diagnosis was recurrent myelitis and evolving neuro myelitis optica. Even though he had gone to the hospital when the symptoms started appearing, he could not be saved from the disability. Now he is having severe pain in the abdomen, sleeplessness, numbness on the legs, difficulty to urinate and his legs were partially paralysed and it was difficult to walk even with support. He needed medicine and his wife Birdha was hesitating to go to the hospital. She said,

> I am afraid to go to the hospital. The Doctor will scold if I am not able to respond to him immediately. Even if we have to die, we do not feel like going to the hospital.

With continuous compulsion and accompaniment only she became ready to approach the doctor. Doctor was found impatient to listen even though there was only two patients left in the queue for consultation.

Prabhath, a Paniya Adivasi activist said that they need separate doctors and nurses in the government hospital to respond to their needs as they were neglected in the hospital. However, from the above descriptions, it was evident that the cultural alienation and neglect experienced by the Adivasis cannot be addressed by appointing a separate doctor for them but the Adivasi culture has to be absorbed into the entire medical system. Doctors have to acquire knowledge about what Adivasis believe and do about health and illness in their culture and treat them as subjects rather than objects. However, when the entire health system is seeing Adivasi culture as backward and their language and habits as low standard the inclination will be to force them to accept the dominant culture which is labelled as superior by the non-Adivasi health personnel.

Although for the Paniyas in Arayal, the PHC was next to their colony (100 meters away), they approach the PHC only in critical stages. Their relationship with doctors and nurses were not cordial and they did not approach them for minor ailments like other non-Adivasis and Kurichias. The Paniyas expressed that the whole compound was like a forest and they used its resources freely and when the PHC staff started staying in the compound, the Paniyas lost access to this land and its resources like jack fruit, mangoes, firewood etc. A pharmacist who worked for ten years in Arayal reported that the Paniyas used to pluck jackfruit and fetch other fruits and vegetables from PHC compound even after the hospital staff started staying in the compound. On the advice of the non-Adivasi land owner, the PHC staff tied a red ribbon on the tree and spread the news that it was dangerous to approach the tree as the old lab technician had hung himself eight years ago on that tree, and naturally Paniyas stayed away as they were frightened of evil forces. The Paniyas used this plot of land which was next to their colony as their own until the hospital staff occupied the land and took on its resources with the establishment of the PHC there. This indicates that the history of alienation is complex and is affected by present disparities and discrimination on the one hand, and varies according to each

specific context. In this case, the government servants who were appointed for the well-being of the Adivasis became a reason for lack of access to resources.

Also they reported that with the establishment of formal structures of governance like *Oorukootams* and local panchayats, and modern systems of medicine and law by the state, the Mooppan lost authority over the people on decisions regarding material, political and health problems. Bama Mooppathi from the Paniya community reported that even their *daivams* are depicted as lifeless and their belief system as superstition by dominant religions, especially by Pentecostal Churches and the converted Adivasis who were seen preaching the gospel. The complete negation of their systems and world views play a role in making Paniyas alcoholics and drug addicts and affect the community's unity and social health.

It was observed that Kurichia Karanavars hold more power than the Paniya Mooppan in political decision making and conflict resolution as they have hold on the *tharavad* property, its membership and the local panchayats. However, there were educated youth among the Kurichias too, who disown their Karanavan and their eco spirituality and healing practices as it is depicted as primitive by dominant groups. For instance, Rameshan from a Kurichia nuclear family commented, "As a researcher it is interesting for you to study about our culture and it is easy for you to say that your customs are excellent. But we are the ones becoming museum pieces in front of others". Thus, the social constructions of the dominant groups and their reproduction through various agencies further perpetuate their alienation. Adivasis challenge or at times perpetuate these constructions of primitivism forced upon their culture and healing practices.

In Wayanad, the folk medicine practised by Kurichias, especially Paniyas was being challenged due to diminishing sources of herbs as well as lack of support from the government. However, traditional treatment still exists among the Kurichias and their knowledge as traditional healers gained popularity in the study area, especially when they cured diseases which modern medicine fail to cure. The Paniyas also follow their traditional healing but have lost their vast knowledge due to lack of access to herbs when they lost their access to common lands and forests. The training given through IIPSS, the minimum remuneration given for a period of seven years by the government through KIRTADS and the better availability of herbs in their land helped the Kurichias to

continue their healing tradition. However, in the larger society, the Kurichia doctor is also considered an Adivasi medicinal practitioner who is deemed as less knowledgeable than his allopathic or Ayurvedic counterparts. Rajan *vaidyan* was well aware that the symbolic power they achieved through their traditional wisdom is limited to the local context and to their patients. Here it is relevant to refer to Good (1994) who points out that biomedicine is often given the credit of universal scientific account of the human body and illness and non-western and folk medical systems are regarded as systems of belief and discounted. However, this scientific rationality adversely affects the Adivasi folk medicine in Wayanad. While the dominant constructions of modern medicine alienate them from their culture and healing practices, the commercial trends destroy their wealth of herbs, clean and natural environment.

Vellan *vaidyan* commented on how commercial trends destroy their wealth of herbs and alienates them,

> When the wage labourers collect herbs for Ayurveda companies they are not bothered about their regeneration. For instance, they collect *kurumthotty* (sida acuta) in the month of *Kanni* (Malayalam month falls in September mid October), the time of its flowering. When Adivasis collect *kurumthotty* they collect it in the month of *Thulam* (October mid to November), when the seeds start falling down and assure its regeneration. We love and respect the plants and with their permission we pluck it. We will not collect the plants after 6'o clock in the evening when the plants are asleep.

The indigenous cultures continuously offer a critique of the commercial culture of the modern institutions of healthcare. Vellan *vaidyan* also pointed out the local threat they face in practising indigenous medicine,

> The tourism development in the area further increases the chances of destruction of herbs. The tourism project grabs all our lands by lavishly spending Rs. 1 lakh for one cent and there is no possibility of accessing a piece of land for the Adivasis or accessing a room for rent to practise indigenous medicine in this area. My patients are staying in a faraway place for completing the treatment as there is no facility in this area. The rent for a room is Rs. 3000 per day in the resorts and their consumeristic lifestyle erodes our culture of living with minimum comforts and protecting the natural resources for our livelihood.

Adivasi people sense the threat to their survival when they see a huge number of land brokers even in their interior small towns selling land at a high price just for resorts and real estate business, destroying the forests and agricultural lands around them. Vellan *vaidyan* said that still they have herbs in plenty on the hills and in the forest near his

house, but the future is unpredictable with the ever increasing number of resorts in that area.

Adivasis own critique is endorsed by various studies. Nair (1995) argues that the health of the Adivasis was affected by the loss of their habitat and incursion of other cultures. He points out that the communities whose natural habitat is less affected are healthier and they have space to continue their use of herbal medicine for healing. Nayak and Babu (2003) point out that the present day model of healthcare services in India has evolved over the last two centuries following the British model which ignored the indigenous belief systems, lifestyle and healthcare institutions and practices which worked as an organic unity. According to them, instead of integrating modern science and technology into the healing traditions and cultures that existed in India, a total shift has been made to a western system of medicine.

However, the agency of Adivasis recognised the need for incorporation of their values, culture and belief system and healing practices into the health system. As Daykin (1999) points out the concept of healthcare underlines the power and authority of the expert and professionals at the expense of recipients. According to Daykin, practises of control establish the authority of the knower by disciplining the subjectivities of the cared for. He suggests resisting this trend and introducing alternate approaches that celebrate difference and choice. While Adivasis gave importance to the whole person and his/her experience, bio medical constructs overemphasise professionalism and the health policies legitimise and institutionalise bio medical practises. However, the Adivasis became the worst victims of power and control in the medical field as their tolerance level is more and they keep silent at the face of suffering and control, fearing the practical consequences. Thus, modern medicine displaces the traditional medicine and is an integral part of state's development agenda, it also marginalises the Adivasis from its healthcare services. However, the Adivasi world views and healing practices offer a critique to this western paradigm and its hegemonic interventions in the world of medicine through their epistemologies of pluriformity and context specificity. As Eder and Gracia pu (2003) observe, the Western paradigm rule the world of medicine through its hegemonic capitalist relations and it is transferred and reproduced through government norms which support this paradigm.

Development and Adivasi Health

State's interventions in Adivasi health reveals that they have a biomedical and developmentalist perspective towards health and state initiated programmes mainly revolve around these perspectives in solving Adivasi health issues. Health is considered as an integral part of 'development' of a community in the modern development discourse. Better health is accepted as a very important determinant of development. Nandy and Viswanathan (1990) critically comment that today, development is not only a treatment of economic ills of society but 'development of healing as a science' has become an important component in the ideology of development. They criticise the modern discourse which projects the idea that development is no longer development unless it takes the benefit of modern medicine to the traditional underdeveloped parts of the society. However, Adivasis have a pluralistic and holistic approach to health and they critically analyze the state's approaches which neglect the broader aspects of health and illness.

Fertilisers and Pesticides, a Threat to Health

Health is determined not only by the biological and physical fitness of the body but also by the surrounding external environment. Clean air, water and uncontaminated food ensure good health. The increased use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides in agriculture for increased production destroys the health of the people through contaminated food and poisonous air. A Kurichian elder from Tulsi *tharavad* was of the opinion that

> Herbs are not acting on our bodies anymore as we are consuming contaminated poisonous food. As we use anti venom for snake bite, poison only can act against poison and we go for modern medicine even though it is harmful as having side effects.

The Kurichias and Paniyas in the study area pointed out the ill effects of using chemical fertilisers and pesticides and they try to avoid the use of it. They reported that non tribal people use it in big quantities and it contaminates the air, water sources and leafy vegetables which the Kurichias and Paniyas also use and it affects their health. Jacob (2006) highlights the extensive spread of banana cultivation in the paddy fields of Wayanad and the increased use of chemicals and pesticides. In banana cultivation the seed itself is soaked in chemicals and at every stage in the growth of the sapling, heavy doses of pesticides are applied. He notes that when the flower emerges, the tip is cut and

chemical is directly applied to the cut to make the fruit heavier and larger. Tea plantations and other plantations on the hill sides also use huge quantities of chemicals.

A non-Adivasi school headmaster who earlier worked in Valad, Thavinjal panchayat reported that the number of cancer patients were increasing in that area due to extensive use of pesticides for banana cultivation and according to his study Valad area was the most affected place in the Thavinjal panchayat. However, the Kurichias in Valad area continue their paddy cultivation extensively except for small patches of banana cultivation and they avoid chemical fertilisers and pesticides as much as possible. Manjan from Tulsi *tharavad* in Thavinjal panchayat said, "We believe firmly that we are not supposed to do anything that hurts the earth". He criticises harshly the use of '*Timit*', DDT (Dichlorodiphenyl-Trichloroethane) etc. for cultivation as it is hazardous to health. He perceives that it can cause cancer and that it is very harmful to the digestive system. He attributed the less number of cancer cases among the Kurichias to their practise of self cultivation without using pesticides and chemicals and the use of homemade food items instead of market items. The Adivasi understanding is only articulated in scientific language in many studies. Bhatt (2000) affirms that the use of chemicals and pesticides can be harmful to health and the biohazardous compounds can act as endocrine disrupters that can cause infertility, menstrual irregularities, spontaneous abortions, birth defects, endometriosis and breast cancer. Further, he notes that women are at a greater risk than men, especially with the rise in environmental estrogens.

Naran from Chathavary *tharavad* mentioned that the government has not done anything to promote or develop the natural manures and pesticides that they have been using for centuries. He expressed the urgent need to move back to their traditional farming practises which was the secret of their health. He felt that the programmes of *Krishi bhavan* (Government Agricultural Department) were encouraging the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides by supplying them at subsidised rates. Subsidies were given for buying fast growing hybrid seeds which required chemical fertilisers, pesticides and water in large quantities. However, the Kurichia's traditional seed varieties which were resistant to pest attacks were partially replaced with hybrid varieties but they were conscious to use minimum chemical fertilisers and pesticides. The Paniyas were forced to

forage and procure food materials from non-Adivasis fields, and they became more vulnerable to the effects of chemical fertilisers and pesticides.

All of the Kurichia elders interviewed mentioned that an important cause of illness was the use of chemicals and pesticides and if the government controlled their use, part of the health problems would be solved. They suggested that government make strict laws to stop the malpractise of using pesticides. However, it is the state development policies which impose capitalist agriculture on marginalised communities with extensive use of chemicals and fertilisers which destroys their health as well as moral and spiritual relationship with nature and human beings and thus destroys the balance and well-being.

Ippi from Knnil colony reminded,

> Be careful, when you collect leaves from paddy fields. In our neighbouring village called Tharuvana, Palliyal colony due to food poisoning the death of a four year old girl Manjitha happened after eating rice, and *ponnamkanni* leaves (a leaf variety extensively used by Paniya community) collected from paddy fields. Now we cannot eat even the leaves, which sustained our lives through generations.... *Kaumuti* newspaper reported this incident ...two hours after consuming food the child started vomiting and had dysentery. They gave the child some medicines for vomiting and dysentery from a nearby medical shop, but the child died the same night. Next day, when their neighbours came to know about this they reported it in the nearby police station in Vellamunda. The police came and admitted three others who had eaten the food and were seriously affected in the district hospital in Mananthavady (see also *Kaumuti* news paper February, 20, 2007, page 10, Calicut).

Further, they reported that many of the leaf varieties were destroyed with the new cultivation practices using chemicals and pesticides and they were afraid to collect them from the fields as they were contaminated with chemicals and pesticides.

In Chathavary *tharavad*, Naran from the Kurichia community said,

> While working in the paddy field, I saw some ripe bananas in the neighbour's garden and I ate it with tea. After some time, I experienced stomach ache that usually I do not feel while working. I told my neighbour that I ate the ripened bananas from his field and got a stomachache. Then he revealed that he had applied hormones the previous day. With the application of hormones mixed with brandy to the banana bunch, they become big and shining and they fetch a better price. But it will cause harm to our stomach. Besides, the farmers use *furadan* to the banana flower which is harmful. We buy bananas from the market, how can we trust and give them to the children to eat?

Naran reported that there are Kurichias who use chemical fertilisers and pesticides but in lesser quantities compared to the non-Adivasi people. He reported that as he did not use

chemicals and pesticides for growing paddy, people from different areas come to buy paddy from his house. He reflected and said that when they had plenty of cattle they could produce and collect food items in plenty which were not contaminated by chemical fertilisers and pesticides and they were healthier. He criticised the profit motive of the non-Adivasi population who saved money for many generations by spoiling the earth and its resources and the health of the people which is the main asset of poor people.

Loss of Commons, Issues of Food Availability and Food Diversity

The introduction and promotion of cash crops through government policies reduced the extent of common lands and fallow lands that the Paniyas and Kurichias used for food crop cultivation as well as gathering purposes. This shift in crop pattern affected the Paniyas drastically as the employment opportunities became less in the cash crop sector. It also affected the poor among the Kurichias who go for wage labour as well as the subsistent farmers among them holding small plots of cash crop gardens. Also the spread of monoculture cash crops with the encouragement of government policies captured the commons used by the Paniyas and the Kurichias.

According to Fernandes (2006), the Common Property Resources (CPRs) were one of the main sources of nutrition and the basis of Adivasi economy and culture. Paniya and Kurichia leaders reported that their access to commons (not named as CPRs on an institutional basis) till the 1970s supported them for their survival, contributed to their socio-economic, cultural and spiritual well-being and enabled the healthy upbringing of their children. According to Shiva (1993), the dominant political formations structure how the knowledge about the commons is produced and circulated. Along with the power structures which control knowledge, Dietrich (1992) points out that the ecological and cultural crisis caused by a development model which is neo-colonial, capitalist, patriarchal and violently attacking the base for material and spiritual survival is destructive of both nature and culture. It appears that to improve the health and well-being of Adivasis, they have to reaquire their lost habitats, with their lost commons.

Further, as Fernandes (2006) points out, the women's work outside the home was socially recognised as they were the main food gatherers and collectors of firewood. With the loss of CPRs from the British period onwards, the status of Adivasi women also

slowly eroded as they were unable to make an economic contribution to the family and that affected the health needs of the family as well (ibid). In Wayanad, women's relatively high status in the Adivasi community depended on the resources they could access easily and the labour opportunities they had in the paddy fields. Several Paniya and Kurichia women said that now they would have to depend on men for their personal and family expenses and their freedom was diminishing with this economic dependence.

The destruction of nature not only destroyed their sources for survival but their vast knowledge about these resources has been systematically marginalised under the impact of modern science and development (Shiva 1988). Rasa, a Paniya woman said that her grandparents knew more than 80 varieties of leafy vegetables. Her mother used to mix different varieties of leafy vegetables they accessed from the surroundings and prepared *puzhukku* with pumkin and *thoran* by mixing different leafy vegetables to make the food more wholesome till three to four decades ago. Rasa said that her mother used to add medicinal leaves also in the *upperi* to protect her children's health. Rasa being a tribal promoter working in the district hospital added that their food practises in the past provided the minerals and vitamins needed for the body. With the loss of CPRs and access to forest resources and the conversion of large extents of paddy fields, the Adivasis have lost their knowledge base and are deprived of these sources to meet their family's health needs as subsistent workers and gatherers.

In a group discussion, Paniya women said that their work load has doubled due to depletion of natural resources and even with a day's toil they find it difficult to fetch firewood for the family and food materials for daily requirement as the land and forest around them was privatised. In the lean periods in the past, when they experienced scarcity, they could depend entirely on wild tubers, leafy vegetables and other resources from forest and common lands. Paniya women stated that today they solely depend on men for food materials during lean seasons of employment. Women and men spent only a meagre amount towards family expenses after spending the wage on alcohol and their entertainment. As a result, the nutritional status of the family and specially that of women and girls deteriorates as they are the last ones to eat after feeding the entire family. Antony (1995), in his study on Paniyas and Kurichias points out that the burden of poverty is most often borne by Adivasi women.

While going in a group to bathe in a stream, Urha a Paniya woman reported that the *purampokku* lands (commons) like the banks of the *thodus* (streams) and streams they used for fetching food items are now encroached by non-Adivasis and the space available to them is restricted to one or two *kadavu* (entrance to river/stream) for washing and taking a bath, which creates in them a feeling of total dispossession of nature's gift which they had enjoyed freely. The Paniyas reported that earlier in the *thodus* near their colonies fish and leafy vegetables were plentiful and they freely made use of these resources. They even cultivated vegetables like brinjal and bitter gourd on the sides of the *thodu*. Now these patches are in private properties and not accessible. However, the *thodus* were relatively more accessible to Kurichia *tharavads* as their land and paddy fields are on the shore of these *thodus,* not only providing them direct access to fish and leafy vegetables but also a feeling of stewardship of nature's resources. Kurichia nuclear families in the study area were also living as a cluster and they have paddy fields and ponds of their own and better accessibility to these resources than the Paniyas. Undernutrition due to alienation of resources makes the Paniyas unfit for work, which further worsens their means of livelihood. However, the common property resources of Adivasis has become private property now and the Adivasis, seen as trespassers, will be thrown out if they enter these private enclaves, no matter if it is for firewood, water or leafy vegetables. The feeling of alienation to their own surroundings as they were threatened while accessing the natural resources they had enjoyed earlier has affected their health and daily living than previous decades as all commons vanished with private occupations and forest conservation programmes; Paniyas become thieves if they entered the areas where they had moved freely. As Baviskar (2008) in her study on commons argues the material and symbolic values and meanings are inseperable in accessing and safeguarding the commons. The Adivasis in Wayanad not only have lost their resources for material existence but also their symbolic and cultural capital with the loss of access to commons and the bountiful nature around them.

In the study report on increasing suicides in Wayanad, Kurup (2007) points out that the large scale plantations and capitalist mode of production and production of cash crops for international market has made Wayanad a region of heavy economic activity and a significant foreign exchange earner for the country. However, the transnational movement of raw materials and capital affect the Adivasis most as they are subsistent workers and

still depend on natural resources for their survival. Further, agricultural policies aligned to the market ignore the food needs of the Adivasi people and alienate them from their livelihoods as they primarily cater to capitalist needs. According to Baviskar (2008), the importance of managing plant species to assure a cost effective orderly supply of raw material for industrial production led to the creation of new knowledge in managing the commons and the decisions are inseparable from power regimes.

PDS System and the Adivasis

The government PDS system meant to ensure basic nutritional requirements of the poor covers neither the Adivasi group nor their basic food requirements. Rice is the staple diet of the Adivasis and the open market price is not affordable to the low income groups. Savan from Paniya community reported,

> The rise in the market price of rice affected us drastically and that is one reason for our increased misery in recent years. The ration system is not helpful always. When we have money, there is no stock of rice in the ration shop. In the colony, many of us have APL cards even now. They say that it will be changed soon but till now (2010) they have not changed it. Also in some families there were eight to nine members and what we will do with the weekly ration of 8 kg of rice? Even though the government promises rice for Rs. 2, only BPL card holders get it for Rs. 2.[40] Even if we get the rice for Rs. 2 we have to spend a minimum of Rs. 20 to Rs. 40 for preparing some curry to eat with. Many times we have eaten rice with salt and during the lean season of employment, we eat only once a day.

In the Paniya settlements, it is noticed that the ration they buy only suffices for three or four days as they have no other supplementary food items like tapioca, yam, colacasia and vegetables and for the rest of the days they have to buy rice at the market price, which is not affordable to them.

An Adivasi promoter reported that in Arayal Paniya colony, out of 42 families only 31 families had ration cards and among these nine families had Above the Poverty Line (APL) cards and 22 families had Below the Poverty Line (BPL) cards (data collected in 2009) and all families were living in a pathetic situation of poverty and ill health. It meant that nearly 50 per cent of them were excluded from this benefit. The nine families with APL cards are very poor depending only on wage labour which is seasonal. When I

40 Paniyas reported that they are getting ration for 2 rupees/kg for BPLs and for APL card if they provide a letter from their panchayat member in the year 2011; in 2012 they get ration rice for 1 rupee/kg. But still Paniya's and Kurichia's APL cards were not changed to BPL cards and for APL cards they distribute only 5kg rice in a month for 1 rupee.

enquired at the PDS supply office about including them in the APL list, they explained that for each ward there was a stipulated number of BPL cards and if those were filled, they could not supply more BPL cards. The revision of the BPL list and the promise to include all the Adivasis in the BPL list has not materialised till 2011. The Adivasis expected that they would be included in the BPL list during the renewal of ration cards, but there was no change when they received the new cards. If they were included in the APL, there was no way for them to change it. This shows the failure of the state to address the needs of the Adivasis. The Kurichias are in a better position in accessing the BPL cards compared to the Paniyas but there were cases of APL card holders among them too. It was reported in *Malayala Manorama* (accessed on Monday, July 23, 2007) that in the 296 ration shops in Wayanad district, there were 12,000 [11,343 - according to the data from district supply office collected through RTI in 2008 by *Neethivedi*, an NGO at Kalpetta] Adivasi families with APL cards. They also reported that in Mulanchira and Ullilam Paniya colonies there were more than 30 APL cards, but they are not government job holders or landowners. This indicates the narrow targeting introduced as part of liberalisation and the need for policy reforms in this area of development.

Ramakrishnan (2008) reported that there were Adivasis with BPL cards buying rice from the ration shop for Rs. 9 instead of Rs. 3 due to their ignorance and the ration shop owner made a profit by cheating the Adivasis. The Paniyas in the study area reported incidents where the ration shop owner told them that the stock was over, thereby depriving them of their share of ration and forcing them to buy rice from the open market at Rs. 25 per kg. Awareness programmes conducted by *Neethivedi*, helped the Paniyas in a few colonies to understand the government provisions and corruption by ration dealers. This corruption is not limited to Wayanad as is well-known. For instance, it is reported that in the last three years, Rs. 31,585.98 crore worth of wheat and rice meant for the poorest was siphoned off from the public distribution system into the market illegally (*Times of India*, September 17, 2007, page 1, Mumbai).

However, till now the government has not fulfilled the promise of including all the Adivasis in the BPL list as it demands supply of more foodgrains. The Paniyas reported that among those who are staying in one house, one has APL and the other has BPL cards and they laughed at the inconsistency in the APL/BPL division. According to Jacob

(2006), it is difficult to find a single person in good health in the Adivasi colonies and the occasional free and price controlled food rations are not the solution to meet their basic needs. According to him, what is needed is not medicine but good living conditions and resource distribution for a better living. Antony (1995) points out that before the drastic changes in the economy of Wayanad, Paniyas food habits were closely tied up with the rhythm of the seasons and farming operations, but now they are tied up with irregular and seasonal employment opportunities and market fluctuations. However, the landless Paniyas met with the double threat of increase in prices of essential commodities and decrease in employment opportunities due to the change from rice cultivation to plantation culture.

Changing Cultivation and Availability of Water

In Thirunelli panchayat, many Adivasi hamlets reported that they were suffering from water scarcity. Local people and Kurichia elders reported that due to eucalyptus and teak plantations, the flow of water in natural sources like streams, wells and ponds in that area decreased and became dry during the summer. Shiva (1983) points out that eucalyptus cultivation is water intensive and reduces water availability for other species, reduces soil moisture, preventing the recharge of ground water and reduces local water tables. She argues that the introduction of such species will destroy the hydrological balance of such areas and contribute to increasing aridity, soil erosion and desertification.

The Kurichia and Paniya people in the study area criticise the claim of forest officials about their scientific knowledge in social forestry and forest management, which according to them has destroyed their environment and water sources. They said there was continuous low intensity rainfall for six months in Wayanad before the heavy rain fall. Now instead, low intensity rain for longer periods, and pouring rain and wind for a short period from June to August is a common phenomena and the streams, which had plenty of water earlier are now drying. However, the eucalyptus plantations which account for less than 1 per cent of the total plantation in 1960 in Kerala rapidly increased to 25 per cent by 1982 (Savur 2003). Savur points out that this rapid increase is due to the National Commission of Agriculture, set up by the government which recommended strengthening forest based industries with forestry. Overexploitation of nature and its resources in the name of development made water scarcity real in the study area. Lack of

water has deteriorated their health conditions with recurring infections and overcrowded living conditions leading to a cycle of infections, which become handy in reinforcing the non Adivasi perceptions of their being 'unhygienic' and primitive in their habits. Thus, the Adivasis who depended on common sources of water, paid the cost of development. Besides, water scarcity is constructed by private agencies and the government to get sanctions for big projects like *Jalanidhi and Giridhara.*[41]

Jalanidhi and Giridhara

When I visited Thirunelli panchayat office at Kattikkulam, in 2007, the area was celebrating the victory of the *Jalanidhi* project funded by Oiska international for reaching water to the interior areas of Thirunelli panchayat. After four years, while visiting the villages for field work, people complained that the *Jalanidhi* water tanks were drying up and that there was no water supply after spending huge amounts of money. Duni from Champa Kurichia community reported that through the *Jalanidhi* project, they received water only for one and half years and after that there were complaints such as, "the pipe is broken", "the motor is spoiled" or "the operator has not been paid" and so on. Nippan, from the Kurichia community showed an empty tank near his property, which promised water for 139 families in his locality (photo 25) by pumping water from the main tank at Thirunelli. He criticised the idea of making a huge tank for the entire area in an interior place without having the infrastructure to repair the damages of the huge machines used for pumping water to the entire area and preferred small local initiatives.

The *Giridhara* project was exclusively meant for Adivasis but the planning and implementation was totally top down and one Paniya as well as one Kurichia family reported that they were compelled to build the tanks even though they had other sources for water, and they were threatened, "If you reject this fund you will not get other funds". However, forcing development on them without respecting their need or cultural specificities is seen as a total failure. The Paniya family said , "The tank has taken the major portion of our small yard and it is a nuisance to us. When we have well water, why

41 *Jalanidhi* is a rural water supply and sanitation project by Kearala government which is partly funded by World Bank. *Giridhara* is a Water project in Kerala for supply of drinking water to the *Adivasi* areas.

will we use rainwater stored in tanks?" However, in the same colony, another cluster of families experienced real water scarcity and their tank was not completed and was dysfunctional (photo 26). One Adivasi who was involved in the *Giridhara* project told me secretly, "It was not successful as envisioned and in many colonies mosquitos are laying eggs in the tanks and if Adivasis go to the court, the court may order its demolition".

In all the Paniya settlements selected for in-depth study, they reported water scarcity especially in the summer. When the health personal attributed the ill health of the Paniyas to their lack of cleanliness, they did not mention the lack of potable water facilities in these settlements. However, according to the target oriented biomedical approach, this responsibility did not fall under the responsibility of the PHC or other state health departments. As the Adivasi leader Janu rightly complains, without giving drinking water and a place to stand up straight, the image of an unclean people was being created about the Adivasis (Bhaskaran 2004). In a group discussion, a Paniya from Kunnil colony reported,

> We were depending on our neighbours for a long period for drinking water. In 2009, after continuous complaints, the panchayat sanctioned a tube well for drinking water facility. We were drawing water from the tube well using a bucket and it was taxing for our women and children. When the elders go for work, our children draw water from the tube well using a bucket and they get chest pain. The bucket fell into the tube well three times and now it is not possible to draw water from it and again we depend on our neighbours for water. Our neighbours are not happy to give water from their private wells and we experience scarcity. The Government built a water tank almost 15 years ago, but do not allow us to pump water on grounds that we did not pay the electricity charge. For rainwater harvesting, the *Giridhara* project built tanks and in this colony two tanks are not completed and not usable. Children throw waste into it and mosquitoes breed.

It was surprising to observe that the Adivasis had to draw water from the tube well with a bucket (photo 27) and it was a very difficult task when I tried to do so. Women sought the help of men when they became tired. Paniya elders reported that there were enough water sources like ponds, streams and *kenis* (small traditional wells made using *panamkutty* – Palmira stems) for their use till three to four decades ago. All those traditional sources have vanished with the new development planning. The Paniyas said that taking water from a non-Adivasi well or pond was not restricted till two decades ago. However, with increasing development interventions, the social relations have changed and sharing of well water has become a favour and a liability. Also the latrines in their colonies are unclean and not usable as there are insufficient water facilities. Here, we see that the

government policies are not in tune with their cultural milieu. Their traditional and clean water sources were destroyed in the development process and the new sources are not providing them enough water for a healthy and clean life.

A few Kurichia youth in Thrissilery, Thirunelli panchayat maintained that as a result of three rounds of eucalyptus plantation, their water resources had dried up. In spite of the protest of the people in Thrissilery, the forest department has decided to continue with the eucalyptus plantation after its third cutting (last rotation) in the Thrissilery section of north Wayanad forest division. They reported that the water flowing from that particular area of forest was meeting the drinking water needs of 1600 families and watershed for cultivating 800 acres of paddy fields near the forest earlier. However, they reported that forest department officials were moving forward with the idea of planting eucalyptus again as it was a government decision. The Paniya and Kurichia communities in Thirunelly reported that their natural water sources dried up in many areas and the alternative sources were not effectively addressing the water scarcity. In Janu's words, "We who dug the earth and found water at will are now reduced to agitating for drinking water supplied through pipes"(Bhaskaran 2004: 47).

Further, with the conversion of paddy fields, the common ponds used by the Adivasis have been destroyed. In the remaining paddy fields, paddy cultivation has been converted into banana cultivation which dried up the water sources. Mehta (2008) points out that water scarcity is not natural, but created through anthropogenic interventions, resulting from bad water management and land use practices. As she argues, scarcity is both real and constructed, sometimes constructed through political and policy processes. According to her, scarcity was earlier accepted as a fact of life that affected everybody more or less equally, but with modern development interventions, it affects the poor and marginalised and creates social differentiation.

Marginality, Resistance and Sustained Critique

The voices and experience of people suggests that the improvement in the health condition in the Adivasi areas can be achieved only through a comprehensive approach which includes their understanding health and illness and the culture of healthcare and healing. Thus, issues related to health cannot be managed by the health system alone but

through political intervention of distribution of land and access to natural resources which was the essential basis of the Adivasi community, and which has to be addressed as the first prerequisite for their health. Jacob (2006) stresses the importance of land and points out that the destruction of the environment and its resultant ill effects are more crucial to those who do not have means of subsistence and thus explains the better health status of the Kurichias compared to that of the Paniyas. However, a radical transformation in the state policies is necessary to address the issues in the agrarian sector and the resultant deterioration of nature and unemployment of Paniyas and the lack of profit for agriculture in the case of farmers like the Kurichias. The study by the Centre of Excellence (2006) has pointed out the decline of paddy cultivation, crash in prices of cash crops and the resultant unemployment of the Paniya community. As Kurup (2007) points out, the governmental policy of agricultural pricing adversely affected the paddy cultivators and resulted in large scale conversion of wetlands to garden lands. Paddy fields, common lands and forest lands, which were store houses of Adivasi food items were destroyed and today they cannot rely on them for their employment and sustenance and this has marginalised the Adivasis and affected their health drastically. The subsistence economies and the ecological balance of the region were affected through capitalist agriculture and the aid policies for development, which further destroyed their local resources for a healthy life.

A sustained critique against the State and its policies is emerging in the voices of the Paniyas and the Kurichias as there is a wide gap between Adivasi world views and state perceptions. Ellan Mooppan from Arayal colony said,

> Those eucalyptus and teak trees planted by the foresters dried our water sources and now the government is asking us to pay for water. I will not pay for water. We have never paid for water in our lifetime. I told the *jalanidhi* officers that if I have to pay for water, there is no need to fit the pipe in my yard. But they have installed it. Since I did not pay the money I have no water in that tap.

The Paniyas like to have tap water in their houses, but it is observed that they resist paying user fees or even electricity charges for supplying water, which they had accessed freely for centuries from common sources. During field work, it was observed that the Paniyas and Kurichias still prefer to have water from natural sources for cooking, and they mainly use pipe water for washing and other purposes. Ellan Mooppan was not able to accept the reality of commoditising water by paying user fees. However, this is

another example of a top down development model, which neglects the voice of the people and their governance in local issues.

The leafy vegetables, wild fruits, tubers, honey, fish and crabs that were available in the commons, forest lands and paddy fields were the sources of their energy and health during slavery and the early independent period. The extension of plantations, the land assigned in the forests during 'grow more food campaign' encouraging cultivation, large scale migration and encroachment of the common lands by private parties, reservation of forest etc. affected this source of supplementary diet of the Adivasis in most areas of Wayanad. The loss of food materials, herbal medicines and the destruction of natural resources alienated them from nature-their abode of deities and life sustaining resources and affected their health. Loss of their forests, paddy fields and commons and extensive use of pesticides and fertilisers in the private lands around them not only destroyed their material basis for a healthy life, but they lost their close bond with these entities and the resultant alienation and dependency affected their social, mental and spiritual health.

While they are losing life sustaining resources that they had freely accessed on the one hand, they are discriminated in healthcare and neglected in preventive and promotive healthcare services on the other. According to Zurbrigg (1984:127), ill health is an institutionalised form of violence in society and suggests a more just distribution of resources to address the issues of health. As Badami (2011) points out, the biomedicine treats the symptoms of marginality and not the root causes of illnesses and marginality of the Paniyas. According to him, most of their illness is associated with poverty and marginality. He points out that without trying to reconfigure the social, political and economic conditions, treating the generally observable physical symptoms are favoured by the health professionals in the PHCs. Further, reaching healthcare to the poor and poverty alleviation alone cannot reduce the inequalities in health as this approach ignores the political, social, ecological and cultural contexts of the Adivasis.

There were incidents of resistance when Adivasis were not cared for in emergencies. The pharmacist in Arayal PHC reported that in 2006, the Adivasis mobilised themselves and demanded a regular doctor when an Adivasi girl died in the area without getting timely treatment. On another occasion, when the doctors in the PHC refused to attend to one of their emergency cases, the Adivasi people jointly protested. Two Adivasi children

fell into a pond and Adivasis reached them to the Arayal PHC and the doctor who was on duty that day did not turn up. Even though the hospital staff maintained that there were no doctors that day, the Adivasis found one doctor watching TV in his quarters. The children died before reaching the district hospital. Even though the children were not from their colony, the Adivasi people living in the neighbourhood of the PHC turned violent and broke the doors and glass windows of the hospital and protested against this negligence. When the police came to arrest the protesters, all the Adivasis in the locality, especially the Paniya women blocked the arrest saying that they would all go to the police station if they arrested the protestors and the police could not arrest them. However, in most of the cases, they had to bear the discrimination and negligence as they were dependent on these health facilities in vulnerable situations. Even though they show indifference at times, in emergency situations they put up a joint front to protest against the PHC for better care.

Krishna, from the Kurichia community, a Zilla Panchayat SC/ST working group member during 2001-2002, reported that he along with another panchayat member from the Kurichia community, forced the Block panchayat to allot funds to build a maternity ward for the Adivasis in the district hospital as they heard about incidents of Adivasi women giving birth to babies in vehicles, hospital verandas and on the roadside. He reported that non-Adivasi panchayat members tried their best to use that amount for building a community hall, road and bridge and removed the Adivasi application before it came to the district development seminar for decision making. Since the Kurichia panchayat member argued strongly, the panchayat sanctioned the funds. Even though the ward was built in the name of the Adivasis, preference is given to non-Adivasi patients. The non-Adivasi patients go for regular checkups to the doctor's private clinics and with her/his support, they arrange the room or ward facility in advance in the district hospital. The Adivasis, especially the Paniyas reaching the hospital in the last stage of delivery were found to be adjusting on the floor and verandas of the hospital till they got one bed to share with another. What needs to be changed here is not the number of facilities, but the attitude that Adivasis deserve only minimum care and the demeaning constructions about their culture. The power relations existing in society and the health system has a detrimental effect on Adivasi health and well-being.

In another case, Jaya, a panchayat member from the Kurichia community approached the duty doctor, to know about the condition and the details of illness, when a patient from her panchayat was referred to the Medical College. Since the duty doctor hesitated to give details, Jaya complained to the Hospital administration and the duty doctor had to apologise. Being a panchayat member, Jaya could use her power. The position as a panchayat member in Kerala bestowed her with the symbolic power to challenge the authorities. Having experienced humiliation and corruption, when Jaya became Minister, one of her priorities was monitoring the Adivasi offices and Adivasi institutions to check corruption and discrimination. Another panchayat member from the Adivasi community reported... "Our party is organising a strike for an Adivasi ward in the district hospital… if our demand is heard and the ward is built then we have to go on strike again for neglecting the Adivasi ward by the hospital administrators and staff."

Escobar's (1995) analysis of the transformation of the poor into the assisted and the deep consequences of it is relevant to mention here as free medicine and health benefits are considered a panacea for all Adivasi health issues in Wayanad, without addressing the issues contextually. He points out that poverty and ill health appeared as social problems requiring new ways of interventions in society and new mechanisms of control. The new apparatuses of knowledge and power emerged to optimise life by producing it under modern scientific conditions. Bury (1998) argues that the general tendency of modernity itself is towards objectification and separation of embedded experience from everyday life. It is reported that there was no initiative from NRHM for introducing other systems of medicine, as doctors in Kerala were against cross practise even though NRHM seeks to revitalise local health traditions and mainstream AYUSH infrastructure.[42] Abraham (2008) points out that the state policies have worked in a manner that supports the hegemony of allopathy in public healthcare. However, the inequality and lack of care is passively and actively resisted by the Adivasis as illustrated in the above sections.

42 AYUSH is the name of the government department which advocates Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy.

Conclusion

It is evident that the Paniyas and Kurichias recognise their marginal position in the modern health system, demand for better care and at the same time put forward a critique of the biomedical developmentalist approach in dealing health issues. In the Adivasi world view land, environment, rituals, community and spirituality, everything is connected and the disconnection and imbalance is very much related to their illness and the regaining of balance is related to their well-being. Badami (2011) points out that immediately observable physical symptoms were treated by health professionals at the PHCs and that it was impossible to understand the serious health problems in short consultation without adequate follow up. He observes that the effects of inadequate social, political and economic conditions are also interpreted in medical terms and the sole responsibility of illness falls on the patient. The construction of body and sickness in the dominant biomedical terms marginalises the Adivasis as they are not socialised into the biomedical system and its mechanistic and compartmentalised approach. So they experience the double burden of marginalisation as the biomedical approach is alien to their world view and also due to discrimination inscribed in the health system.

Generally without serious complaints, the Paniyas do not go to the hospital and this feature deserves special attention. The term, 'Adivasi' creates a perception in the non-Adivasi mind that they deserve only minimum care and comfort in the state initiated health programs and especially for the Paniyas who have had a slave caste identity in the past. The unequal power relations reflect drastically in the health field. Unequal power relations are not only limited to the realm of discourse but extend to the realm of practise as Escobar (1995) points out. The approach of seeing the doctor as the ultimate knower of the truth about illness through the language of disease and the patient as a passive agent is prevalent in modern medicine as Bury (1998) points out. In Foucault's language, it is a 'docile body' caught in the web of medical knowledge and medical power (ibid). Foucault unravels the multilayered forms of power and its mechanisms, and shows that power plays in manifold ways, reaches the individual, touches their bodies, affects their actions and attitudes, discourses and learning practises in everyday life (Gordon 1980). In the case of Adivasis, especially the Paniyas, these unequal power relations are not only experienced in relation to the state and its machinery but by the entire society around

them with a caste ridden, patriarchal, hierarchic mentality affecting their body, mind and spirit and disturbing their balance and well-being.

The Kurichias and Paniyas experience a lack of cultural space to integrate themselves with the modern system of medicine, but the Paniyas are more alienated and lack the skill to access even the meagre benefits and resources allocated to them. The Kurichias are comparatively resilient to the discrimination. It emerges that their specific cultures and subjective experiences have no place in the discourse of modern medicine and their traditional health practises need to be promoted as it offers a model in the highly commercialised profit oriented health sector in Kerala. In Adivasi culture, it is highly unethical to work for profit when people suffer from life threatening or other health problems. Their health culture centered on their world views are found holistic and place a challenge before the commodification of health and illness. Further, the political economy of health and redistribution of resources become more important than mere healthcare services in determining their well-being.

The conversion of health to the mere provision of medical facilities and care that are technology intensive, expensive and accessible only to a select few still marginalises the Adivasi population. According to Roy Burman (1983), in an Adivasi society the moral order predominates the technological order. He points out that in the technological order, men are bound by things or are themselves things. He suggests that when the nation state is geared to the anti-monopoly pro-peace mobilisation on a global scale, the Adivasi communities have the potential to show the way forward. Through the voices of Paniyas and Kurichias, we have seen that the culture of commoditisation of health services and people are entirely opposed to the Adivasi culture which treasures healing as a divine mission to their fellow beings. Thus, integration of Adivasi culture into the health system can reduce fragmentation in health practices and the alienation of people in the modern health system. However, tribal world views are considered lack of knowledge and superstition, instead of looking at it as another approach to health and illness. It emerges that there is need for recognising Adivasi's pluriform expressions of healing and they seek space for evolution of their healing practices through a sustained critique of state programmes. The Paniyas as well as the Kurichias assert that their unique tradition as

well as environment is central to their well-being but the developmentalist state neglects these two areas and institutionalises healthcare.

CHAPTER VII

Wage Labour and Employment: Reproduction of Exploitative Relations

This chapter delineates how bondedness and dependency continue in the context of Adivasis in Wayanad and how they alienate, exploit, marginalise and pose a threat to their livelihoods. The first section of the chapter describes the occupational patterns of the Paniyas and Kurichias, their experiences of exploitation in the labour market and the changing nature of labour relations. The second section discusses the role of religion in the reproduction of stigmatised labour relations and how it contributes to the marginalisation of Adivasis. Kodagu labour and the second incarnation of brutal slavery of the Paniyas is discussed. The third section delineates the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) and the experiences of the Paniyas and Kurichias and the extent to which it ameliorates the exploitative labour conditions or reproduces the exploitative relations. The issues discussed in this chapter need to be read in tandem with the exploitative histories of the Adivasi groups discussed in Chapter IV.

According to a study by the Centre of Excellence (2006) seven months in a year form the lean season of employment for the Adivasis taken as a whole in Wayanad, and it is almost nine months for the Paniya community. They report that employment opportunities reduced due to the collapse of prices of agricultural produce after the implementation of economic liberalisation. According to a survey by the Kerala Institute of Local Administration (KILA), 2008 majority of the Adivasi population in Wayanad are employed as agriculture labourers (29668 families - 82.10%). The second main employment is agriculture (1872 families - 5.18%) followed by 3.92 per cent (1418 families) in government and semi government organisations and 2.21 percent (797 families) in NREGS. In non-agricultural wage labour, 2.09 percent (757 families) are involved while the forest sector wage labour accounts for 1.10 per cent (397 families) and forest produce collection accounts for 0.43 per cent (156 families) (KILA Survey 2008). The main factor emerging from the data is that Adivasis in Wayanad are mainly

dependent on agriculture for their livelihood as wage labourers or subsistent agriculturists (around 90%).

According to the KILA survey (2008) out of 32876 children in the age group of 5-15 years, 84 children are labourers and among them 68 are involved in agricultural labour. Those who fall in the age group 15-59 years, form the main productive force which constitutes 97793 (63.84%) of the total Adivasi population in Wayanad. Among them 73503 (75.16%) are employed. In the 15-59 age group, 23.58 per cent are doing supplementary work along with their main work.

Table: 6.

Category wise Employment of Adivasis in Wayanad, 15-59 age group

Categorywise employment	**Major occupation**		**Supplementary occupation**	
	Number	**Percentage**	**Number**	**Percentage**
Agriculture labourers	52227	53.40	2759	12
Agriculturists	6504	6.65	3232	14
NREGS	5848	5.98	13606	60
Non-agriculturists	1966	2.01	343	1.48
Cattle rearing	1316	1.35	1604	7
Wage labour in forest sector	1482	1.51	416	2
Forest produce collection	1089	1.11	802	3.48

Source: KILA survey (2008)

Among Paniya Adivasis in Wayanad, 14184 families (89.34%) are involved in agriculture labour, 305 families (1.92%) in NREGS and 137 families (0.86%) in the forest sector for their livelihood. Among the Kurichias, 4642 families are involved in agriculture, 369 families in government jobs, 126 families in NREGS and 36 families in the forest sector.

Among Adivasi communities in Wayanad, Paniyas constitute 42197 (43.14%) of the main productive force in the age group 15-59. In this age group, 28912 (68.5%) are agricultural labourers, 369 people (0.87%) are involved in collecting forest produce, 229 (0.54%) people are involved in agriculture and 151 people (0.35%) in cattle rearing. Among the Paniyas who do supplementary work in this age group, 72.27 per cent are involved in NREGS. Some of the Paniyas use agriculture (778), forest produce collection (203), and cattle rearing (150) as a secondary source of livelihood. In the study area it was not possible to include them in a single category of work force.

In the core areas selected for study, the Paniyas are mainly dependent on agriculture wage labour and the Kurichias are involved in subsistence agriculture. The Kurichias and Paniyas participated in NREGS work occasionally. A few Kurichias are employed in the government sector but no Paniyas are to be found even as *anganwadi* teachers.

According to a study conducted by Aerthayil (2008), Wayanad has the highest rate of unemployment among the Adivasis in Kerala. He points out that Wayanad is the most affected district in terms of loss of working days for Adivasis due to the shift from food crops to commercial crops that has increased during the last ten years. The cash crops require less regular work compared to paddy and other food crops. The Paniyas in the study area reported that till the 1990s, they used to get employment for seven to eight months a year as there was large scale paddy cultivation, coffee and pepper plucking and ginger cultivation. Thus, the conversion of large tracts of paddy cultivation to other crops in the 1990s was a severe blow to the Paniyas who were experts in paddy cultivation (Nair, Paul and Menon 2007). Aerthayil (2008) points out that the crash in the prices of cash crops due to the import of the same product from other countries as part of the neo liberal reforms and new agricultural policies affected the Adivasi wage labourers severely.

Occupation and Employment Patterns of the Kurichias

The main source of livelihood of the Kurichias is subsistence agriculture. Most of them used vast areas of land as their customary right during the pre independent period. They were using hill areas and forest areas for shifting cultivation with *ragi* and settled cultivation with paddy in the low areas. Their shifting cultivation practices and other

opportunities for self-employment using forest resources and hunting are curtailed now with rules and regulations. Presently, they are engaged in settled agriculture - wet land cultivation as well as dry land cultivation like the non-Adivasis.

Agriculture alone cannot provide income for the growing needs of the Kurichias and rare opportunities of government jobs give support to few families among them. In one *tharavad,* out of 110 adult members, only four members had government employment and three of them were working in the post office and one was working as a clerk in a college. There were no women who were employed. There was one girl studying for B.Ed who may be employed soon. In the other *tharavad* selected for study, which was a branch of the main *tharavad* nearby, had 13 families earlier out of whom only two men were government employees. In this *tharavad,* the previous Karanavan's *marumakan* and his children and their families are residing at present and all the others have separated by taking a portion of the property from the common pool. In the three nuclear families selected, two households had government employees - police, conductor and forest guard. Even though it was limited, the employment opportunities in government services became a support in their livelihood as well as in their socialisation process.

However, the pattern of government jobs reveals that they are not appointed to important posts which could have improved their decision making capacity for the evolution of their community. As a teacher from an alternate centre for Adivasi education reported, during the British period, they were at one side or the other of the pistol and now they are appointed in some clerical posts as Indians were permitted in the times of British rule. While visiting one *tharavad,* I heard one Karanavan announcing to the youth that there were employment opportunities in military services and those interested could join the military services.

For the Kurichias, cultivation was a joint occupation from the beginning and all members of the lineage joined, thus there was not much need of outside wage labour. Even now growing paddy is a joint cultivation practice wherever their *tharavad* system exists and since it was engraved in their culture, they enjoyed this strenuous work. The Kurichias are known as an agricultural tribe and agriculture is the main source of their livelihood. However, they have not adopted the capitalist mode of agricultural production based on profit.

Further, their tradition of social exclusion from other communities in the past forced them to become self reliant. These skills later helped them to avail themselves of opportunities in the labour market and make a living. There are a few masons and painters among them who have developed these skills while living in joint families. As there were a large number of people staying in one house, big and strong houses were necessary for them unlike the small huts of the Paniyas. A member from the Tulsi *tharavad* reported that he could work as a contractor and build houses and water tanks in his locality. He also worked as an employee in the Giridhara water project specially meant for Adivasi communities. Manjan from Tulsi *tharavad* reported,

> When the panchayat allotted houses, we could undertake all the construction works in our *tharavad* by our own people and thus middlemen's exploitation was less. We are alert in entrusting our own people when such works are available. Still, we need to train some people in driving, tailoring etc. so that we can become self reliant.

The Kurichias had herds of cattle and grazing the cattle in the forest was another occupation which supported their cultivation practices as well as nutritional needs. However, during the enforcement of the law that banned grazing in the forest, step by step they give away their cattle. Since it is their traditional occupation, they are experts in cattle rearing and even today those who have land keep a few cattle for their own use, which becomes a support for meeting their subsistence during difficult times.

Subsistence agriculture reduced the effect of alienation and gave the Kurichias minimum self sufficiency even though modernisation trends in agriculture were alien to their cultivation practices. This aspect will be discussed elaborately in the next chapter. Further, other supplementary work such as NREGS, government employment and cattle rearing contributed to better life conditions among the Kurichias when compared to the Paniyas.

Paniyas Life Conditions in the Present Labour Market

Historically, Paniyas caught as slaves were made to take an oath in front of the goddess at the Valliyoorkavu temple to commit that they would work under the *jenmi* for the entire year. Through strict surveillance, control and punishment, slave labour was enforced. The *jenmis* needed a work force and they trained the Paniyas who were nomads as bonded labour using a moral framework that described idleness and disobedience as sin. This

moral discourse is still prevalent in Wayanad through the social constructions of non-Adivasis about the Paniyas. Even today, the Paniyas constitute the main wage labour force in Wayanad and their exploitation draws legitimacy from the earlier history of bonded labour in Wayanad as well as the ideological constructions of the past. The bargaining power and resistance of the labourers is minimal since they have to depend on the employer for rare chances of labour in the area due to the agrarian crisis in Wayanad. Adivasi experiences show that the concept of 'free labour' is not fully applicable in Wayanad. However, there were occasions of resistance when they were exploited or forced to go for work.

In Edavaka panchayat, two non-Adivasi people went to a Paniya colony and promised double wages for some urgent work in the Catholic Church near their colony. They rejected the offer and when they were compelled, they challenged them saying "If it is so urgent why can't you go and work?" Non-Adivasi people who are too ingrained in a *jenmi* culture of seeing the Paniyas as less human beings fail to grasp their refusal to work under enticement or compulsion. And to console themselves, they retired by saying '*Enthokke Cheythalum Avaru Nannavilla'* (whatever we do for them they will not improve). For the non-Adivasi employer, promising double wages for labour is a great favour. They are not concerned with the limitations and estrangement experienced by the Adivasis. For the Paniyas, double payment promised by the employer would not have much meaning as Marx (1992: 332) points out, 'better pay for slaves would not mean an increase in human significance or dignity for either the worker or the labour'.

Exploitation of Paniya labour was accompanied by violence or threat of violence at times. In the Edavaka panchayat, two Paniyas were called to work at night and when they asked for their wages, the employer's helper said that he had no money to pay them. When the Paniyas insisted on getting the money as they needed it urgently, they were beaten up and were told,

> You are Paniyas, even if your whole colony comes together, you cannot do anything against us.

The Paniyas beat back the employer's helper who in turn beat and humiliated them and filed a case against them. The employer admitted his helper in the hospital even though there was no serious injury.

When the Paniyas came to know about this, they also got admitted in hospital and filed a case against their oppressors. The non-Adivasi masters came to know that they were seeking support from the researcher, other NGOs and political parties, they approached the Adivasis for negotiation, and promised them compensation of Rs. 1000/- which was never given on the pretext that they had a loan to repay. The Communist Party [CPI (M)] which supported them also agreed to this stand. However, most of the time, Paniyas did not have the courage to resist violence of these extreme forms.

When I visited the hospital, the Paniya employees, Vasan and Ravan were actually in a panic and they said,

> The police come every day to the hospital and ask us to get discharged from the hospital and appear at the police station. The police inactivated my mobile and I was not able to contact anybody.

When the police came to the hospital I asked them about the Adivasis' complaint and the way non-Adivasis treat the Paniyas. The policeman was silent at first, and revealed that there was political support for the employer. The police even went to their colonies and scolded their women for their spouses not getting discharged and presenting themselves in the police station. But the victims just extended their stay in the hospital by acting that they were sick fearing that without enough support, if they came out, they would have to undergo punishment in the police station. Even their children were fearful to go to school for a few days as the school was near the place where the incident happened. The children too stayed with them in the hospital till they were discharged. The political non-Adivasi nexus is very evident here and even the communist party who acted as supporters of the victim at their request showed minimum interest in deal their problem.

During the days of slavery, fleeing was the only way to escape from work and the brutal punishments meted out by the masters. Today, also if they are not willing to work, they just hide from the employer's sight after promising to do the work. The general comment from non-Adivasi people is that they do not keep their word to report to work and that they are liars. The Paniya community comes out with its own way of resistance when they are in a group and where they have control over the situation. For instance, another landowner was furious while stating that Paniya youth insisted on Rs.500 for three hours of wage labour late in the evening. However, since Paniyas are the main work

force in that area, non-Adivasis had to depend on them and thus had to comply to their demands at least occasionally. Both parties vent their feelings not always through confrontation but through indirect comments. The Paniyas, especially the Paniya youth are becoming resistant to the demeaning constructions and they resist whenever a chance appears for example by abusing the non-Adivasi employer after drinking alcohol. When the circumstances are perceived as threatening, they run away or hide from the employer. As Scott (1985) points out the covert and overt forms of resistance can affect changes in the behavior of the landowners as well as in government policies in the long run. Constant struggle against the *jenmis* by the labourers in the 1960s compelled the government to introduce land reforms and abandon slavery. Anyway providing 10 cents of land is not meant for building their subsistence capacity but can only suffice for a homestead and they have to depend on rich landowners for labour to survive. Yet, ownership of 10 cents can increase the freedom to choose different employers without fear of eviction from the house one built in the *jenmi's* land. But majority of the Paniyas in Wayanad could not avail of this benefit due to their lack of awareness about the concept of private property and practical procedures to acquire the necessary documents for land. However, in the case of Paniyas poverty, debt and lack of resources for survival maintains a dependent relationship to the employer and this situation is exploited by the employer to control and treat them in inhuman ways. When lack of wage labour affects the Paniyas materially, the historical stigma of being slaves and a labour force for the 'high caste' and 'high class' in Wayanad is used to dehumanise and marginalise them.

Ideological Construction of the Paniya 'Idle Worker'

In the early and mid nineteenth century, discourses on labour were very much part of a moral and racialised discourse, and hence used direct surveillance and moral instruction in order to make the workers more civilised. By the end of the 19th century, the morally inflicted discourse of idleness gave way to a scientific discourse of energy according to the European liberal doctrines (Philip 2003). Philip points out that in the colonies, the moralising discourse on labour persisted even in the twentieth century. Thus, the European liberal doctrines cannot be applied in the colonial context, where racial differences naturalise class difference and thus legitimise the strict surveillance and moral supervision of the working population (ibid). In Wayanad, the 'Paniya colonies' are still

affected by this moral discourse and face the stigma of condemning them as idle and lazy by the non Adivasi community even today, but in a lesser degree compared to the period of slavery and bonded labour. One landowner in the study area was disgusted while talking about the Paniyas' lack of response after promising to work for him. He said,

> Earlier, we could have give them a nice beating to make them obey our commands. Today if we touch them or scold them, they can complain against us.

It emerges that the mentality of the employer has not changed even though the protective laws for Adivasis prevent them from physical harassment. The stigma about forcing Paniyas for wage labour and the stigma around their identity as labour class is not confined to Wayanad but is widespread. During a discussion about the Paniya community, a rich landowner in the neighbouring district reflected on his experience,

> Oh! the Paniyas – *Nayinte Makkal* (an abuse literally meaning children of dog). One day I went with my car to fetch them for work. They resisted coming with me. See their pride! They deserve *iruttady* (severe beating). No other way to tame them. When electricity goes in the town we ask the shop keepers to blow off their petromaxes (lanterns) and we beat them. We tie stones in bath towels and give them a nice beating.

Thus, the Paniyas continue to be treated as slaves and their resistance is seen as 'pride' that needs to be tamed with more violence. When the Paniyas have enough work, they may go for three days of work and then relax ignoring the demand from the employer. When the money is exhausted they start working again. The 'mainstream' capitalist society may describe this as pride, laziness and idleness, but for the Paniyas relaxing after a few days work is like their second nature. Unless there is compulsion to meet their material needs they keep away from wage labour. As Marx (1992: 326) points out 'he is at home when he is not working and not at home when he is working' is still relevant in the case of the Paniya community and the work becomes more forced than voluntary. Some of the Paniya people reported that they are not able to work continuously due to health reasons. However, the morality discourse continues to be deployed to make the Paniyas a work force, whose natural tendency was nomadic life and food gathering in the past.

During the festival season in the Valliyoorkavu temple, one Nair landowner was trying to reconstruct the past slavery of the Adivasis, especially the Paniyas and the Adiyas by trivializing and justifying it. He said,

> What existed in the past was not slavery but just a small trick to create fear of god and to make Paniyas consistent in their work. They are idle and not trustworthy and without adopting the method of creating fear of Valliyooramma they used to disappear without replanting the plucked paddy in our fields.

He quoted from history books to prove that the Paniyas are thieves, but when asked about any incident about their stealing in the locality, he became silent. Through the continuous use of ideological constructions like 'not trustworthy', 'idle', and 'thieves', the act of exploitation is deflected. The Paniyas are the people who worked hard in the fields of the Nairs and the Brahmins as the latter stayed away from manual labour in their own agricultural field. Neither the contribution of the Paniyas nor the violence meted out to them in the past are highlighted in history, instead they are portrayed as idle, thieves and betrayers.

Changing Nature of Labour Relations

The feudal forms of production gradually gave way to production for profit, which is the essential characteristic of the capitalist system of production. And this production for profit totally depends on the means of production and the relations of production and those who do not have the means or the subordinate class still get exploited and marginalised in society. This explains why the marginalisation of the Paniyas in Wayanad has a strong material base - because they do not own any means of production, their labour is exploited to the maximum by the landowners. The Paniyas said that the minimum reciprocity which existed between the landowners and their wage labourers has disappeared during recent times.

Nellan from Paniyan community said,

> When there was paddy cultivation in Wayanad, if the landowners got a good harvest, they used to share the benefit with their labourers. The Muslim merchant 's father used to give plenty of paddy grains as '*sakkath*' during their festival season and in the fasting month as we used to work in his paddy fields. Now paddy cultivation has become very rare and if they cultivate it is only for their use.

While, paddy cultivation is seen as cooperative affair with mutual dependence on the landowner and the labourers, cash crop cultivation is seen as totally profit oriented, where the support, mutual sharing and social relations have ended in pure market relations. A media person, in Wayanad said that the employers who take Adivasi people to Kodagu for ginger cultivation earn 15 to 16 lakhs as profit, if the yield is good. But they do not share the profit with the Adivasi labourers who work hard for them. This is also the case with coffee, pepper and other cash crops. The employers become very rich but no Adivasi labourer benefits.

Raven from Kunnil Paniyan colony reported that when the migrants from Thiruvithamkur and Cochin came, they started paying for wage labour in cash. The rapid growth of non-Adivasi people in the area resulted in the monetisation of the economy and also the loss of common lands led to the erosion of the Adivasi economy based on collection of food materials, mutual exchange and sharing of natural resources. Thus, the gradual conversion from pre-capitalist society to the capitalist market oriented society lead to commodification of labour and the workers lost even the minimum social benefits they accrued from their masters, which further challenged the minimum livelihood security they had in the past.

The Paniyas and Kurichias treated natural resources of the hills and nearby forests as common property resources and no household were excluded from accessing the resources for their survival. Kurichia elders also reported that in feudal and colonial times their livelihood security was mostly based on resource availability and shifting cultivation in the surrounding areas and with its loss it changed solely to settled agriculture and availability of money. However, loss of these natural resources pushed the Paniya and Kurichia communities to have monetary concerns to meet their day to day life. The money economy was alien to the Adivasis and they reported rampant exploitation of money lenders and petty shop owners, which led them to debt traps, further dependence and bondedness.

Being landless and dependent on others even for fuel wood and leafy vegetables, the Paniyas are experiencing another kind of slavery. The barbed wires around almost all private lands symbolically represent exclusive ownership and the Paniyas are ousted from the places where they used to collect firewood and food items. Non-Adivasis constantly

create fear amongst the Paniyas regarding the boundary and if they cross the boundaries, they become encroachers and thieves and a very clear demarcation as “we” and “they” automatically appears in their descriptions when they discuss their livelihood issues.

On the contrary, the Kurichias who owned land continued their cultivation practices and try to achieve self-sufficiency. One Kurichia Karanavan said that if they have half an acre of cash crop, they cannot survive today but if they have half an acre of paddy field, they are self sufficient at least for their food. In the non-Adivasi’s mind, this is foolishness and for the Adivasis it is their wisdom which survived amidst all calamities of life. Many non-Adivasi farmers committed suicide when the market value of the cash crop went down. The subsistence economy of the Kurichia people helped them to meet the crisis without frustration and their subsistence cultivation practices present an alternative in the midst of agricultural crisis. They planted mixed crops in their gardens and even though it did not promise huge profit, it was enough to meet their livelihood needs. However, monetised economy and the resultant debt traps affected Kurichia livelihood options and led them also to dependency. For instance, the Kurichia elders reported that there were cases of land alienation in their community to money lenders and business people even though they could save their land from them in the core areas selected for study.

Another landowner’s complaint about Paniya men was that they go to employers who distribute liquor before work and after borrowing money, at times they escape. Since there is legal sanction against physical violence and when moral surveillance fails, non Adivasi people resort to distribution of alcohol to attract Paniyas for work and then extract maximum work from them. Giving advance money during lean seasons is another way adopted to entice Paniyas to work. The middle man, job brokers and those who do petty business with them becomes channels of dependency and bondage for the Paniyas. Similarly, debt in the grocery shops also compels them to work for the shop owners leading to a vicious cycle of indebtedness.

Karl Marx’s analysis of society with its focus on the working class helps to understand the exploitation in wage labour and estrangement of the Paniya community only partially. However, Marx did not include an indepth analysis of the significance of religion, nature and culture in the understanding of society and their oppressive

mechanisms. Gurukkal (1992:32) points out "The temple was the hinterland headquarters of agrarian control and the economic life of early medieval South India was organised around it". It is therefore not surprising that the Valliyoorkavu temple, earlier famous for buying and selling Adivasi bonded labourers, continues to have a hold over their lives.

Valliyoorkavu Temple: Religion in the Reproduction of Stigmatised Labour Relations

The Valliyoorkavu temple despite its history of being the centre of 'Adivasi' enslavement, remains an important place of worship for the Adivasis. In 1951, the control of the temple was taken over by the Department of Hindu Religious and Charitable Endowment (H.R and C.E). The day to day administration of the temple is vested with the manager, who is nominated by *Ooralars* (hereditary owners) and approved by the Assistant Commissioner of the department.[43]

According to the Executive Manager of the temple, Valliyoorkavu temple came under the category of Grade A[44] from August 6, 1996. In 2008, it came under the authority of the Malabar Devaswam Board. However, the Kurichia elders said that the Paniyas and Kurichias also could have been given the position as *Ooraalars* of the temple as it was their place of worship. Today, the Paniyas as well as Kurichias claim that Valliyoorkavu was their temple before caste Hindus came to occupy it and they had a great role in recognising the presence of Valliyooramma in the *kavu* (Refer to the chapter on History). A Kurichia panchayat member Chandan reported,

> We Adivasis experienced the divinity in Valliyoorkavu and started worshiping Valliyooramma and slowly the Bhrahmins and Nairs became the superiors and they decided that they only can do *pooja* there. When I was small, we were not allowed to enter inside the main premise of the temple but from outside we bow and the *prasadam* also is kept down on the floor. But now we can go and bow in front of the statue.

The recent inhabitants of Valli Paniya colony, situated in the premises of Valliyoorkavu temple claim that they came to the temple premises 75 years back and before that they

43 Ooralar -Hereditary owners of the temple. The temple was owned by three hereditary *ooralars.*

44 The temple under HR and CE Department are classified into four grades based on annual income with effect from August 6, 1996. Grade A: Rs. 10 lakhs and above; Grade B: Above Rs. 1 lakh and below Rs.10 lakhs. Grade C: Rs. 50, 000 and below Rs. 1 lakh. Grade D: Below Rs. 50,000. The classification adopted prior to August 6, 1996 was different. Grade I: Rs. 1 lakh and above; Grade II: Rs. 60,000 –Rs. 99,999.etc.

were living in Vemom (5 kilometres away from Mananthavady town) and were working for the *Jenmis* as slave labourers. Paniyas were living in the periphery of the *jenmis* land but when *jenmis* sold the land to the migrants, they lost their land and they left that place and came to the forest area near to the temple.

The Paniyas and Kurichias narrated myths to affirm that in Valliyoorkavu temple, they have an important place. Even these myths are not making them actual owners or shareholders but only as mediators to the actual revelation of the Devi to the Namboothiri Brahmins. The executive manager of Valliyoorkavu temple and a Paniya Mooppan, who worked earlier as *Adichuthali* (washerman) in the temple said the same story about Paniya community's change of location from the roadside to the recent spot where Paniya houses are situated. Karuppan Mooppan recounted,

> First we were staying on the road side near the temple. Paniyas showed laziness and became late to wash the utensils used in Valliyoorkavu temple. Only the Mooppan turned up for the work. One day all our huts caught fire. But Mooppan's house did not catch fire. All other houses got burned to ashes and we are given land here (in between the *Thazhathambalam* and *Mele ambalam*) by the temple authorities.

The Paniya community does the main manual work for all the activities in the temple and for the festival season, such as cleaning the area, washing utensils and bringing firewood for cooking. The myth narrated above communicates a message that if they do not cooperate for temple work Valliyooramma would punish them. It is observed that they are very faithful to the work in the temple. During festival times they work day and night in the temple.

Division of Labour and New Definitions of "Rights"

The usage of the word 'right' actually gives an impression of one's particular freedom and authority over an entity. Today there is a common saying by the Nair and the Namboothiri communities that the Adivasis have certain 'rights' in Valliyoorkavu temple. Enquiring about the above mentioned rights of the Paniya community, it is revealed that the local Paniyas are asked to bring a very long bamboo flag pole - the *Kodimaram* from the forest for the purpose of hoisting the temple festival flag. In addition, their 'rights' include cleaning the compound during festival season, bringing firewood and other materials for preparing food for the large number of devotees, providing plantain leaves

for the *'nercha bhakshanam'* (food offered to the devotees), removing the leaves after the devotees have eaten food, cleaning the large cooking vessels and to provide other necessary manual labour. They do all these tasks on a daily wage basis. A Kurichia panchayat member Chandan reported,

> By assigning the Paniyas tasks like washing vessels, bringing firewood, bringing plantain leaves etc. and by keeping them as *Adichuthali* (washerman) in the temples, the slavery is continuing in another form. This is continued not only in Valliyoorkavu but also in other temples too. And they establish and continue this tradition by saying that it is the *Thampuran's* (diety's) commandment. Even in the committees they are not given representation and thus are not included in the decision making. Even clerical posts are not given to us even though there are educated members among both Paniyas and Kurichias.

It emerges that religion is still used for continuing the old hierarchical order and traditions. By invoking the modern discourse of 'rights' in the context of temple, Paniya subordination and its exploitative condition are reproduced. Even today the stigma attached to Adivasi identity is very well utilised for the maintenance of the prevailing modes of power structure in the temple.

The asymmetric relationship is not only established among the Non-Adivasis and Adivasis but also among Adivasi groups. The Kurichias landedness and their history of being a warrior group give them a comparatively better status. For instance, the temple authorities still assign different duties to Paniyas and Kurichias. A Kurichian from Karpooram *tharavadu* said,

> For celebrating Valliyoorkavu festival the one-month long manual labour is mostly done by the Paniyas and Kurichias. Kurichia people also have certain 'rights' like preparing *kodimaram*, *pantham* (a torch made out of cloth tied to a stick diped in Kerosin to burn), conducting *Kathinavedi* (a kind of firework), and to erect a *pandal* (temporary shed) *for Kurichiya Muni* (Kurichiya Ancestor god) and keep burning *Nilavilakku* (lamp with many layers) for fourteen days in their *pandal*. In the festival committee Kurichias and Paniyas do not have enough representation and so the voice is missing in the planning and decision making processes. We do not have representation in the temple administrative staff. Even being famous warriors, the security post is not given to our community but a Gurkha from Orissa is appointed for that post. We had withdrawn ourselves from the annual festival responsibilities for 12 years as we are paid very little for our services (Rupees four and food during the festival days). Now they have increased the remuneration to Rs. 4000/- and we are co operating for the festival. But the actual amount of our work contributes Rs. 40,000/- as minimum 30 men are involved in the work[45]. We need more people in the festival committee to demand our rights.

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45 *Meenam* 1st to 10th , two men are needed during day and night. From *Meenam*10th to 15th, 35 people are needed for holding flags, *pandams*, and for fire work (*Kathina*).

There were also attempts to project a Hindu identity for Kurichias and Adivasi identity for Paniyas through the narrations and different constructions about the two groups by the festival committee. For instance, while installing the *kodimaram,* the festival committee announced that Edachana *tharavadu* (Nairs), Karpooram *tharavadu* (Kurichias) and the Adivasis of Valli colony are responsible for *Kodiyettam.* This clearly indicates that the temple authorities and festival committee have not counted Kurichias as Adivasis and tried to include them in the Hindu fold even though they were not given the same status and representation in all the temple activities. People from the surrounding area reported that the RSS had conducted a mass drill in the temple premises and that there was a clash between the Communist party and RSS groups and they were forced to discontinue it.

By introducing the term, 'right' the high caste Hindus who organise the temple activities, reconstructed the Adivasis experience of exploitation as a favour to them by the *Valliyooramma*. They established the concept of right in such a way that if they did not perform their rights in the temple, they would be punished and not get the blessing from their god. Paniyas also interiorise and perpetuate this and say that we have certain rights in the temple. However, the temple authorities and caste Hindus use their fear of god even today. The double sense of invoking fear through the modern discourse such as 'right' and the traditional moral discourses of 'debt', religion works as an ideological tool to legitimise the subjugation and prevent the oppressed from agitation. Heuze (2009) points out that in Hindu culture, life is often interpreted as a process of debt to the gods, to the ancestors, to the *rishis* and life is for paying debts. As Heuze points out, the Adivasis do not know the Hindu scriptures but the ideology of debt reaches them and is conveyed through the relationship they have with the higher castes. Through certain personal bonds with an obedient Mooppan or an obedient servant, they perpetuate Hindu ideology and possibilities to challenge these myths are constrained.

On the contrary, the Kurichias were less dependent on the temple and have also undergone less violence during slavery and there were voices of resistance in the festival ground itself about the corruption in the usage of funds and about the lack of sharing of power. The Kurichias preserve their right to create a separate temporary shed for their gods and collect offerings from their devotees. While talking with them in the festival

ground they raised objection to not keeping *bhandarappetty* (box to collect offering in cash) in their name, the way the Edachana Nair castes keep theirs. Thus, Valliyoorkavu temple which was once famous for buying and selling bonded labourers still plays a major role in legitimising the power structure and the division of labour existing in the society and thus in maintaining the prevailing order of production and reproduction of bondedness. They are not excluded with a strong untouchability discourse but what is present today is an 'adverse inclusion' as in Nathan and Xaxa's (2012: 3) description about the Adivasis.

Even though some of the Paniyas mentioned how they were exploited, they are still faithful to the temple activities. For instance, they offer their wage during the festival season and take responsibility for distributing *nercha bhakshanam* for one day. During the festival, it was observed that a Paniya *Mooppan* was struggling to collect money from the community in the temple yard to give *nercha bhakshanam* for one day. He said that he had to collect a minimum amount of Rs. 1500 for it. Paniya youths from his colony who work the whole day, came in the evening and gave the money to the *Mooppan*. They informed that if they did not get enough money, they would take it from the festival committee, but it would be deducted from their wages. Thus, even their meager earnings went into the temple fund to pay back the 'debts'.

A Kurichia *Karanavan*, Kannan, reported that there was huge wastage and misutilisation and destruction of temple properties by the authorities and that they could not intervene as they had no representation in the Board Committee. Kannan said that the temple had a lot of cattle which were sold by the authorities without any account. A Paniya youth from Valli colony was of the opinion that if they had begun a dairy farm with those cattle, or a handicraft project using the resources from the forest around the temple, many of their youth could have got employment. Some of the Paniya youth were disappointed as they were not even given a clerk's post even though they were the main workforce for the temple. The Paniyas and Kurichias are devoid of employment other than a Paniya Mooppan holding a permanent job as *adichuthali* (washer man) in Valliyoorkavu temple. They also said that the paddy fields which were given to them for cultivation until a few years ago are now kept barren by the temple authorities for holding an exhibition during the festival season. Another Paniya youth mentioned that it could be

easily cultivated once a year before the exhibition. The temple earns around Rs.16 lakh as rent from the exhibition alone and they had the right to use it for the development programmes. She expressed that if temple authorities wished, they could plan many development programmes for the Paniyas in the temple premises. Lack of permanent labour, lack of self employment and casualisation of hard manual labour by depicting it as the rights and duties of Adivasis are the tools that the upper caste have used to manage a work force around the hinterland of Valliyoorkavu. However, the temple authorities are not providing the Adivasis alternate employment opportunities, thinking that such oppornuties may reduce the Adivasi dependence on the temple and their obligation to do the duties and to remain obedient and faithful labourers forever.

Today, the agriculture economy in Wayanad is facing a threat and the landowners want cheap labour due to the decrease and fluctuation in prices of agricultural products. The Paniya community is the most vulnerable among the Adivasis who depend on wage labour as the only means for their survival. The Marxian theories and the concept of free labour are not fully applicable in the Wayanad situation because of the feudal remnants, the crisis in agriculture and the scarcity of wage labourers. Even the trade unions could not progress much in the fight against the capitalist mindset except in getting some improvement in the wages they were earning. Lampan from Kunnil colony said that they joined for some protests but during the emergency period everything came to an end. However, the asymmetric relations are not challenged and the human rights and human dignity aspects are ignored by the left wing and right wing parties. The protest from the Adivasi communities for land did not succeed due to the inaction of successive governments as Adivasis are numerically, politically and economically weak and thus marginalised as we have seen in Chapter IV.

The climatic change due to environmental destruction, the price fluctuations in agricultural products and modernisation of agriculture further challenge the labour opportunities of Adivasis. According to Paniya leaders, decrease in productivity due to environmental factors and pest attacks in the case of pepper and coffee in the late 1990s and 2000s was another blow to them as farmers stopped employing them for these jobs due to loss and debt. Their flight to Kodagu in the neighbouring state of Karnataka for

labour due to lack of wage labour in Wayanad unravels stories of a different kind of slavery, more violent and brutal.

Kodagu Labour

During the last two decades the migration to Kodagu for employment has increased as farmers in Wayanad started leasing land in Karnataka state and started ginger cultivation on a large scale to recover from the agricultural crisis and loss they experienced in Wayanad and also after recognising the possibility of making huge profits. However, the seasonal migration in the agriculture sector and the bondage of Adivasis recruited by giving an advance amount through job brokers as well as by the farmers in Wayanad is not addressed adequately by the government, non government organisations or by tribal development departments. Exploitation of Adivasi labourers in Kodagu was reported by Adivasi people even three decades ago. But till now there has been no effective action plan to resolve the issue.

Lampan from Kunnil Paniyan colony said,

> *Kodagu* labour is not a recent development. Thirty years ago people from Kodagu came to our colonies to hire labourers. One night they came and promised to give money for their work and took people in one lorry. When my grandfather and father's two brothers died, my father and I went there and brought back our other relatives. Father's two brothers, Maru and Kappan were seriously ill when we reached there. Their bodies were swollen and Maran said that others had died from the same symptoms. So we brought them back and one died after reaching here.

Even after having this experience, the younger generation from Kunnil went again and they narrated stories of running away twice due to brutal treatment and unbearable living conditions on the work site. Ruha, from the same colony said that her husband Kappan lost his eye sight after coming back from Kodagu. He remembered that while plucking pepper, some white powder had fallen into his eyes and it pained for a long time and after a few days, he lost his eye sight partially.

A Kurichia employed in the TB centre, Mananthavady, Wayanad reported that TB patients who were undergoing medication were taken to Kodagu for work and he was furious about the inhumanness and greed of the non Adivasi people in Wayanad. As he could not get the patients to have DOT treatment, he sends the medicine through the

employer. In Arayal colony, they reported that even children are hired for wage labour in Kodagu.

The Paniyas take the risk of going for wage labour to Kodagu even when their health condition is crucial. Even after knowing about the brutal treatment and pathetic living conditions they go to Kodagu for work. This indicates nothing else but the hardship they undergo in their colonies to meet their daily survival. In lean seasons of employment they need some money to manage their household and the advance amount given to them is an actual relief and they become ready to suffer any hardship to earn a livelihood for the family. One Paniyan said that the job brokers give them tempting promises about the facilities and good working conditions and they are also attracted to travelling to distant places and working as a group. All these become an impetus to go to Kodagu for an experience as these habits are inherent in their nomadic and traditional culture. Even though they set out with enthusiasm, some of them run away when confronted with brutal treatment and exploitation. However, the system of advance payment to the Paniyas for migrant labour at Kodagu is another form of neo-bondage. There are instances of resistance when they come in contact with the oppressive situation there.

Naman the Paniya *Oorumooppan* recounted the resistance story of his people running away from Kodagu and filing a case against the employer who took them for work,

> Seven Adivasi*s* were *taken* to *Kodagu* for climbing on Eucalyptus trees and cutting leaves. They had no experience of climbing big trees and they informed the employer. But the employer lied and when they reached the work site, they realised those were big trees but decided to stay as they had taken advance money from the employer, Mr. Regi. After one week's work they were extremely tired and informed Regi that they wanted to leave. As he did not agree, they decided to come by themselves and Regi knowing their plan arranged g*undas* from Karnataka to block them. They were beaten up on their way and while two of them ran and escaped and the other five were taken back and shut in a room and the following day they were taken back to the work site and forced to work. The two escaped, reached Ambalavayal, approached me and gave details of the cheating. Immediately we filed a case in the police station and I admitted them to a hospital as they had been beaten by the gundas. Regi was called to the station, but he did not come. The police maintained that as the incident had taken place in Karnataka state, they could not conduct an enquiry. He asked me to give another petition if there are minors among them. There were two boys who were under 18. Then he advised that I write a petition that they were missing.... the police, me and Madhavan from Uraly Kuruman community reached there by evening and we kept the two minors in the jeep first and asked the others to come if they were interested in coming back. They also got into the jeep. Next day, we went to the station and Regi had to pay Rs. 9000 as the hospital expense and wage. Then he was asked to withdraw the fake case that he had filed in Karnataka against the Adivasi*s* saying that they had beaten him. He was warned by the police not to repeat such crimes.

Even though they got some compensation in this case the culprit escaped without any punishment. This again affirms the general perception that for Adivasis justice means compensation and the harassment they have undergone remains unaddressed. However, Chinnappan being a landholder and an educated man and having had experience in organising people for the Adivasi cause, he could get some support from the police and the CPI (M) party. But he also could not challenge the exploitation which compromises human dignity with money power.

'Neethivedhi', a Human Rights NGO in Kalpetta, Wayanad, reported that their attempt to take some of these cases to the court failed due to Kodagu being in a different jurisdiction. But with the efforts of Neethivedhi and Adivasi leaders in Wayanad, the District Superintendent of police issued an executive order in 2007, making it mandatory to register the names of Adivasi labourers taken to other districts or states, but this also was not fully implemented. Neethivedhi conducted a study among 122 affected Adivasi families who suffered severe exploitation and torture or death in Karnataka. A people's tribunal was organised on November 22, 2008 to hear their grievances and take further action. Their report shows that from 1991 to 2005, among the 122 cases they could enquire, 99 Adivasis had died, 7 persons were missing, 16 returned home after being tortured. Among them 81 were Paniya workers, 25 were Kattunayakas, 9 were Adiyas, and 6 were Kurumas and 1 was from the Scheduled Caste (SC) category. Among these 99 deaths, suspicious murder was reported as 34, natural death 15, occupational disease 36, death unknown as 14. This data indicates the inhuman conditions under which Adivasis are working in Karnataka. This is the list of the people who came in contact with Neethivedhi and approached the tribunal and the actual cases who suffered in Kodagu will exceed this.

The study report and the discussions in the Paniyasadas (the conference organised by the Centre for Development Studies and University of Montreal in Wayanad) prompted the SC/ST commission to appoint a study group including an SC/ST commission member, representatives from panchayat leadership and Adivasi NGO's. Both study findings reveals the brutality and violence meted out to the Adivasis in Karnataka ginger fields. Suspicious deaths, severe torture, over time work, law wages, child labour, sexual exploitation, inadequate shelter, lack of nutritious food, lack of medical facility, alcohol

distribution as part of wage to extract maximum work etc. are reported in the study group report. Further, it reported that for women labourers there was no separate shed or toilets. No protective measures are adopted in the usage of pesticides and chemical fertilisers. The middleman takes them for work giving an advance to the family without reporting to the Adivasi development office or police station and exploitation is rampant. The employers are not keeping a register or they do not know how many went for work and how much wage each of them earn (study group report)

Even though the SC/ST commission promised some quick action regarding the Kodagu issue the only thing that happened was filing the cases in bulk in the court and the promise to have some negotiation with the Karnataka government. Thus Kodagu labour reincarnate as a grave form of bonded labour to the Paniyas. First of all it is bonded as they are promising their labour for an advance amount and till they finish the work they have been assigned, they do not have the chance to escape from there. As we have seen the attempts of escape was punished with brutal physical violence just like what they experienced during slavery. The severe torture, alcohol distribution, sexual harassment etc. increases the gravity of the slavery they experience. For instance, one job broker said that Paniyas understand only the language of beating and when they quarrel after drinking alcohol he gives them 'nice' beatings. Alcohol is provided in the morning to extract maximum work and when they enter into conflict after drinking they are severely punished. Making them work without paying minimum wage, inadequate shelter, lack of nutritious food and medical facility all add to the slave existence of a Paniya labourer in Kodagu. However, Paniyas are forced to sell their labour power in the midst of these unfavourable circumstances in Kodagu due to scarcity of wage labour in lean seasons in Wayanad. The next section will analyze the state intervention to ameliorate the labour scarcity of Adivasis in Wayanad through the national employment guarantee scheme and Adivasis experiences of them.

National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) and Adivasis in Wayanad

For ameliorating the various issues faced by the Adivasis, a number of programmes and schemes have been introduced at the state and national levels. There were various employment generation programmes earlier and the recent programme is NREGS. The

Government of India passed the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, in September 2005. NREGS implemented in the year 2006, gave the supreme priority to employment generation. The Act gives legal guarantee for a minimum of one hundred days of wage employment in a financial year to a rural household, whose adult members volunteer to do unskilled and manual work. If an applicant is not provided employment within 15 days of receipt of the application seeking work or from the date on which the employment has been sought she/he can apply to the panchayat secretary for unemployment allowance. The Act is applicable in the districts notified by the Government of India. Wayanad and Palakkad districts in Kerala were included in the first list of selected 200 districts to implement NREGS programmes and the scheme came into force from February 2, 2006 in the rural areas of these two districts.

According to the Kerala Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (KREGS) instructions, the Grama Panchayat shall be the principal authority for planning and implementation of the Scheme. At the intermediate level, the Block Panchayat and at the district level, the District Panchayat shall be the principal authority for planning and implementing the scheme. The District Collector shall be appointed as the District Programme Coordinator (DPC) for the implementation of the scheme in the District. The DPC was assisted by a Deputy Development Commissioner called the joint programme coordinator. The DPC constitute a committee at the District level for smooth implementation. At the state level, the Commissioner for Rural Development (CRD) shall be the State Programme Coordinator (SPC). An Additional Development Commissioner assists the CRD for implementing the scheme and there shall be a cell at the state level with the Additional Development Commissioner to look after all implementation aspects. The Grama Panchayat is responsible for identification of the works in the Grama Panchayat area and for executing and supervising the work as per the recommendations of the Gram Sabha and the Kudumbasree units in the panchayat. In Kerala, the entire programme was implemented through the Grama Panchayat, scrutinised by the Block and District Panchayats. The work is executed through the Area Development Society (ADS)/Community Development Society (CDS) of Kudumbasree units and its selected ‘Kudumbasree mates’ (supervisor and helper) supervise the work.

Kudumbasree and NREGS

In Kerala, Kudumbasree is characterised as a 'women oriented' poverty eradication mission to empower women (Devika and Thampi 2007). It was started in 1998 by the Government of Kerala with the aim of eradicating poverty within a decade. Kudumbasree leadership was organised into a state wide self help group network aimed at improving the economic well being of families through women directing them into micro-enterprises and thrift and credit activities. Devika and Thampi point out that Kudumbasree places women from Below the Poverty Line (BPL) households at the centre of the poverty eradication efforts of the state. They highlight that the present structure of Kudumbasree is composed of Neighbourhood Groups (NHG's) which were joined together into Area Development Societies (ADS) of the ward level, which were in turn united into a Community Development Society (CDS) at the Municipal level. Kudumbasree neighbourhood groups and its leaders have a role in the planning and implementation of NREGS. The Kudumbasree mates who supervise the NREGS work are elected from the Area Development Society (ADS) of Kudumbasree mission. It is helpful to understand very briefly the participation of Adivasi groups in the Kudumbasree programmes. In Wayanad district though 35882 families have been brought under the scheme and formed 2236 NHGs (Neighbourhood Groups), the most vulnerable and poverty stricken Adivasi groups like the Paniyas are still out of coverage.[46] It is observed that out of four Paniya colonies in the study area, they have formed neighbourhood groups in three colonies but they discontinued after the initial enthusiasm. According to Kudumbasree mission's evaluation, the lack of thrift and credit habit among the Adivasis was the reason for their lack of interest in joining Kudumbasree. At this juncture, Kudumbasree introduced a special project for sustainable development of Adivasi families. In their sustainable development project, Kudumbasree introduced the credit first policy for the Adivasis as a trial to achieve their participation. The organisation will deposit 2500 rupees for each Adivasi group in the beginning and take measures not to withdraw the full amount and wind up the group.[47] To facilitate the thrift habit among the Adivasis, Kudumbasree

46 Data collected from District Kudumbasree Mission, Kalpetta in 2009.

47 From the Project plan for sustainable development for Adivasis collected from District Kudumbasree Mission, Kalpetta.

planned to use Adivasi promoters after giving them special training. However, the field reality was different even after this modification; panchayats in the study area could not point out even one Paniya Kudumbasree unit working successfully. At this juncture it is wise to ask, do the government's plans like Kudumbasree and its saving schemes match with the Paniya community's vision of subsistence and their cultural specificities? However, the demand and struggles of the Paniya community was always for land as they see it as the base for a hunger free life.

The case of Kurichia women was better and one of their groups 'Kathir Kudumbasree' in Edavaka panchayat of Kurichia community won the prize for the best Kudumbasree in their panchayat. They were making umbrellas by taking loans and the panchayat bought and distributed them for school going Adivasi children and it was progressing well. The Kurichias did not find it difficult to pay the saving on time because they have land and they do cultivation and it is a support system for their daily expenditure. The chances of government jobs among them, though very rare, also contributed to their saving habit.

It is stipulated that Kudumbasree NHGs and ADS/CDS of Kudumbasree mission shall be associated in the implementation of the NREGS, in community mobilisation, capacity building, social audit and monitoring of processes relating to rights and entitlements of the workers. However, the workers in the NREGS reported that the 'Kudumbasree mates' of NREGS were appointed from Kudumbasree leaders by the respective ward members according to her/his choice and Kudumbasree was not actively involved in NREGS as they have no power in its planning and implementation. There were no reports from the field about challenging voices from the Kudumbasree in the planning processes of NREGS or in giving creative suggestions to make the work more vital and gender sensitive. Thus, Kudumbasree also becomes an active work force for the panchayat without decision making powers but involved in microfinancing. They were mainly involved in income generation for individual families and indirectly promoted capitalist development. Revival of traditional knowledge systems and the entire community's development based on that were not reported in the study area. As Devika and Thampi (2011) point out these recent efforts have not advanced women's mobility towards work and the potential of SHGs are limited.

Wayanad has won special attention at the national level for transparency and efficiency in implementing NREGS. For the State Employment Guarantee Council, an independent institution - Centre for Rural Management has conducted a study and they found that in Wayanad, contractors are not involved in NREGS and there is no corruption in the implementation process and that there is efficiency and transparency. However, during the study period, corruption was reported from a few areas and while enquiring the reason, the implementing authorities stated that there was practical difficulty in getting workers for Rs.125 per day for hard agricultural work and thus they had to make more people to sign the register to give them more wages. Here we cannot completely deny the rationality of the implementing authority because it is a plain truth that without even offering the minimum wage notified by the state for agricultural labour nobody will join for hard labour which needs special skill as well.[48] At the same time, such manipulations although with good intentions can lead to corruption and lack of transparency if the social audit is not properly done.

In another panchayat in the study area, instead of employing people JCB was used for quick completion of a road. By using JCB, 15 days work may be completed within one day. However, the basic purpose of NREGS is deceived while using machinery to speed up the work. Using machinery will reduce the mandays of NREGS. However, people were given 50 rupees by calculating the mandays needed for the work without doing any work. This arrangement was accepted by the people but again a question remains. Were the poorest people were employed for the work and were they able to manage with 50 rupees per day? The goal of employment generation is forgotton even though people perceived it as a successful alternative as they received money without doing work. In spite of these irregularities, NREGS is perceived as a good initiative by the government for the rural poor by the common people in Wayanad as a whole. Even many of the Adivasi people, especially the Kurichias perceived it as a model scheme from the government as it gives employment guarantee for the poor and thus provides security to many. Also they noted that it is a great help to small scale farmers as the panchayat provides free labour to protect and cultivate their land which has remained barren.

48 In Kerala the minimum wages last updated by pay check India on March 5, 2011 for agricultural operation: For heavy work- Rs. 200/- ; For light work-Rs.150/-.

However, enquiry into the implementation process and their subjective experiences brought out Adivasis' grievances about the NREGS programme.

Registration, Issuance of Job Cards and Work Participation

The government has passed the Act in 2005 and the programme has come into force in February 2006. According to the official reports in 2009, out of 32491 scheduled Tribe (ST) families in Wayanad, 29141 families have registered in this programme and 28435 families were given job cards. Among those who registered, only 12146 have been given employment in 2007-2008 and the average employment per family was 25 days in a year (data collected from district NREGA office). The different categories were not mentioned in the NREGS registers and records and so separate data for Paniya and Kurichia communities were not available.

While visiting the sites in the month of February 2007, there were several Paniya households that did not have job cards. For example during the first visit to Arayal, only eight families out of 30 households reported that they had a job card. Many of them were interested in getting it and they criticised the Adivasi promoters and panchayat members for not giving them the job card. Quick investigation from the state planning board office revealed that job cards were not distributed to many Adivasi families in Thirunelli panchayat. The Officer's timely interventions and threat of suspension of the panchayat Secretary helped to strengthen the monitoring and distribution of job cards to Adivasis and the situation improved slowly. The job card holders opened an account in the nearby branch of the Grama Panchayat and the payment of wages to the workers was through their bank accounts. This helped avoid corruption in payment of wages.

It has been observed that even after receiving the job cards, the Paniya community's participation was minimal. For example, in Kunnil colony out of thirteen households, only one was going for *thozhilurappu* in the beginning stage despite having secured the job cards. They explained the reasons for their absence as lack of provision of receiving daily wages, inevitability to carry food to the work site and communication gap between the workers and organisers. It was against their practice of wage labour where they were provided with food as well as daily wages for their day to day expenditure. When they get the wage in the evening they go to the shop, buy rice and vegetables or fish and cook food

in the late evening. Unlike the non-Adivasis and the Kurichias, the Paniya community generally cooks only their dinner. If there is some left over rice they give it to their children the following morning and the adult members have their food from their employer's house. Sudden transition to the necessity of carrying breakfast and lunch to the work site was against their practice and it affected their participation in the scheme. Further, in the beginning stage, there were complaints about lack of information regarding the work site and date. This reveals that the Paniya's material needs and cultural specificities are not taken care of while planning the NREGS.

The Kurichias perceive this programme very positively and their participation in *thozhilurappu* was relatively better than that of the Paniyas. In the beginning stage of its implementation, priority was given to take up construction or repair work in public areas such as roads and *thodus* (rivers) and also on Adivasi lands. The Kurichias benefitted the most from this programme, especially the Kurichias living within the *tharavad* property. Tulsy *tharavad* reported that their ward got Rs. 5 lakh in 2007 for making mud walls on their land and they perceived it as a very useful programme. Again in 2008, they got Rs. 14 lakhs for their ward and they could give priority to the works on Adivasi land. The panchayat member of that ward was from Palottu Kurichia *tharavad* and this gave them more bargaining power. Another *tharavad* in the study area too received help for contour bunding and repairing their *thodu* through this programme. As the Paniya community does not have land, they could not access any of these entitlements except for their right to work and get the wages. Jayalakshmi, a panchayat member from the Kurichia community said,

> I came first at the all India level in spending the highest amount of money on NREGs and conducting it satisfactorily. In 2009- 2010 I had spent Rs. 50 lakhs in my Ward in Thavinjal panchayat. Out of Rs. 50 lakhs I could spend Rs. 30 lakhs in the Adivasi sector.

There was satisfaction for the Kurichias in that area as they could work in their locality, in their own *tharavads* and families. The panchayat member said that she could bring majority of the Adivasis in her area into this work. But she admitted that she failed to bring the two Paniya families in her ward to this work and she interpreted their absence as their pride and the possibility of getting more wages if they worked elsewhere. However, we cannot ignore the practice of purity/pollution existing between the Kurichias and the Paniyas.

While visiting Kunnil Paniya colony in September 2009, members of that community were found participating in *thozhilurappu.* They expressed many reasons for their increased participation. First of all an alternative arrangement for providing a small amount of Rs. 50 daily for meeting their day to day needs from their wages was implemented. One panchayat (Edavaka) had initiated this partial daily wage arrangement and entrusted its responsibility to the Area Development Society (ADS). Another reason for their increased participation was that work was arranged in the nearby areas and there was no need to carry lunch when they went for work. They came back to the house for 10'o clock tea as well as for lunch if it were prepared at home. Also the Kudumbasree mate who supervised the work for that period was a member from their own community and this gave them more enthusiasm to join.Nima, a Paniya Kudumbasree mate reported:

> There was no Kudumbasree mate from the Paniya community until now and according to the order from the centre to appoint Adivasis, I got the chance to become the supervisor for the first time.

Unlike the non-Adivasi dismissal of the Paniyas' efficiency, she was found confidently supervising her work in the work site.

Dhuni, a Kurichiya Kudumbasree mate from Champa reported:

> Paniyas need a daily wage for their sustenance and they did not opt for NREGS as in this scheme it takes a minimum 20 days to get the wage. There was an order to give Rs.50 daily but recently they have linked the daily withdrawal of wage with Kudumbasree and only Kudumbasree members can take this Rs.50 daily. Thus, again Paniyas are excluded as there are only very few members from Paniyan community in Kudumbasree.

The minimum arrangement done for the Paniya workers is again restricted to the few who have linkages with the Kudumbasree programme. Many Paniya women were not members of the Kudumbasree and it also kept Paniya men away from NREGS work. Another NREGS staff said that since the entire transaction of money in NREGS is computerized, it is difficult to give Rs.50 daily. If technology blocks the right of a Paniya to earn a minimum for his day to day survival, then it is definitely coercive and cannot be seen as unintentional. Thus, it was not according to the ideas, needs and the culture of the vulnerable Adivasi groups such as Paniyas in Wayanad.

Lack of Information in Labour Friendly Laws

There were no leaflets available regarding the rules of this programme in English or in Malayalam in the panchayats in 2007 during the pilot study. In September 2009, a hand book prepared by the District Assistant Programme Coordinator was available in the NREGS office. But on enquiry, it was revealed that this hand book was not distributed to any of the Paniya or Kurichia workers including the Paniya ADS. The level of awareness about the NREGS programme among Paniya group was minimal and almost nil in most of the cases. In the beginning stages, the Paniyas were not aware of even the purpose of getting the job card. Even after three years of its implementation, most of them do not know their right to demand a job and if the job was not available, then demand their right for unemployment allowance. They also did not know the other worker friendly rules and regulations in the Act such as the existence of social audit team, vigilance monitoring committee etc. to evaluate the programme as well as to address their grievances. The ADS from the Paniya community in Ward XII was also not aware of these rules and the toll free number to call and register their complaints. While observing the work in one panchayat, the Adivasis reported that at the time of social audit there was no ST member present in the social audit team even though their representation is compulsory according to the rule. The Paniya community was not at all aware that such an audit had happened in their ward.

Further, while attending the evaluation conducted by the Ministry of Rural Development on 30/9/2009 in one (Edavaka) panchayat, it was observed that there was no ST member to address their issues or to give suggestions for their benefit. Other non-Adivasi members were found very keen to give wrong information that Adivasis participation was almost 99 per cent and that they were fully aware of the benefits of this programme and so on. When the researcher enquired about the reason for no representation from then Adivasis, one panchayat member said that the meeting was fixed only on the previous day and the sudden change made by the evaluation team made it difficult to inform the Adivasis. But the Adivasis in the study area reported that they were not informed about any such meeting at all and that the panchayat was holding back information from the Adivasis to avoid conflict.

During the above evaluation, the panchayat president proudly claimed,

> We are determined not to give unemployment allowance (and after reflecting for a second he corrected it as) I meant we find jobs for all job card holders.

He explained that first there was difficulty in finding work for all people with job cards but with the implementation of watershed programmes and extension of the scheme to include small farmers land there was plenty of work. On enquiry, it was found that this panchayat had not given unemployment allowance to any one and this was one of the model panchayats selected by the NREGS. But the following response reveals the smoke screen created by the panchayat. Mini from Kunnil colony stated,

> In this colony we apply for work only when the ADS approaches us. ADS has to bring the application from the panchayat, then only we can apply for work.

She also said that the work was not offered as per their requirement. The Paniyas in the study area did not know that according to the Act, they could apply for work at their own will in the prescribed form or on plain paper. In the interview, Praveena (18 years) from Kunnil colony revealed that she was unaware of any laws regarding *Thozhilurappu.* She said,

> The muster is to make sure that one is reaching for the work exactly at 8 am and wind up the work at 4.30 pm.

She does not dare to go for work if she is delayed, fearing the comments of ADS and other people. She is totally unaware of the facilities to be provided at the work site. Other workers were at least aware of that the muster roll was for marking their attendance but were unaware of the possibility of corruption by entering fake names of those who did not participate in the work to withdraw extra money. They did not know about the site diary and its use. Nobody from her colony was aware that a first aid box was necessary at the work site and they did not demand for it. Few of them reported that when they were repairing road, there were facilities like shade using *tarpai* (thick mat made of cloth), hot water in the flask and a first aid box. One day Mini cut her big finger while making a *kayyala* (contour bunding) in a farmer's land. Since there was no first aid box, they could not do anything and she continued to work; the next day she was feverish and the finger was swollen with puss and she could not go to work. Further, it is observed that members from the Paniya community go in search of tools to neighbour's houses and sometimes do not report to work due to unavailability of tools. They did not demand these tools from the panchayat even though it was their duty to provide and maintain tools for

thozhilurappu workers. Kurichiya labourers and Kudumbasree mates were more aware of their rights in NREGS and demand for necessary facility in the work site.

When the rules were explained by the researcher, the Paniyas were keen to listen and they started reading the handbook given by the researcher. They were of the opinion that nobody wanted to tell them the rules as the authorities wanted to exploit them and avoid questions and complaints. At the same time, the panchayat claimed in the evaluation that they spread awareness to Adivasis through Adivasi promoters, *Oorukoottam* meetings, *Kudumbasree Ayalkoottam* meetings and Gram Sabhas and that they all worked as an extension wing to reach out the benefits of this programme to the Adivasis. The Paniya workers, on the contrary, reported that *Adivasi* promoters seldom visited their colonies to discuss NREGS programmes. From one colony, they recollected that in 2009, the promoter visited the colony only to communicate that there was some free rice distribution by the Tribal Development Office.

According to some of the Paniya members, when the *thozhilurappu* scheme was introduced there was an *Oorukoottam* meeting and in 2008 and 2009 there were no *Oorukoottam* meetings in Ward XII in Edavaka panchayat which was selected as the model panchayat for NREGS. The researcher observed that in the Gram Sabha, the Paniya community members were usually absent or if present due to some special benefit (house, latrine etc) they were not free to talk or raise their issues. No space was given to include their opinions in the decisions. Nellan criticises the process of Gram Sabha and explains why they are silent in Gram Sabha. He reported:

> Only we get the information about the Gram Sabha at the last moment. When we reach there, we will not be prepared to talk as we are fully ignorant of the agendas beforehand. Non-Adivasis come there with pre planned decisions and they can respond in one minute. But we need one full day to discuss and express our ideas. But the Gram Sabha timing is from 2pm to 6 pm according to the rule and in reality when the registration gets over it will be 3. 30 pm and the speeches of the panchayat leaders will take another long hour and there will not be any time left for discussion and by 5pm they will wind up the meeting.

On the contrary, in their traditional decision making they will not keep strict time schedules but take enough time for discussion, silent reflection and to reach consensus. Today their traditional forms of decision making has no place in bodies such as the panchayat Gram Sabha. Kurichia members are found more talkative and raising their issues in the Gram Sabha.

Is there any Preference for the Most Exploited?

One of the criteria for including Wayanad in NREGS programme is the presence of 17 per cent Adivasi population as it contributes to the high poverty index of the district. As mentioned earlier, the Paniyas constitute 40 per cent of the Adivasi population in Wayanad. In the study by the Centre of Excellence in 2006, the Paniya community was found to be one of the most struggling groups due to scarcity of wage labour.

Being the most exploited group for centuries, Paniyas deserve the first preference in *thozhilurappu* programme. However, in the registers and reports, they have the list of work participation of different communities, but this is not produced separately for different Adivasi communities and they are all included in the ST category. Thus Paniya's absence or irregularity is made invisible by the reporting procedures of the state department.

It appears that even NREGS, known as a radical scheme for the poor people did not synchronise with the Paniya community's needs and their culture and tradition. Men and women from all the four Paniya colonies in the study area complained against the delay in wage payment and their inability to participate in it. They informed that Paniya men get Rs.150 to Rs.200 and food if they go for daily wage labour elsewhere. And for special jobs such as cutting trees, cutting and loading bananas they get Rs.250 to Rs.300 rupees in2009. They face limitations in the wage rate but more than that the following narratives and observations give a clear picture about the process and their struggles to participate in a scheme purportedly meant for their welfare.

An 18 year old girl was going for work when she was having fever. She went and signed in the muster role at 8 am and started the work and later entrusted the work to her breast feeding mother and went to the hospital with her father. The doctor told her she had *vilarcha* (local term used for anaemia) and gave medicine for fever and anaemia. After returning from the hospital she returned to her work and relieved her mother as the child was crying for her mother at home. In the interview, she said that she was forced to work as there is no other way to survive. She said,

> I have started going for wage labour from Standard V onwards and in Standard VIII, I stopped going to school. As I have no grown up brothers and being the eldest in the family, I am the bread winner of 8 children, father, mother and grandmother. My father had a fall

> when he was young and he is not able to do manual labour. Occasionally, he does traditional healing practice and the earning from it is minimal as he does not demand anything from the patient except their offerings. Mother is having a 6 month old breast feeding child. During *thozhilurappu*, many times I felt giddiness and headache. But I continued the work silently as there was no use in saying anything to anybody other than completing the work. Sometimes, there is no rice left to cook and eat in the morning. If there is rice, there will not be firewood. At times I go for work without having food as I get a vomiting sensation when I eat the leftover food from the previous day.

While she was talking, the room was filled with smoke and her mother was trying to cook rice over some wet firewood pieces. Most of the farmers were not ready to contribute a small share by giving food to the workers even when they were receiving free labour from the panchayat. In the case of Paniyas, the notion of 'wage labour' and the rules of monetary economy cannot be implemented as their material and health conditions make them unfit for physical labour. Their physical conditions also reinforce their philosophy of living for the present, carried forward from their nomadic past.

Nellan (39) from Kunnil colony said,

> *Njangal annannathe annathinuvendi nayikkunnavara* (we are people who work only for day today survival). We have nothing else other than this house and what we get daily as wage is the only source for our food. Since they are not providing daily wages, we have to shift between *thozhilurappu* and daily wage labour at regular intervals. This you can notice in the register. In the Adivasi column if she/he is present for two days she/he will be absent for next three days. In Edavaka panchayat this year they are giving Rs. 50 daily for Adivasis and that gave us motivation and our participation increased. But in my family there is only one member to work and ten members are dependant on that wage alone for daily survival. So it is impossible to survive on that and we buy on debt and give it back when we get the wages. Also we have to wait more than one month to get the wages after 14 days of work. The delay in wage payment affects our daily survival, but few among us managed to buy a bit of gold when we got the money together.

As Nellan's sharing reveals, in the midst of all their struggles they are also slowly being drawn into the capitalist consumerist economy. One day when the researcher reached the site, Lakshmi (20) was busy in canvassing more people to join in a network chain because she would get a sari for Rs.70 if she convinced four more members to join the network. They asked the researcher also to join with them. Another lady, Ammini showed a small earring that she bought for her four year old child when she got the wage for *thozhilurappu*. In the midst of all their struggles for survival, their youth and children get attracted towards a modern lifestyle and started demanding modern dresses, shoes and food items and the parents become helpless and try to pacify them or suppress their

desires. And when they get the wages in lumpsum they try to spend money on such items compromising their food and health needs.

Members of the Paniya community said that shop keepers discourage them from thozhilurappu as they do not get ready cash for the grocery they sell to the Paniyas. When they go for daily wage labour they buy more items paying cash. A few of them stated that if they avail the *thozhilurappu* schemes they have to get the panchayat member to mediate with the shop keepers to sell grocery to them on debt. In one house there was rice to cook but no firewood and they were not able to go for *thozhilurappu.* If they want to go they have to spare one day to collect firewood. The farmer's today chase Adivasis away saying that 'let that firewood remain there, get decayed and become manure. One Paniya worker narrated that there was *Noorakkizhangu* (a root which Adivasis boil and eat) in the farmer's land where they were digging while doing *thozhilurappu* work and asked his permission to pluck it. Even though the farmer did not use it as a food item, he did not give permission to the Paniya worker to pluck it. And the Paniya worker plucked it without the farmer's notice. The Paniya narratives are filled with incidents of exclusionary practices of the non-Adivasis.

The Paniyas have maximum work opportunity from December to February and for Kurichias it is from November to February (Centre of Excellence 2006). Usually the NREG programme achieves momentum during this period since by March all the funds need to be spent and the expenditure statement has to be produced by April. According to the NREG Act, *thozhilurappu* is meant for the lean season but Adivasis reported that the panchayat did not stick to this rule. Usually Paniyas did not join for *thozhilurappu* leaving the wage labour they get on a regular basis in the months of November to March. However, many of the non-Adivasis who go for *thozhilurappu* are not regular wage labourers but subsistent farmers and they can respond to *thozhilurappu* at any time and this lessens the chance for Adivasis. Further, when the work in the small scale farmers' land was included in *thozhilurappu*, the work opportunities for the Paniyas in the nearby areas becomes less; non-Adivasis also join for *thozhilurappu* knowing about the extra benefits in the scheme and the possibility of saving money. This again resulted in non-availability of daily wage labour for the Paniyas and forcefully pushed them to join *thozhilurappu* even though they preferred daily wage labour.

In Edavaka panchayat, mainly Paniya women from Kunnil colony reported that in 2008 and 2009, they got 25 days of work in the paddy fields for cultivation during the rainy season; even though cultivation is not allowed under this scheme, this work was included in the category of conversion of barren lands into cultivated fields. For men only seven days work was available. When all the paddy fields were getting converted to plantations as farmers were not able to make any profit out of rice cultivation, this eco-restoration programme introduced through NREGS by the Government of Kerala was much appreciated by the Adivasis even though it was not done on a large scale. There were also complaints from a few Paniyan women for including paddy cultivation in the NREGS programme as their work opportunity was reduced in areas where non-Adivasis also joined for the work. Further, 100 days work for a family is not a guarantee for a healthy life for the whole year, especially for the Paniyas who have no other material resources for livelihood. According to the Paniyas, the NREGS fails to provide them work during heavy monsoon and summer, the time they face acute famine.

Conflict and Negotiations between Non-Adivasi Farmers and Adivasi Labourers

It is a fact that the basic wage for an agriculture labourer and the wage for women labourers increased due to the implementation of NREGS in Wayanad. When women were given Rs.125 in NREGS, men demanded double the amount from farmers for work. When NREGS increased the wage to Rs. 160 recently, men demanded Rs.350 for ordinary labour and more for skilled and hard labour. Earlier, women's labour was accessed at very cheap rates in Wayanad (around Rs.70 rupees) when NREGS fixed it as Rs. 125 and farmers were forced to pay that amount. Generally, farmers in Wayanad tend to blame the wage increase as a reason for their loss in agriculture instead of the agricultural policies based on liberal economic policies and the fluctuating global markets. However, the Kerala government has extended the NREGS to farmer's landholdings of less than five acres as free service. This has pacified them partly even though farmers complain about the poor quality of NREGS work and the increase in wage due to its implementation. Even though farmers complain about the wage increase in NREGS, it still pays less than the minimum wage decided by the Kerala state.

On the other hand, Adivasis and small farmers reported that rich farmers with more than five acres also utilised the benefit of this scheme by acquiring utilisation certificate

from the panchayat for one acre or two acres of their bulk of land. However, the Paniya and Kurichia communities had minimum complaints against these farmers and the Paniyas even appreciated when some of them offered food once a day while working in their field. However, there were conflicts and lack of communication between the farmers and Paniya labourers. The following incident reveals that exploitation of the Paniya community even on the NREGS site.

In the morning Nima, a Paniya ADS from Kunnil colony came to call the Paniya workers for *thozhilurappu.* First they were hesitant to go for *thozhilurappu* saying that there is no money to buy rice and that they preferred to go for daily wage labour. But they got ready when she mentioned that it was necessary to conduct a meeting in the morning to fill the application for work during the next fifteen days. But when they reached the work site on October 1, 2009 at 8 am to work in a non-Adivasi farmers land, he was a bit hesitant to give them work that day because there was very low intensity rain and he suspected that the contour bunding they made on his land may not last. There was sign language between the farmer and a few non-Adivasis and they were just finding excuses not to give work on that day. They were purposely avoiding the open discussion in the presence of an outsider. Even though I had explained my research purpose and the need to observe the Paniya community at the work site, they were not fully at ease. The Paniya workers were sure that they wanted to work, because they had to give food to their children by evening and being late they could not go for any other work. They mentioned that there was no sign of heavy rain and asked the convener to decide on the measurements for the contour bunding. The convener Narayanan (who sells illicit liquor at home and exploit the Paniya community) started playing tricks to postpone the work. They waited for almost 45 minutes impatiently and started to return. The Paniya supervisor's silence struck me and I provoked her by asking a question, 'Does the supervisor have the power to take the decision in such conflicting situations?". Then her silence was broken and she asked,

> Who will listen if I ask them to do the work. Today my Adivasi friends wanted to go for daily wage labour and I compelled them to come for this work promising them to give at least Rs. 50 to buy rice in the evening. Now they could not go for other work and how can I face them again.

My presence among them was disturbing for the farmer and Kumaran and hesitantly, the farmer called them back and told them that he had no objection to their working in his land that day. After hesitating for a few minutes, the Paniya workers came back. When the measurement started again the farmer interfered by telling his familiar non-Adivasi women workers to stand where there was an old contour bund because there it needed only repair and that was easier than making a new bund. But that day, the Paniya women managed to stand near the old constructed bund and when the measurement was done for new bunds there was nobody to work there and the farmer did not have other option except to call his non-Adivasi workers. But the Paniya men insisted that they would help finish the work if women or other old people could not complete the work. When Nima was asked about her silence, she said,

> They are my neighbours and I cannot make them enemies and survive there. So I kept quite even though I know it is my responsibility to facilitate in such situations.

Kurichia workers and their supervisors experienced more cordial relationship from the farmers and co workers. Bindu, a Kurichia Kudumbasree mate who supervises and help the workers said,

> Workers know that I have lot of work at home. So they tell me that they will do the work and allow me to go and finish the work at home and come back to the work site for supervision and necessary services.

Farmers also had a complaint that there was labour scarcity as the agricultural labourers go for NREGS work. This can be dealt with if the work is planned in the lean season as stipulated in the rules. This complaint may have partial truth as the planning is not properly done in the neighbourhood groups and the panchayat Gram Sabha according to the report of the people. Panchayat members reported that there were initiatives to prepare a labour calendar to arrange NREGS works in the lean season. However, according to the report of the workers and field observation, it was evident that the implementation was not effective in arranging the work during the lean seasons. However, in practical terms panchayat members and the ADS together decide the work and the timings. When the NREGS work supervisor is informed by the panchayat member to apply for job, they give an application and it need not be the lean period for the labourers. Interviews of NREGS staff revealed that huge amounts of money were lapsing due to delays in the preparation of the labour budget and the implementation of

work on time. Since they were tied funds, they could not be used for any other purpose other than the stipulated work.

NREGS and Gender Sensitivity

The implementing agency of NREGS proclaims that it is gender sensitive and could attract many women workers. It is true that more women workers opt for *thozhilurappu* than men and there is provision for equal wage for men and women. The programme demands the same amount of work from the female and male workers when they pay equal wages. The authorities however claim that the work estimates are labour friendly. But a few Paniya women reported that repairing roads, making compost pits and trenches are too heavy for women and they become extremely tired by evening. They said that if their men do not join them for NREGS, it would be difficult for them to finish the estimated work. Men from the Paniya community generally like to opt for other daily wage work as they get more money. Men from other communities did not co-operate with the Paniya women to finish their share of work. Non-Adivasi men sometimes finished the work within three hours or half a day and left.

A pathetic scene in Kunnil colony showed an eight year old mentally retarded child tied with a rope at home when his mother went for work, as her 85 year old grandmother was not able to manage him alone. Under this scheme, there is provision to appoint a made servant for five children but if there are only one or two such children in a colony, what can be done? Carrying them to the work site may be more risky in such cases. Nimmi, the child's mother from Kunnil colony reported,

> Authorities are just concerned about our work and the targets but they do not see the daily struggle of Paniya women in day to day life. For me it is very difficult to finish all the household work with this sick child and reach the site on time. But NREGS officials are not sensitive to these daily struggles of women.

There is no concession in the amount of work assigned to women and even to handicapped people. If it is bund building, it is the same seven and half meters for women as well as for men. If it is compost pit or water trench, it is the same measure for men and women. Also in NREGS the tools provided are not suitable for women. Even weak Adivasi girls (from 18 years onwards) were seen struggling to lift the heavy spade to make mud walls and compost pits. Women from the Paniya community, especially the

weaker ones, said that they preferred daily wage labour as there was no compulsion to finish the work in time. Also in daily wage labour, the employer's households provide food and it reduced the risk in going for work on an empty stomach. But the call of their stomach, forced them to go in for even hard labour. However, it is true that in daily wage labour, they pay less for women. But the work expected from them is also less and they are not given very hard jobs such as making compost pits, mud walls and trenches. It is very important to arrange specific work plans for women considering their work load at home as well as the bodily conditions if NREGS claims to be gender sensitive.

Before going for wage labour, women have to draw water, cook food and pack food for lunch and send children to school. But there is no time concession for her in NREGS. For Paniya women, there is the extra burden of fetching firewood and water from faraway places during the dry season. They have to spare one full day to collect firewood for the following two days. This is an important reason for the Paniyas' lack of interest in participating in NREGS. However, these contextual specificities are not a concern of NREGS while fixing the timings or workload for women.

A panchayat member from Kurichia community stated that she managed to reduce the work load of old people individually or by assigning work in groups. Such arrangements are not reported in the case of women anywhere in the study area. Special consideration is needed for Adivasi women folk as they are facing the double vulnerability of poverty and ill health. Specific work plans and tools have to be designed for women to make it more gender sensitive as women constitute the main work force in NREGS. According to recent (2012) reports from a previous NREGS staff, discussions have started to make NREGS more women friendly by designing special work plans and special equipment which suits the anatomy of women and there are plans to assign work load according to gender, age and disability.

Labour Market and Increasing Gender Disparity

The traditional ways of food gathering and the subsistence agricultural practices and economies that prevailed among Adivasis were supportive to women and gave them better status. Women and men were jointly responsible for the subsistence production

among the Adivasi population in Wayanad and women were respected for their economic contribution.

The capitalist mode of agriculture based on colonial and neo-liberal policies and the conversion of paddy fields resulted in lack of employment especially for Paniya women. As a result, women's economic dependence on men increased both for personal needs as well as family needs. As they were experts in paddy cultivation, paddy planting, weeding and harvesting assured them almost three months of work to Paniya women until the 1990s. They suffered the most due to the destruction of paddy fields and the transformation into cash crop gardens or for construction works.

In Wayanad, in the past as well as today, the wage difference among men and women is an accepted fact among all categories of people. Even with this disparity in wage, Paniya women had economic independence due to the wage labour available to them mainly in the paddy fields. They had the freedom to use their earnings as they wished unlike in the other non-Adivasi communities. However, the sudden fall in their incomes reduced their expenditure for food items and affected their health status. According to Paniya women's narrations, Paniya men's domination over them increased as labour opportunities became scarce for women increasing their economic dependency on their men. The gender division of labour is getting strengthened by the conversion of paddy fields and the loss of labour opportunities for Paniya women.

Among Paniyas, the household chores such as cooking, drawing water, bringing firewood etc. were shared by men to a greater extent until around thirty to fourty years back. Paniya women said that if they go for outside work, men used to complete all the household tasks and vice versa. I have observed old Paniya men involved in cooking more frequently than the younger generation. Nowadays, the Paniya youth are also influenced by the non-Adivasi world which is projected as a superior way of life, with its gendered division of labour within families and work place. One day a Paniya youth said, "Drawing water is not my work, but I am helping her. Even then she does not give me due respect and obey what I say". It was observed that the Paniyas are increasingly entrusting the responsibility of cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water and caring for the small ones to the girl child. However, chores such as going to the market and buying and selling things, they entrust to boys as well as girls. As a whole, boys are found freer

from household responsibilities than girls and patriarchal norms are penetrating into Paniya culture in socialising their children.

When NREGS promoted equal wages for men and women, men started demanding more wage as the disparity still exists in the open labour market. While discussing with Adivasi men, it was revealed that there were men who were against the practice of equal wages for men and women. This reveals the public patriarchy existing in the society which underplays the overload on women in managing the household and bringing up the children and its influence and slow incursion into Adivasi conmmunities. The societal norms that construct women's manual work as less efficient is very strong in Wayanad and men are not ready to see the oppression of women through disparity in wage labour.

In Wayanad, women's work was considered very cheap and they were paid only Rs.70 till the implementation of NREGS. Even though the state implemented laws for equal wages, the wage rate in NREGS is less than the minimum wage decided by the state. So most of the Adivasi men keep away from NREGS and women become the main work force and they are forced to do hard labour like road construction and trench making even without earning the minimum wage notified by the state. However, the capitalist patriarchal system confines women to the household or extracts her labour power by paying minimum wage. Men's demand for double the wages of women shows the grave disparity that exists in wages and these values are entering into Adivasi culture. As Sankaran (2009) points out, it is unreasonable to delink the relation between wage levels and the existence of forced labour and he highlights that not providing minimum wage is violation of Article 23 of the Constitution. Thus, it appears that the difference in the quantum of work alone cannot address the gender disparity but the ethical consideration of women's extra work load in the household and her specific bio-social experiences such as multiple pregnancies, chronic aneamia, abortions and miscarriages have to be an important factor in deciding her wages and her workload to do justice to Adivasi women, especially the Paniya women.

On the other hand, it was observed that Kurichia woman had no leisure time as they were confined to the household from morning till evening. Along with the household responsibilities, they had to support their men who worked in their fields, especially for paddy cultivation. Kurichia men generally did not support women in their household

tasks but helped in cooking and cleaning if the women in the family were menstruating. The younger generation was also socialised in the same manner and girls were trained for household duties such as cooking, cleaning and boys for shopping and feeding the cattle. Even after doing a great share of work at home, the women were totally dependent economically on men. Some of the Kurichia women were interested in availing themselves of the opportunities offered by the NREGS to escape their complete dependence on men for money to meet their personal and family needs. Thus, the gendered division of household labour and women's dependence on their men in a *tharavad* based agricultural occupation was well entrenched in the Kurichia community.

The disintegration of traditional agriculture and the incursion of the capitalist system and market economy were disempowering to women in the Kurichia community. Krishna, from Palottu Kurichia *tharavad* reported that in *punam* cultivation, women had more participation and decision making power than in settled agriculture. Preparing the forest land for cultivation by cutting and burning the bushes was mainly done by men but sowing and continuous caring was women's duty and the goddess Vadakkathy Amma was specially venerated in the rituals before *punam* cultivation. But in settled agriculture, men's role is prominent than women's. Kurichia women are restricted from even touching the plough. Women's labour outside the household is more restricted today than in the *punam* cultivation period. Nathan (1997) observes that when the agriculturist-gatherer tribe settled down as land owning agriculturists, they tended to adopt gender practices of Caste Hindus and seclusion of women become a symbol of higher status. For instance, even entering the *tharavad* temples is restricted for Kurichia women. Devika and Thampi (2011) point out that spacial norms regulated the movement of upper caste women and in the study area it was true in the case of Kurichia Adivasi women too. Kurichia men had superiority over the religio-cultural and political decision making related to their tradition. Women were not allowed even to touch the bows and arrows that Kurichia men used for their ritual hunting. Even small boys were provided with bows and arrows for playing and practicing, but girls were not allowed to touch them during the ritual practices on *Tulam* 10, an auspicious day. However, both their girls and boys participated in the school archery competition and girls got a chance to practise archery at home even though they were banned from participating in ritual hunting. Thus, while

private patriarchy is enforced, they are willing to underplay public patriarchy in order to enhance their community's opportunities at the societal level.

Paniya women reported that migration to Kodagu for wage labour made their men alcoholics and men lost respect for their women. There were also incidents of men bringing women from Kodagu and deserting them after one year and bringing another woman on the next trip to Kodagu. Thus, lack of employment opportunities in the locality and the struggle for day to day survival was making women more vulnerable to men's violence. It affected the Paniya women's status in the family as well as in wider society. When men's support in family matters reduces, women have to get into debt for their daily sustenance. There were also incidents of women going for domestic labour to nearby towns as well as distant cities occasionally to meet their financial needs. The advance amount that employers offer is the incentive to go for such work which is exploitative in nature. There is no protection for such women labourers with respect to wage or physical security. There were incidents of sexual exploitation of women who were recruited for domestic work. In Thirunelli, Arayal colony, the *Anganwadi* helper who stayed in the colony reported one recent case of sexual exploitation but the woman was hesitant to discuss the matter with outsiders. In Kunnil colony, another girl Milha was asked to go for domestic work 6 km away from her house. She was promised Rs. 1500 for looking after one child. The family who requested for help was their earlier landlord's relative. She went for work and after four days, she came back due to the misbehaviour of one of their relatives. Milha described how she was harrassed,

> One of their male relatives came and secretly said to me that he would come at night and that I had to open the door for him. I hesitated and there was nobody around and he held my hand tightly. Somehow I escaped from there. That day I tried to contact my relative Nima on the phone but they did not allow me to talk. Then I asked them to reach me home immediately. They also harassed me by scolding me for not eating the previous day's food. They tried calling me a thief saying that I took their mobile phone and dress. I was entrusted with all the work - cleaning, washing clothes, washing plates, taking care of the child etc. Next day, they brought me back in a jeep and before reaching the house, I wanted to get down. They stopped the jeep according to my suggestion, but before I got out from the jeep, they started the jeep and I fell down. My head and knees hit a stone. I was admitted into a hospital and treated, but I still feel giddy and suffer from headaches.

Nima, an active member of the community and the girl's relative filed a complaint and the police came to enquire while she was in the hospital. Milha could not say anything being frightened of the police and Nima was not present during the enquiry. Nima wanted

to proceed with the case even though the employers promised compensation and settled the case in her absence. Nima reported that all her non-Adivasi neighbours discouraged her saying that "she is a girl, her future will be spoiled if the news is spread and she may not get married". Nima then wanted to file a case at the Women's cell and took the initiative. Again, she was discouraged by non-Adivasis who said, "Do not destroy the future of that girl". Nima said that, even detailed check up or scanning was not done for her. They just paid the hospital charges and even the compensation was not fully paid. Nima did not know how to proceed with the case and nobody supported her; non-Adivasis again advised her "nothing has happened to the girl by the grace of god and there is no need to dig it again and make it an issue".

The gender constructions of the non-Adivasis clearly indicate the patriarchal norms and the brutal exploitation of Paniya women using these constructions. Non-Adivasis are slowly transferring their cultural norms of women's subordinate sexuality to the Paniya community while exploiting their bodies and labour power. Lack of support to access available legal aid and lack of legislation and state policies to protect domestic labourers restricted the Paniyas' fight against injustice. However, even in the KILA survey mentioned earlier in the chapter, domestic wage labour of women is not included as a category while enumerating different categories of labour and this again shows the gender disparity existing in the public sphere.

The Kurichia women mainly depend on their own land for vegetable and paddy cultivation and this gave them better availability of food and also status in the eyes of the non-Adivasis. The Kurichias' self cultivation practices became a real support to meet the family's food needs and reduced the vulnerability of women. The women's ability to contribute to their families' economy due to their access to land is a significant factor in determining the status of Kurichia women. The relatively better self sufficiency in the Kurichia household gave them more public acceptance than Paniya women who depend on wage labour and debt from non-Adivasis, employers and shop keepers for their sustenance. Non-Adivasi constructions, like Kurichia women have '*adyathwam*' referring to aristocracy, are an example. Kurichia families in the study area reported that they did not send their women for domestic labour and that they were saved from the possibility of harassment related to such labour.

It emerges that the custom of equality between the sexes which was the hallmark of the Paniya community is slowly diminishing today due to labour scarcity, increasing division of labour and violence by men folk. Kurichia women are also affected with the imposition of restrictions on their mobility through their custom, traditions and sexual norms. The Sanskritisation process gives momentum to establish control on women's labour through taboos and rigid ritual practices restricting outside labour and mobility in the case of Kurichias.

Extension of Bondedness and Slavery

Livelihood issues of Adivasis in Wayanad are increasing due to labour scarcity and the various forms of alienation they experience in the labour market. As Marx (1992) observes they experience alienation from the product of their labour as well as from the productive activity as they are not producing for themselves and their consciousness is not involved in the production process. They work under surveillance, control and coercion and this leads to further alienation from their own fellow beings. The Paniyas being devoid of any means of production, experience alienation in all its forms. More than the material alienation, the work itself becomes alien to them as it does not align with their cultural norms and as their creativity and decisions according to their cultural specificities are not involved in it.

For the Paniyas, Kodagu labour becomes the most exploitative experience as even the place, people, labour, everything is alien to them in the physical as well as mental realms as they have migrated to another culture which keeps them bonded with an issuance of an advanced amount. As mentioned earlier, the brutality and coercion intensifies their experience of alienation and marginalisation. In the case of Kurichias, the minimum subsistence agriculture gives them chance to think and for creative interventions but the capitalist cultivation practices based on profit has an alienating effect on their culture of subsistent community based agricultural production processes and they experience value conflict and another kind of alienation. The KILA survey (2008) reflects that only 694 Adivasi *oorus* (Adivasi colonies) out of 2167 *oorus* continue their traditional agriculture. The Kurichia *tharavads* in the study area reported that they still follow their traditional agricultural practices. At the same time, they mentioned that when all non-Adivasis around them follow modern agriculture using pesticides and chemicals, it is difficult to

continue their traditional ways as there are more chances of pest attacks on their fields and besides they do not have government support. Thus, the transition is forced on them in indirect ways.

The question that arises is does NREGS help in any way to ameliorate the alienating nature of labour or does it increase the alienating effect of agriculture and labour? The Kurichias as well as the Paniyas expressed that they are against the work being currently undertaken to preserve *thodu* (small river) in many areas as they are removing all the plants (*kaitha, eetta, chembu* etc.) on its sides and banks and building stone walls in the name of protecting the *thodu*. The Paniyas said it may cause much damage to *thodu* as the roots of the plants preserved the sides from falling. Besides, it destroys the Paniyas' last reserve of food items like *chembu* and leafy vegetables on the river banks. All these point to the absence of any holistic plan in selecting useful immediate employment. Without a long-term vision for this programme, the Adivasis feel the consequences acutely.

During my visit to the area in 2007, many women were found involved in digging trenches in the forest to prevent elephants from entering the cultivated land. They complained that it was very difficult to work continuously, since it was hard labour. If the land was hard and rocky, it was very difficult to dig. It was a very strenuous job for women. The Central government is against trench making, but the Kerala government continues this work, including it under soil conservation and water conservation category. The soil conservation officer in Kalpetta says that trenches will be helpful for the areas, which come under the same contour. Wayanad being a place of hills and paddy fields, it may not come in the same contour and not serve the purpose of soil and water conservation. Rajan, a forest guard from the Adivasi community pointed out that the concept of trench making itself is wrong and unscientific. According to Rajan, water percolation trenches help only to create some job opportunities and do not reduce the man animal conflict as envisioned by the implementing officers. In addition, he pointed out that in all other states, there is plenty of common land and it is not difficult to find jobs for the people. In Wayanad since there is not enough common land for implementing NREGS, the government has taken up digging trenches, which is not good for forest conservation. He opined that the Forest Department was trying to pacify the farmers who

complained against wild animals destroying their cultivation. The work they are forced to do is contradictory to their understanding of what needs to be done. All these reflect the unproductive nature of NREGS work.

The Paniyas appreciated the reconversion of paddy fields for paddy cultivation instead of keeping it barren, which was initiated by the panchayat under NREGS. However, this was only for one year and that was done by including uncultivated paddy lands under the head of 'employment in barren land'. However, paddy cultivation is becoming a rare occupation and the area under paddy cultivation reduced drastically as it is not profitable and thus this intervention of the panchayat though in a very limited area can be considered a creative intervention. As the Adivasis immediately sensed and appreciated this work, the rejuvenation of paddy fields for rice cultivation on a large scale can become an innovative and productive intervention in NREGS with proper planning. Besides, it can become a motivation for Paniya people to join NREGS. This can also bring back paddy fields and its natural environment for the Paniyas to fetch food items for their daily needs and also become a way of acknowledging and valuing their knowledge and skill in agriculture and their lost vitality in labour activities. Through introducing traditional cultivation practices, the clean natural water sources and pure environment can be restored and the goal of environmental conservation could be achieved.

It emerges that lack of facilitation in assuring the Paniyas of their participation in the decision making and implementation process still exists. There is need to relook at the gender sensitivity aspect including criteria like quantum of work, timing, the problems they face at home etc. without sticking only to womens' participation and wage equality. However, there is hope since evaluation and creative interventions are slowly emerging from the authorities. When the government gives the propaganda that it is not a project but a 'magnacarta' for the poor people, it has to become more humane in many aspects and include the most deprived sections. For instance, hundred days employment guarantee without even giving the minimum wage may not be enough for a family to meet their livelihood needs as nine months are lean seasons of employment, especially for the Paniyas. The Paniya community from Kunnil participated in a strike conducted in the panchayat to increase the wage from Rs. 125 to Rs. 160 per day and there was a promise to increase the wage to Rs. 160 by the government. (In 2012, they reported that they were

receiving Rs.160 if they went with the tool, otherwise Rs. 150 as the supervisors deduct Rs. 10 as rent for the tool).

It emerges from the discussion that NREGS is not suitable to the Paniya culture and lifestyle and they fail to access the benefit of the scheme. They are alienated from the product of labour as well as from the process of labour. On the contrary, the landedness and representation in the panchayat helped the Kurichias to avail themselves of the programme as they get minimal opportunities for planning the work in their land, and thus minimizing the alienating effect on them. However, at least for increasing the participation of the Paniyas, context specific micro level planning, monitoring and vigilance by educated Adivasi youth who are aware of all the labour friendly laws of NREGS, appointment of Paniya Kudumbasree mates, provision of a minimum amount of Rs.100 on a daily basis respecting their philosophy of living for the day etc. may be helpful. It emerges that the heterogeneity of different Adivasi communities were not addressed in the NREGS programme.

Thus, NREGS if planned properly can ameliorate the labour scarcity of Adivasi folk and the trauma they face while migrating to other states for employment. What is lacking is micro planning in the specific context of the most vulnerable Adivasi communities and the political will to radicalise its rules and regulations to meet the felt needs and cultural specificities of different Adivasi groups.

Conclusion

It emerges that Paniyas still stay bonded in the minds of non-Adivasis and it is manifested in their everyday constructions, conflicts and actions towards them. Historically, exploiting the slave labour of Paniyas for many years, non-Adivasi minds are obsessed with dehumanising constructions and actions towards them. Continuing dependency, debt and advance money are new tools of bondage for them even though they are free from bonded labour through the enactment of law. Provision of alcohol and drugs is another tool invented by non-Adivasis to keep them bonded and in a wretched condition for ever. So what the Paniyas undergo today is another incarnation of slavery. In the capitalist monetised economy, there is legal sanction for surveillance through the domination of money capital as the Hindu temple used moral discourse as the legitimising tool.

Valliyoorkavu is no more the centre for slave trade but the religious institutional set up that still uses the discourse of ‘laziness’, ‘idleness’, ‘right’, and ‘debt to god’ to legitimise control and extract manual labour in nuanced ways. The ideological constructions cover up the bondage and make it appear like a normal occurrence. Even the NREGS programmes limit the Adivasi self realisation in economic, social, cultural and political levels and contribute to the alienation they experience, especially in the case of the Paniya community. Also the narratives revealed the unproductive nature and lack of creativity in NREGS work. It is evident that the creativity and enthusiasm of Adivasis is underutilised in NREGS. The motivation is to employ as many people as possible for any kind of work and the delay in planning reduces the scope to make it more creative, productive and environmental friendly. Even with all these flaws, Adivasi narratives reveals the hope that they still have in NREGS programmes and this stresses the need to improve Adivasi participation in NREGS in Kerala through micro planning, considering the heterogeneity and specific contexts of different Adivasi groups.

The hierarchical caste and class structures, master servant relations and the paternalistic state entities are involved in perpetuating a different kind of bondedness in invisible ways unlike the plain and brutal ways of the past slavery. For the Kurichias, their institution of *tharavad,* their landedness and lack of dependency due to their subsistent agriculture created minimum space for dialogue with the power structures and achieve political representation which assigns a symbolic power. It is true that agriculture faces a great threat in the neo-liberal context and its income is very limited. At the same time, Kurichias landedness and agriculture give them security by providing minimum livelihood and belongingness in their cultural traditions. However, the government employment is minimal and does not give the Kurichias any decision making power as they are appointed in low ranks as in the case of Indian clerks appointed by the colonial rulers for the smooth ruling of an alien country. However, it can contribute a small share in reducing the alienation they experience in their tryst with different administrative structures. In contrast, the total dependent relations of Paniyas due to landlessness and lack of minimum livelihood, the experience of alienation and marginalisation becomes more intense for them. The KILA survey report also affirms that majority of the Paniyas and Kurichias work in the agricultural sector and reveals the importance of land for these two communities. The next chapter will explore the patterns of landownership of the

Paniyas and Kurichias, their access to land and the land relations in detail to understand the material and cultural significance of land in their development or lack of development.

CHAPTER VIII

Land and Natural Resources

Development as Dispossession, Inaccess and Alienation

Land and natural resources provide a vital source of food for Adivasis. Besides the material advantages that land provides, it serves as cultural and symbolic capital. Land is not dead matter or a commodity but an organic entity for the Adivasis. The Adivasis in Wayanad refer to land as *poomi thai* (mother earth). They maintain certain trees, sacred groves, burial land and forest as the abode of their gods and revitalise their spiritual ties with the land through rituals surrounding these entities. For Adivasis, land is a habitat, territory, social organisation, economic system, cultural identification and political boundary. However, the government policies in the colonial and post colonial period have affected the Adivasi's close relationship to land, forests and its resources. The coloniser's ideology based on private exclusive ownership of land and capitalist development were alien to the Adivasi notions of stewardship and communal ownership of land.

The Indian state continued the colonial policy of private property. Thus the independent Indian state systematically restricted and abolished Adivasi's collective ownership of the common property resources and access to forests through colonial land laws and capitalist development initiatives (Fernandes 1992, Pathy 1998, Roy Burman nd). The process of alienation was initiated through the creation of individual titles to land and then through the concept of *'res nullius'* (absolute ownership of the state) and *'terra nullius'* 49(literally meaning nobody's land). Through this, the state legitimised its superior power over people's domains and alienated Adivasi people from their forests and common property resources. After independence, private ownership was institutionalised and the collective customary ownership of land and land based resources were alienated

49 Webster's dictionary defines 'terra nullius; as 'a territory not annexed by any nation'

by both the state and the private entrepreneurs. At the time of conferment of *patta* (title deed) to individuals, communities' customary rights over land and forests were not demarcated. As Rao (1998) highlights, through this process, in a way, not only the land was alienated from the Adivasi people, but also from the state itself.

This chapter discusses the perceptions and experiences of the Paniyas and Kurichias in their relationship with land and their ownership and access to land. The differential experiences of these two communities are related to the nature of ownership and access to land and their land relations. The chapter also examines the state interventions with regard to Adivasi land issues and their responses to these interventions in everyday life. The material and cultural significance attached to land and the centrality of land in the development experience of Paniyas and Kurichias are analysed in detail.

The colonial legal stipulation that all land must have a private owner changed the property rights of the Adivasis in Wayanad. The colonial rule rejected the customary rights of the Adivasis and the dual process of conferring private property right on the *jenmis* and the spread of British plantations curtailed the Adivasis' ownership and access rights to agricultural land and common lands (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 2007). Bestowing private property right to the *jenmis* by the colonial government while doing the survey and settlement (commenced in 1886 and completed in 1889) for the systematic collection of revenue had a detrimental effect on the Adivasis (*ibid*). During this survey, the land registers in Wayanad were rewritten in the name of *jenmis* and they became the undisputed landowners.

Adivasis' Relationship and Experiences with Land

It is difficult to separate Adivais relationship with land and its resources from their culture and values. The communal ownership patterns, management and access to land and the social embeddedness inherent in their relationship with land still prevails among the Adivasi communities in Wayanad in one way or the other. It was observed that Adivasis have a different set of values and pattern of relationship to land compared to the dominant societies in Wayanad. Adivasis joint cultivation practices, their protection of *kavus*, their reverence for their burial lands and their ritual practices around land were all evidence of

another culture which centres on production of life and sustenance rather than commodification of life sustaining resources for economic progress and 'development'.

Tharavad based Agriculture

People from the Kurichia community, especially those who keep close contact with the *tharavads,* continue their paddy cultivaton and some of their indigenous cultivation practices, ritual practices and festivals around paddy cultivation.

Vinod, the previous office secretary of *Kurichiya Samudaya Sanghatana*, Mananthavady reported,

> Our indigenous concept of community life and well-being cannot be separated from our culture of cultivation. Agriculture is not a business for us, but it is part of our culture. It is a celebration as well as holy action for us. We do *pooja*, bow down to earth and do the ritual celebration before sowing seed, paddy plucking, planting, reaping etc. *Veliyan* is one of the main paddy seed varieties we use traditionally.

The Kurichias cultivate *Veliyan* as a community activity and use it for their food and they believe that this is sustaining the unity among them. *Veliyan* cultivation, is followed with several ritual celebrations. Eran (72) from Tulsi *tharavad* narrated,

> Before entering the field for paddy cultivation, we as a community come together and talk about our conflicts and grudges and affirm community feelings. We decide the *Muhoortham* (auspicious time) and do our ritual celebrations and prayers. We have a ritual called *Daivam Kanal* (seeing god) before beginning the cultivation. After doing *pooja* and special offering to the diety, the *Karanavan* and *Karanavathy* begin the paddy planting and we call it *Vilanatti utsavam* (paddy planting festival).

It was observed that during *daivam kanal, muni* or *nekal* (ancestors who are venerated as god) possess the religious functionary who becomes the mediator between humans and *nekal.* The religious functionary goes into a trance when they are fully possessed with the *nekal*. He gives directions to the community and elders about what they need to do for good yield as well as prosperity for the whole year. They give special offerings of bunches of bananas, coconuts etc. as offerings to god and call their relatives and neighbours to celebrate the feast.

Rasa from Chathavary *tharavad* said,

> We do paddy cultivation as a celebration. Our traditional customs and ritual practices are associated with that. We used to invite all people in the neighbourhood for these

> occasions and give them a feast with wild meat and fish from the river earlier. All members in the *tharvad* then join for the work.

All their narrations revealed that paddy cultivation was one of the most important festive times for the Kurichias. Kunjaman from Kurichia *tharavad* reported,

> When we do the cultivation together, we get more strength. We know that we have to keep good relationships to make our cultivation a success. All the members in the *tharavad* join together for this by completing the work in their own individual fields. The elders initiated the celebration of paddy cultivation. After completing the rituals, the *Karanavan* and *Karanavathy* asked permission to sow the seed and they sow it first. The ritual practices continue for paddy transplanting and harvesting.

Many of the Kurichias said that it is not celebrated elaborately nowadays.

Not only paddy, but even vegetable cultivation is a celebration in connection with the *ucharal* festival. Rasa, a Kurichia woman said,

> When we celebrate the *ucharal* festival, we do vegetable cultivation. Even the old people become so interested in cultivation. Earlier, if there were 15 acres of land we counted the members in the family and cultivated according to our need. We used only cow dung as manure. Like a competition we conduct the vegetable cultivation to increase the team spirit.

While the men and women participated equally in the paddy cultivation, women are very enthusiastic about vegetable cultivation. The older women are very interested in vegetable cultivation even today and some of them claimed that they produce all the vegetables they need for the house. As part of their old tradition, they produced cucumber and pumkin. Today they cultivate other vegetables like tomato, ladies finger, spinach, beans etc. in their paddy fields. This became a real help for them as the vegetables they buy from outside could not be trusted because of the use of pesticides. Even now, they continue the practice of vegetable cultivation and this gives them better food security compared to the Paniya community.

The institution of *tharavad* organised the joint cultivation of paddy and it increased the bondedness among the *tharavad* members. The spirituality and community values of the Kurichias are interwoven in their cultivation practices. They are owners of paddy fields, workers and consumers of the produce and they celebrate their cultivation as a community.

Paniyas' Access to Paddy Fields

The Paniyas were experts in working in the paddy fields. According to the oral traditions of *Aivu* (the code and conduct of the daily life of the Kuruman community) when Kurumas were owners of land, the Paniyas were given control over the paddy fields and the Kurumas accepted Paniyas' rights in the agricultural activities even though they observed pollution taboos (Kjosavic and Shanmugharatnam 2007). Paddy cultivation was ingrained in the Paniya culture too and they reportthat even their rhythmic dance movements and folk songs have deep links with paddy cultivation. Paniya diet practices were also related to the flora and fauna of the paddy fields.

The Paniyas' knowledge and skill for paddy cultivation was widely used in Wayanad by the non-Adivasis. As Paniyas were not owners of paddy fields, historically their cultural celebrations around paddy cultivation was used by their non-Adivasi employers to exploit them as they do double amount of work when it is integrated with their cultural dance and music.

Kavu (sacred groves) and Adivasis

Many of the Kurichia *tharavads* maintained *kavus* on their land. Nuclear families who have no connection with the *tharavad* could not preserve their *kavus* and culture of reverence to nature very strictly. Eran from Tulsi *tharavad* said,

> We consider *Kavu* the abode of our gods. We will not unnecessarily step into it or cut a tree, creepers or bush from it for any purpose. We keep it in its wild form. On *Tulam* 10 (Malayalam month) when we do our ritual *Nayattu* (hunting) we enter the *kavu*. The forest department promised money to protect it. They kept boards to take the credit. But they discontinued the support and we told them we are going to remove the board. They asked us to keep it as it was already installed, but we removed it.

While seeing another *kavu* which is maintained by the forest department I asked them why it is not maintained like their original *kavus* in other *tharavads*. One Kurichian responded, when *jendas* (cement stones that demarcate the boundary of the forest) are made people are kept out from its maintenance. The two *kavus*, one maintained by Kurichias and the other in the forest maintained by the forest department provides the contrasting behavior towards the *kavus* (photo 29 &30).

Promising money to maintain and keep the board by the forest department can be seen as an effort to take the credit of the self preserved forests of Adivasis. But Kurichia people recognised it and they removed the department's board when they stopped giving money for its maintenance. However, the State continues to play a decisive role in the future of their 'living places' in manifold ways beginning from the reservation of forest, taking away the usufruct rights of the Adivasi people and through new initiatives like, treating *kavu*-their sacred spaces as 'administrative spaces'.

When the Paniyas lost their sacred groves with the erosion of their common lands, they maintained at least a tree symbolically as their *kavu* and did the rituals under that during their festivals and life cycle rituals. In the study area wherever they had a small plot of land, the Paniyas were particular that they maintained a *kavu*. In the Muthanga land struggle they took the tree as a symbol of their last 'frontier', last space to connect themselves with earth and venerate. There it became not only a cultural and spiritual symbol but a political symbol to reacquire their lost land and autonomy. However, even after religious mainstreaming for many years, Adivasis relate the trees and forest to their gods and their spirituality revolves around the subjective experiences of human and non human world and their ancestral spirits.

A spirituality of Shamanism is observed among Kurichias and Paniyas even today where the godman in a trance proclaims the experiential knowledge and wisdom as revelations from god for the well being of the community (photos 12 and 13). One Kurichia elder boastfully said that our *nekal* (ancestral spirit medium) is seeing god and out of that experience they talk unlike the non-Adivasis who just memorise and venerate god. Thus, their experience of god is a subjective experience more than objectiying god as a separate entity. As Surralles and Hierro (2005) point out god become a knowing subject rather than a certain ideal of knowledge which stays outside the human. They also observe that this shamanic god experience of the Adivasis holds a different epistemology opposing the Western objectivist epistemologies. The Adivasis always stress a rigourous preparation from their godman to enter into this non human experience, to make explicit or personifying the qualities of the subject they are representing to an ideal minimum. Also many of their elders expressed that their younger generation lack rigour in

observances of their tradition and the diminishing spirit in personifying god due to the modern ideas of religion and spirituality.

Adivasi narrations revealed that their spirituality is cosmo-centric and the commercial and capitalist values are opposite. Modern society seeks to protect nature with an anthropocentric vision, but *Adivasis* have a holistic vision and nature and human beings, non humans and god, are related to each other in their everyday life. Their narration of stories depicts that non humans and their actions are equivalent to a human being's action having the same consciousness and common sense. Their narrations of stories as well as their real life situations represent the mythical realm of the union of the human and the non human world. Thus, land, nature, animals, and even their gods become an extension of themselves, and they are different from things/objects. Surralles and Hierro (2005) highlight the contrast by pointing out that in modern science, knowledge is obtained through objectification but in shamanism every thing is subjective and it is through subjectification that knowledge is acquired. When Adivasis say that our culture is not reflected in the state's development plans, they mean that their subjectifying epistemologies are missing and that the mythical union they experience with nature and the non human world is missing in the Western developmental models of the state.

Loss of Burial Lands

The Paniyas see their burial lands as the resting place of their ancestor gods. All of the Paniya colonies selected for study reported their loss of burial land or recent encroachment. They reported stories of capturing back some of the remaining patches through resistance. The Paniya community fought for their burial lands and reacquired it in two colonies in the study area. The cultural and spiritual significance they attribute to their burial lands united the community to fight back together.

Today, in most of the Paniya colonies in the study area, people have no land of their own or common lands, but in three of the selected settlements, they have a piece of common land left for burying their dead and in one settlement, they bury their dead in the forest. Non-Adivasi people's greed for land extended even to these small patches of burial land that the Paniyas kept very dearly. In Kunnil colony, they were so upset while talking about the loss of their burial land, that they mentioned that the village *adhikari* took the

side of the *Jenmis* and the land which was used by the Paniyas were given in favour of the *jenmi*. Chantha recollected the past and said,

> While our Mooppan was ploughing, the *adhikari* (village officer) and Vellambady Swamy (land lord) came and took his thumb impression on a white paper. They said, they will give record for our *vachanasthalam* (burial ground). But later we came to know that the land was sold by the *jenmi* to a *nattukaran* (migrant). We do not know what was written on the paper. But when the non-Adivasi people occupied the land, we realised that we had lost it.

Paniya elders shared that in some colonies, since there was no common land for burial, they had to take the dead bodies of their old people to the nearby forest for burial. They had a ritual for their dead ones giving them to the *Theyyakkavu* or *Koolikkavu*. According to their belief, if they did not perform the death rituals, they feared that evil forces would do harm to the family and the community. During *Kakkappola*, the spirit medium (*Attaly*) fasts and he gets possessed and conducts the ritual services to give peace and rest to the dead person's spirit. *Attaly* in a trance removes the evil spirits through dramatic physical manifestations like shaking of the body, falling down to the ground and producing voices of the evil spirit to merge the spirits into their ancestral world of spirits. By performing the rituals without failure, the family of the dead person and his community receive blessings through the ancestral spirit.

The three day long rituals give the community conviction for a new life, having been relieved of grief from loss and fear of evil forces. Except one, the other three Paniya colonies in the study area have their burial lands away from their colony or in the nearby forest. They reported that their ritual practices are losing rigour due to lack of burial grounds in the vicinity. It is observed that if they had land and enough facility in the colony, they perform rituals very rigourously but if the burial land is in the forest, the rituals are cut down and the participation becomes low. Their relationship with the burial land was linked to their relationship with their ancestors and thus the loss of burial land alienated them from their cultural beliefs. Even now they hold onto ancestor worship despite their close interaction with non-Adivasis. The Paniyan community fought for their burial lands and reacquired it in two colonies in the study area.

Thanan Mooppan (70) from Valli colony described how they protected their burial land at Vemom. He reported,

> When I was small, the *non-Adivasi* people encroached into the common lands we used at Vemom. There we had one and half acre burial land. Non-Adivasi people started encroaching that and now we have only half acre left. Again when non-Adivasi people started encroaching, we (30 to 40 Paniya people in Valliyoorkavu) joined together and created a fence using bamboo thorns. We also had applied to the Panchayat and Block to get funds for building a wall so that we could make sure that non-Adivasi people would not encroach it again.

Thanan Mooppan from Valli Colony said that they blindly believed that nobody would encroach into their burial land and kept it without a fence. He was glad that the CPI (M) supported them by encouraging them to reacquire at least the remaining area. In Chathavari, the *Oorumooppan* who had earlier histories of fighting for land stated that they insisted and managed to get funds from the Panchayat to make a wall around their burial land when one Christian family started encroaching on it to make a road to their paddy fields.

The Kurichiyas also face conflict regarding their burial lands, from within the *tharavad.* For instance, in Tulsi *tharavad,* the former Karanavar gave ten acres to *marumakan* (nephew) and suggested that two acres should be kept common as burial land for the entire *tharavad*. As there was no official record for that two acres he has now started cultivating that land keeping only ten cents for burial and there is dispute and negotiation among the *tharavad* members to keep two acres exclusively as burial land before the partition. There was no issue about the burial land before the partition.

The loss of burial land is a major concern for them. "Where will we bury our dead ?" becomes a resonating phrase as their small patches they kept as burial ground – the resting ground for their ancestors is also being encroached by the land hungry people in Wayand and the mobilisation against this is a cultural and political assertion widespread in most of the Paniya settlements in the study area. The last common lands left for the Paniya community is their burial lands and even on that, the non-Adivasi community continues its encroachment.

Loss of Access to Common Lands

The resource base and livelihood systems of the Adivasi people are generally founded on common property rights and forest resources. In Wayanad, common property rights were not established on an institutional basis. As Varghese (1970) points out during British rule, the policy of considering *jenmis* as the sole owners of the landed properties were institutionalised by assuming *janmam*[50] right of theirs on landed property. Later, however, British writers

50 *Janmam* or *jenm* right gives the proprietor absolute right to property and he can alienate or oust all other occupants at any time if they make any attempt to convert it for any profitable account (Varghese1970).

themselves acknowledged that declaring the entire landed property including wasteland as *jenmam* right was imprudent (*ibid*). He again points out that during the British rule, a large area of Wayanad taluk was converted into a new holding called government *janmam* to establish the state's superior right over landed property. Kunhaman (1989) points out that during the second, third and fourth decades of the 20th century, large scale immigration of non-Adivasis from Travancore and Cochin into the Wayanad region happened and they purchased land from the *jenmis*. The migration during different historical instances resulted in the transition of the Adivasi economy of subsistence into a market economy.

The Paniyas and Kurichias reported that the areas they used as common property until three or four decades ago is in private ownership or government ownership now. Paniyas being a slave caste in the feudal, colonial and early independent periods accessed the common resources for their survival other than the daily pittance they received from their masters. From the narrations of the Paniyas, it was evident that there were plenty of common lands and forests accessible to them for collecting materials for their daily use, ritual performance, burial etc. even though the land was under the *jenmis.* There was plenty of land available till the influx of large scale migration into Wayanad.

During the feudal period, the Paniyas were living at the fringes of the *jenmis* land in small temporary huts. When the Paniya community recounted about their slave labour, they said that life is better now as they get wages for their labour and they are not beaten or threatened to go for work. At the same time, they recollected that even though the *jenmis* did not allow Paniyas to cultivate their land on a long term basis, their daily needs were met from the common lands around them and that they used to cultivate banana, tapioca etc. in small patches for their use.

Members of the Paniya community stated that in the past (they meant feudal, colonial and early independent periods), land ownership was not a dire need for their survival. Chantha (85) narrates,

> When we were working under the *jenmis*, we had everything on this hill. If we went for a walk in the morning we could collect everything for the day. Where we are staying now was a *njaval thottam* (black jamun garden) before. We used to eat all kinds of fruits to fill our stomach during our childhood. We had roots and leafy vegetables in plenty. Those days we never bought soap to wash our clothes and for our bath. We had *Cheengakkaya* (soap nut seeds) on this hill. We had enough medicinal plants to treat our common illness. Now everything is destroyed and there is not a piece of land, which is common. Every inch is occupied by 'others' (non-Adivasis) around.

This indicates the subsistence of Adivasis built around the common lands even during the time of *jenmis*. The Paniyas treated natural resources of the hills and forests as

common property resources. For their survival needs, they collected the natural resources around them and shared it among themselves. When the Paniya community shared their views about the nature around them, they described the nostalgic plentiful past forgetting the hardships that they had undergone during slavery. This indicates that the land, the whole ecological system or the nature around them was much more supportive for their livelihood in the past than in the present. According to Jacob (2006), the erstwhile feudal chiefs did not block their traditional rights in the forest and they were comparatively free in accessing food materials from the vast areas of land around them till it became private property.

The environmental degradation and restrictions to enter the land which are in private ownership and the non availability of common lands is related to Adivasi marginalisation. Kunhaman (1989) points out that till the middle of the 17th century, Wayanad was inhabited exclusively by hill-tribes. The Kurichias and Kurumas were predominant among them and they were at the stage of slash and burn agriculture and their social organisation had the characteristic of primitive communism where class contradictions were non-existent (*ibid*).

However, as Chantha (85) mentioned, there was no scarcity of land and forest in Wayanad for their common use or for gathering, burial grounds, sacred groves etc. during her younger days. Further, from the narratives of Lampan (45) from Kunnil Paniya colony, it appears that the restriction to access land and its resources increased in the modern period. He said,

> In olden times, we had to fear only our *Jenmis* who stayed far away from us, but today we fear each and every one around us. During the *Jenmi's* time there were vast areas of common land and we used to enter freely, collect food materials and fuel wood and fodder and used vast areas as burial grounds without restriction. However, today if we want to put our foot on another person's property we have to take permission. The non-Adivasi people do not give us permission to collect firewood or cut grass from their fields. We cannot even collect leafy vegetables, which we see as the only alternative when we are not able to buy food items from the market. They say that their banana plants and ginger cultivation gets destroyed if we enter. .

Lampan's description may sound as though they are hiding the hard realities of slavery while criticising capitalist development. It is true that he distilled the history to criticise capitalist development. However, there are facts which control their mobility more than during the slave period as their access to common land was blocked when it became

private property owned by non-Adivasis. The alienation of common lands and natural resources from Adivasis was almost complete during the land reform period as *jenmis* started selling their surplus land, (which was used by Paniyas), to non-Adivasis and when the state captured the uncultivated surplus land from the *jenmis* for redistribution to the landless. As Agarwal (1992) points out, the availability of natural resources to the poor is eroded due to its degradation in quantity and quality and the increasing ownership of the state and privatisation of common property resources.

Lampan (45) from Kunnil colony expressed his anger towards private property and narrated another experience. When their *Jenmi* Velmurukan swamy sold his property to a Christian convent, they fenced it with barbed wires. They fenced Lampan's land also with barbed wire which fell along the border of their land and the two spaces were divided by a small footpath. Lampan was not there when sisters from the convent constructed barbed wires on the land that he had acquired from his *jenmi*. When Lampan came back, he removed the barbed wires from his land. The sisters in the convent called the police to frighten him. However, the police could not do anything as the barbed wire fencing was on Lampan's land and he had the right to remove it.

The sisters then put up iron fencing around Lampan's land which falls near their boundary. However, Lampan perceived it as a double protection for their 'private property' and mentioned that non-Adivasis usually suspected Adivasis first if something was stolen from their land. However, the barbed wire fencing blocked the Paniyas' free movement to the field and the stream close by. These spaces were accessed by them easily for taking a bath, washing clothes, collecting leaves, crabs, catching fish, fetching sand for repairing their houses etc. Lampan's action of throwing the barbed wires was an expression of the Paniyas' anger towards the concept of exclusive right on property and the blocking of their easy access to the *thodu.*

In a group discussion, the Paniyas reported that their life was thoroughly affected by the capturing of their common lands by the state and others and it became one of the most important reasons for their marginalisation and they became "thieves" when they entered the common lands which they had been using over the years. One non-Adivasi from Edavaka panchayat asked, "If Paniya people are given land what is the use? It will remain unproductive". According to him, the British rule introduced the concept of private

property and made land productive by raising plantations in the waste land. Similarly, the state perceived the lands they used for subsistence as *wastelands* as they were not used for cash crop cultivation and the income generated was negligible, but for the Adivasi people in Wayanad, it was the land for subsistence, the resource for their everyday life. In the local context, it resulted in the indebtedness of the Paniyas to the local merchants and increased their control over the Paniya community in manifold ways.

Earlier, the Kurichia community lived near the forests, in scattered homesteads- each a self-contained unit with its own hills and fields (Menon 1996). They settled as joint families and to feed all family members, they had to cultivate large tracts on a long term basis. They used the land and forest around them as common property and enjoyed customary rights over it as a community. The Kurichia elders said that they used to cultivate large areas of forests for their subsistence. Their subsistence cultivation practices like *punam* (slash and burn) cultivation was stopped due to lack of common lands and forest lands. The loss of pastoral land and the decline of grazing and fallow land affected the Kurichias severely. The number of cattle slowly declined and the manure to the paddy field also reduced and the yield became less. *Tulsi* tharavad reported that they had around 175 cattle and slowly they were sold or got extinct due to lack of pastoral lands. This increased their dependency on the market for cattle food as well as for manure. However, they were forced to change to cash crop cultivation. The Kurichias used all their paddy fields for rice cultivation but in recent years, small patches are used for banana which they cultivated earlier at the forest fringes and other cultivable common lands. The forest used to be another habitat for them and they were hunters. When hunting was prohibited, they could not even perform their ritual hunting on *Tulam* 10 (Malayalam month in October). However, there were *tharavads* in interior places who still conduct this ritual hunt after taking permission from the forest officials (photo 31).

The Paniyas as well as the Kurichiyas lost their common property resources in many ways. Polanyi's (1964) analysis of the 'enclosures' in Britain and how it deprived the means of life of the poor peasants and their heirs, helps us to understand the plight of Paniya and Kurichia people today. He calls this enclosure movement as the 'revolution of the rich against the poor'. He points out that the lords and nobles broke down ancient laws and customs by means of violence at the price of social disorder. The conversion of

Adivasis' living places to private enclaves and state administrative spaces is similar to the 'enclosure movement' or in Marx's terms, 'primitive accumulation' but not perceived as an injustice generally.

Further, Therakam (2009), in his study on socially denied and legally sanctioned rights of Adivasi people in Wayanad, argues that interpretation of customary laws of Adivasis may be brought before courts so that it can be applied by courts wherever it is necessary. Kujur (2010) points out that the Constitution of India has given a mandate for the cultural rights of the Scheduled Tribes under Article 13 to treat customary law at par with other branches of the civil law. Article 13 (2) has the provision that the state shall not make any law, which takes away or abridges the rights conferred in this article and any law made in breaking of this clause shall be void. So he argues that the customary rights have the force of law and can be taken as judicial notice by the courts under section 57 of Indian Evidence Act, 1872. In Wayanad, the customary laws are not included in the civil law and the court has no knowledge about the customary laws of Adivasis (Therakam 2009).

When their relationship to land was threatened, Adivasis material and cultural survival became difficult and there were incidents of resistance and fights for land in their day to day life. Taking away of the revenue land by non-Adivasi land owners and state is reported by the Paniyas and the Kurichias and there were rare voices of dissent despite the fact that they were not familiar with the land laws.

Among the Kurichias there was internal strife during the transition from joint property to individual property.

Naran from Chathavary *tharavad* narrated,

> There are also incidents like the educated members among us trying to get private ownership of land by influencing the village *adhikaris* when power shifted from Karanavar to the local panchayat authorities and tribal administrators. As a result many of our *tharavad* members abandoned ties with the *tharavad* and their collective existence around the *Karanavar,* and became more individualistic.

Naran, firmly believed and insisted that officers have to negotiate with the Kurichia community to solve the land disputes among them. Now that power has been taken away from the community and given to other entities like political parties, administrators and

village officers the unity among them has shattered, he maintained. This has resulted in internal strife among the *tharavad* members regarding division of property.

In Kurichia *tharavads,* where the property division is not settled by consensus, there is still strife among the members. One *Karanavan* expressed his discontent with the local panchayat who sanctioned money under a housing scheme for the Adivasis to individual members without negotiating with the *tharavad Karanavan* when the property is not divided among the members. He suggested that instead of planning from above, the officials have to come down, sit with them and plan if they are really concerned about their issues. He also believed that only Adivasi officers can understand their issues and others cannot understand their culture. Even though the government has ensured the participation of Adivasis through *oorukootams* in the formulation and implementation of schemes related to them, the processes in the local context reveal that it has not materialised even now and the Kurichias as well as Paniyas are not able to participate in these negotiations.

While attending an *adalat* held by the SC/ST Commission on 16/3/2010 at Mananthavady for resolving Adivasis complaints, Kurichia nuclear families (outside the selected settlements) reported different issues regarding land. Sharavanan from the Kurichia community complained that he did not get *patta* for the land which he was using from 1969 onwards. The commission promised that they would study the details and within 45 days they would find a solution for the issue after contacting the concerned authorities. Sharavanan said he had been approaching the village officers since 1969 to settle this issue, but the village officer was indifferent. With the SC/ST commission's involvement, the village officer enquired and found that for his three acres of land, the *patta* was permitted before, but since they did not pay the *vrikshavila*, it had lapsed. Village administration claimed that there were 44 trees and now they have to pay for those trees to get *patta* for their 3 acres they were using since 1969. He mentioned that they are three siblings and if they get *patta* for that, each one will get one acre as promised by the government. Annan's father said that there were only around 20 trees that he could remember and they had been destroyed in a fire. The dried trees got decayed or were used as firewood, and now there were only four trees. After almost six months, the concerned authorities called another *adalat* at Kalpetta and informed Annan that he

had to pay Rs. 66,000 to receive the *patta*. Annan informed that they did not have money to pay and asked for a reduction to an affordable amount. He asked,

> Isn't it injustice, not giving *patta* in the name of non payment of *vrikshavila*. And after complaining to the SC/ST commission, the village officer came and harassed me saying "You cut the trees and sold it. We can take action against you. It is better to withdraw from this case...you will not get this land anyway". I told them that we were using this land since 1969 and I did not mind proceeding with the complaint despite action taken against him.

Also, there were complaints related to occupying their traditional land by the forest department. Velu, a Kurichia who was using the land near the forest from 1970 onwards claimed that he paid tax for more than ten years and had the receipts for that. He complained that the village officer was not taking the tax after that, saying that it is forest land. In the *adalat,* the village officer said that there was conflict existing between forest land and private land and so it was not possible to give *patta* for Velu's land. (I could follow up these two cases only till March 2011). It appears that even with the involvement of the SC/ST commission, Adivasis are unable to acquire *patta* for their land or resolve the dispute on ownership.

Even though, being slaves Paniyas not inherited any land, the Paniya colonies in the study area recounted that a Mooppan who resided in their colony had a piece of land with record. The Mooppan or his successor holding the record said that *jenmi* had helped to get him land. To ensure the supply of labour to the *jenmis* and the landed class around, they have given half or one acre of land to a Mooppan to form a Paniya colony around as a labour force. When all the surplus land was taken away by the government, *jenmis* acted very cleverly and retained a Paniya colony at the fringes of their land by assigning land to one faithful Mooppan. If land was not given even to one person when surplus land was taken away by the government, they could have gone back to the forests to earn their living and that was prevented by giving land to one Mooppan who was a faithful slave to the *jenmi*.

Other than this there were rare cases among Paniyas who faught with the *jenmi* to acquire a piece of land they were using. Chantha narrated,

> The *Jenmi* started selling the last piece of land left for us without offering any security to us. During the night my son and I made a mud wall around the piece of land we lived and cultivated for our sustenance. One *sakhavu* (active CPI (M) member) from the communist party supported us to escape from police atrocity for capturing the land even though the

> *jenmi* filed a case against us in the police station. When the police came they asked us 'why have you taken only 40 cents? You could have taken at least two acres of land'.

In another case in Thirunelli Panchayat, the land on which a Paniya *Mooppans'* house was situated was revenue land according to his understanding. However, the *Chetty*, (the former *jenmi*) threatened the Adivasi people saying that it was his land. Ellan *Mooppan* took courage and started building a house on a small plot. This angered *Chetty* who verbally abused him. However, *Mooppan* was very courageous and he mentioned:

> Holding the pick axe in my hand I told the *Chetty* not to approach me. *Chetty* went back without fighting. But nobody else in the colony is courageous enough to challenge the *Chetty* and build a house again in the remaining revenue land.

Ellan *Mooppan* is one exception who could fight alone with the *Chetty* and his resistance bore fruit. He showed the nearby land and said these are all *rouny land* (for revenue land he used the word *rouny land*) and with support from the officials, it is all in *Chetty's* name today. According to a newspaper report (Mangalam, 6 December 2006), the village in Thirunelli Panchayat, office unlawfully accepted tax for 50 acres of revenue land from an estate owner under the order of a higher official. The estate measured 165 acres and with that the estate owner occupied 50 acres of revenue land and was paying tax for that land too. When it was divided among the owners and they came to pay the tax, the village officer found out the mistake.

Even now the Paniya people in that colony are hesitant to go and clarify their land details with the village office and revenue department. The inability to negotiate and fear in approaching officials still prevails among majority of the Paniyas. During my pilot visit in 2007, in Arayal colony, Kunjan's family had 5 cents of land around his house and they took permission from the Chetty to plant tapioca in that land. Kunjan's wife said, "It is unfair that we had to ask permission from the Chetty to cultivate in the land we used from our ancestors time".

However, today they are cautious about the non-Adivasis' tendency to appropriate even their meagre land holdings around their hut. For instance, Nellan (35) from Kunnil Paniya community said:

> When a non-Adivasi started digging at the boundary of the small plot of land we have, I told her we will complain to the police. But my people have no record even for the small patches they hold and so they are exploited even today.

Other than these external quarrels, the Paniyas' lack of land and lack of access to common lands are causing struggles within their community. Adivasi leader C.K Janu said that lack of land caused petty quarrels among Paniyas because if they chewed tobacco and spat, it may reach the veranda of their neighbours house due to lack of space.

Studies show that the Adivasis have continuously been deprived of their land by vested interests, money lenders and particularly by those who have settled in Adivasi areas (Cheria et.al 1997, Kjosavic and Shanmugatatnam 2007). Benami transfers, the transfer of land from Adivasis to non-Adivasis in the form of lease and mortgage and encroachment due to lack of land records were very common. Projects related involuntary displacement, seasonal and long-term migration were other important factors for land alienation (Cheria et.al 1997).

In the core areas of study, it was observed that the Kurichia community fared better in protecting their lands as they had a comparatively better relationship with the *jenmis,* village authorities and migrants compared to the Paniya community and managed to get records for the land they were using for cultivation. Even though the land transfers among Adivasis and non-Adivasis are strictly prohibited in Kerala, it continued through illegal measures and the village authorities were found to be indifferent to Adivasi land alienation. Thus, the concept of private property, non-Adivasi greed, and the nexus among non- Adivasis and officers are all reasons for Adivasis land alienation and loss of their common lands they accessed earlier. The following section discusses Adivasi women's experience around land alienation lack of access to common lands and forests.

Private Property, Material Alienation and Experiences of Women

The exclusive rights on land as private property and the intrusion into the market economy for subsistence changed the reality of the Adivasis drastically. The *jenmis,* migrants, money lenders, business people, and forest department made use of Adivasis' ignorance of different land laws which are imposed on them by the state and it accelerated the process of alienation. Adivasi women are the worst victims of the exploitation of life sustaining resources as they assume more responsibility to collect food items, firewood, water etc. and feed the family. Ammini (35) from Kunnil Paniya colony stated,

> Before the arrival of migrants we had vast areas of land and we fetched food and other resources from there. Now we have to depend entirely on money. For everything we have to depend on others. There is nothing left for us. If we had land we could collect firewood, fodder, leafy vegetables and food items from there… the common lands we used to cultivate paddy, *chama*, *muthari*, *thena*, *cholam*, banana, tapioca etc. are no more there and the places where we used to dig for edible roots were converted for construction purpose or for *thottam* (cash crop garden).

From the narrations of Paniya women, it was clear that the common property resources and the natures' wealth they made use of for their subsistence has vanished today due to the concept of private property and modern development. Women are predominantly responsible for the food needs of the family even today. Whenever Paniya women are asked about their problems, they immediately plunge into lack of water, firewood and food materials. All their common land became cash crop plantations and private property. The Paniya community were landless and their women suffer more than Kurichias who own at least a patch of land. Agarwal (1994) points out that land occupies a special place as a productive asset and the possession of a small plot of land, unless totally barren, can reduce the risk of poverty and improve the status of women.

When all the common property resources were alienated from the Paniyan community, they were left without any base for their everyday survival. Urha, a Paniya woman stated that non-tribal neighbors will not allow them to fetch firewood from their land, saying that it is manure for their plants. She affirmed,

> We may take firewood from 'others' land without their notice as they do not allow it if they see us. They may call us thieves, but we are not thieves. We take only the fruits of the earth and do not loot gold or money like the non-tribal people. All our common lands and forests are taken away by others. Where will we go for firewood and leafy vegetables?

In this life world narrative, she unravels the manifold marginalisation of her community by the state and non- Adivasi people. The State engaged in structural violence by capturing all common lands by including it in the criteria of no man's land or government *janmam*. Similarly, non-Adivasis also engage in everyday violence by ousting Adivasis if they try to enter private lands, which were once common property. She rises above the state laws in challenging the stereotypes and historical injustice meted out to them. While showing the fences created around private property, she cherished the past memories of using common lands and paddy fields for their daily needs even during the times of slavery.

The introduction of private ownership of land by the colonial state and its continuation and appropriation of land by the modern state has far reaching implications in gender relations especially in Adivasi societies. Lack of access to natural resources increased the work load of the Paniyas as well as Kurichias. According to Agarwal (1992), the state control over forests and village commons and privatisation of communal resources has far reaching effects on traditional resource use and management and in the status of Adivasi women. She highlights that the traditional systems of water management, methods of gathering firewood and fodder and practices of shifting agriculture were not destructive for nature and it lessened the work load of *Adivasi* women. The loss of natural resources and environmental degradation affected Paniya women more than Kurichia women and it had class and gender implications as well. In the case of Paniyas, the resource for livelihood was destroyed totally, and their economic dependence on men increased, and the special status enjoyed by them at home is also diminishing.

Land conflicts with the *jenmis* also led to the exploitation of Paniya women. The Paniyas were hesitant to fight with the *jenmis* for the land they were traditionally using for their subsistence fearing that their girl children would be sexually exploited. Nima, a Paniya woman from Kunnil colony narrated her relative's earlier experience with their *Jenmi:*

> One girl was used by the *jenmi* and when she became pregnant they killed her and left her in their *pathayappura* (paddy store room). They did this as her brother had kept a plot of the *Jenmi's* land. Parents having girl children were all the more fearful to keep any land for themselves, since they feared for their daughter's safety.

It emerges that their worst sufferings were related to their loss of land and exploitation of women. Paniya leaders share these experiences through songs and narratives while gathering for protest meetings to discuss their land issues. For instance, in a Paniya coference51 a Paniya leader Prabhath from Cheengeri sang,

Theyyame kaithozhincho… Enkale Kakkename…

Enkala Nadum poya…Enkala Kadum Poya…

Enkala Mannum poya…Enkala Pennum Poya…

51 Paniya conference, conducted in Bathery, Wayanad from March 13 -15, 2010 supported by the Centre for Development Studies and University of Montreal.

> (We adore you god, protect us god, we lost our nadu (habitat), we lost our forest, we lost our soil, we lost our women).

Other than extreme forms of violence, Paniya women met with demeaning constructions due to their landlessness and dependence. In Arayal Paniya settlement in Thirunelli Panchayat, they do not have a small yard to perform their ritual celebrations and dances and during one marriage celebration, their women danced on the road. As a consequence, the non-Adivasi as well as the Kurichia community depicted them as *shameless* women and depicted their lack of discipline as the reason for the presence of unwed mothers in that settlement. In the selected settlements, the Kurichias did not report sexual exploitation from non-Adivasis. According to Kurichia's narratives, their landedness, matrilineal joint families and their history as warriors gave their women more security from non-Adivasis. The non-Adivasis construct Kurichia women as having *adyathwam* (of high social rank, aristocratic and cultured) connecting them with their *tharavad* property and their 'decent' behaviour. The concept of public patriarchy (Walby 1990) helps understand the differential status of Kurichia and Paniya women in the larger society and how the non-Adivasis patriarchal notions create a clear divide between them.

As the matrilineal system existed among the Kurichias, women were secure in their community. In matrilineal kinship, a Kurichian identifies oneself throughout one's life with the matrilineage and the *mittom* of one's mother's natality. Transmission of property through women confers better security to them even though the ownership is bestowed upon the maternal uncle who becomes the *Karanavan* of the *tharavad.* However, they reported that unlike the other communities, Kurichia men rarely wreak physical harassment on their women or ask for dowry during marriage. Their widows and divorced women can come back to their *tharavad* at any time as they have a right in the *tharavad* property. Giving maximum protection and security to their *kunjoottikal* (women folk in the *tharavad*) is considered as a factor that adds honour to the *Karanavan* and it is a prerequisite for venerating them as *Munis* (ancestral gods).

However, the matrilineal system did not give equal status to women in Kurichia *tharavads.* As Kelkar and Nathan (1991) points out, in Kurichia community the marriage was not based on the sexual attraction of a boy and girl, but the boy's father looked for a healthy and strong daughter-in-law to perform household labour as well as labour in the field. Thus women's productive and reproductive power and her use value was the main

criteria for selecting a woman for marriage and this reveals how women become objects of exchange. As Kelkar and Nathan observe, when land was not scarce for cultivation, the labour power was the main source to be monopolised for control.

First of all, women's development should cater to their livelihood requirements, which demands that women have control over land and its resources. However, Kurichia matriliny did not bestow women with equal status and freedom and control over property. The *Karanavar* in *tharavad* and husbands in nuclear families had control over property and greater responsibility for the financial maintenance of the family, while the female partners were more bound to household work. Women do not seem to participate in important discussions and decision making and they themselves perceive their role subordinate to their husbands and brothers. With regard to customs and taboos related to the Kurichia tradition, there are restrictions on women. The purity/pollution rituals are practised very strictly among the Kurichias especially in *tharavads*. The socialisation of Kurichia women is in accordance with patriarchal values and restricted through a powerful hierarchy between men and women in their every day lives. Thus, the special security offered in a *tharavad* for women and the control over women, helped protect their community as well us their *tharavad* property from disintegration. As Lindberg (2001) observes, the more the property involved the more the restrictions on a women's sexuality, and this was true in the case of Kurichia women in *tharavad*. However, the girl preference and special care for women went along with this control in the Kurichia *tharavad* and the interest was mainly the landed property which descent through mothers lineage. For instance, Eran from Tulsi *tharavad* stated,

> In earlier times, we liked our girl children more as the *tharavad* and material resources were inherited through her. Now when the matrilineal system and joint families are not fully functional in the traditional way, our preference for girl is also disappearing.

When the matrilineal system is undergoing transition and the *tharavads* are changed to nuclear families, the preference for girls and the strong observance of purity pollution rituals and control over women are reducing in the Kurichia community. However, the Kurichias in their nuclear families reported the emergence of the dowry system due to the influence of modernity and division of property.

In the Kurichia nuclear families, it was observed that those women who owned a piece of land demonstrated better participation in the decision making process than those who did not have any land title. For instance, in Champa Kurichia nuclear family, the property is in the name of Maani (wife of Nippan) and she was found to be very outspoken with visitors, and also sat with her husband for all decision making processes of the household. Supporting this phenomenon, Agarwal (1994) argues, "The gender ideologies and associated practices are culturally specific, historically variable and dialectically linked to property ownership and control".

Nathan (1997) traces the dominant position in the hierarchy by men primarly to the formation of state and the establishment of individual property. The state had contributed to the growing gender division among the Adivasis. For instance, when the government gave record for land to a few Adivasis in the earlier times, it was registered exclusively in the name of men. Only after the death of their husband, did women inherit this land. Xaxa (2004) argues that the development pursued by the Indian state in the post independent era has accelerated and intensified the gender disparity among the Adivasi people. However, according to the agreement with the Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS)52 in Kerala, the recently distributed lands were given in the names of both women and men.

Land Issues of Adivasis and the State

Against the backdrop of the Adivasis' relationship with land discussed in the first section, this section delineates state and its capitalist development processes to understand the material condition of the Adivasis. Before discussing the state policies and interventions to distribute land to the Adivasis, the land ownership patterns of Adivasis and their issues related to landholdings are briefly discussed.

A Kurichia Panchayat member Chandan who passed away during field work from Edavaka Panchayat mentioned that during the time of Pazhassi Raja, the Kurichias were given land in plenty. During British rule, the *Jenmam* right was made supreme for easy extraction of revenue and the Kurichias lost their land to the *jenmis*. Extensive migration

52 Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGMS) is formed as a political organisation for Adivasis during the 48 day strike at the Thiruvananthapuram Secretariat.

into Wayanad is also reported by him as a reason for their loss of land and forest areas they used for *punam* (slash and burn) cultivation. A study conducted by the Centre of Excellence (2006) reports that the Adivasi population in Wayanad has limited capability to reacquire their alienated land through legal procedures due to lack of awareness and absence of supporting documentation to prove their ownership. According to their study, out of 439 respondents, 225 have their land possession under *Koottupatta* (joint title) and 134 households have possession under *individual patta*. In both types of *pattas,* the average size of land holding is 5 cents to 50 cents. About 30 families have *koottupatta* above 5 acres and this belongs to Mullukuruman and Kurichia joint families. On the contrary, in the study area, most of the Paniya families are packed in their *colonies* within 2 to 5 cents and there are very few who own more than half acre of land and they seldom have land records.

Table: 8.1

Land ownership among the Adivasis in Wayanad District

Land ownership (area)	**No: of families (36135)**	**Per centage (%)**
Landless (zero land holding)	1986	5.49
< 5cents	7001	19.37
5 to 9cents	7817	21.63
10 to 24 cents	6231	17.24
25 to 49 cents	3252	8.99
50 to < 1 acre	4106	11.36
> 1acre	6513	18.02
Total	36906	102.1

Source: KILA survey report (2011). The report acknowledges that 771 families could acquire land in more than one way and that is the reason for minor differences in the total number of families.

According to the KILA survey report (2008), 8.28 per cent (1315 families) among Paniyas and 2.63 percent (153 families) among Kurichias are literally landless. 29.39

percent (4666 families) among Paniyas and 4.55 percent (265 families) among Kurichias are having less than five cents. While, 36.80 percent (2139 families) among Kurichias hold one acre or more land, among Paniyas only 7.44 percent (1182 families) falls in this category. Thus, 92.66 percent of Paniya families and 63.20 percent of Kurichia families are eligible for land according to the agreement made by the government to Adivasis in the year 2001 and the criteria decided by the Tribal Rehabilitation and Development Mission (TRDM) who are entrusted with the responsibility of distributing land to the Adivasis.53

Kurichias and *Tharavad* Lands

Kurichia settlements which hold large extents of land are commonly known as Kurichia *tharavads*. The Kurichias in the study area had *koottupatta* in the Karanavan's name or individual *pattas.* During the field visits, it was observed that the total area of land in Chathavary *tharavad* was 40 acres of garden land and 21.20 acres of paddy fields. The property is divided among the members but individual records were not made. Thirteen families in the *tharavad* premises related to each other, hold garden land in the range of 20 cents to 5 acres. Out of the thirteen families, eight families hold paddy fields in the range of 27 cents to 5.65 acres. Naran from Chathavary *tharavad* said,

> Our *tharavad* is the *upasakha* (branch) of the main *tharavad* nearby. The land we hold is part of the land our earlier Karanavan has taken from *Jenmi* as *marupattam* (leased in-land for specified rent) for ten years. By giving a certain amount of money as per government rule it became our *thravadu* property.

Naran said that there were many Kurichias who cultivated on *jenmi's* lands on the basis of *Marupattam* agreement. Marupattam agreement is signed between the *jenmi* and tenant and the tenant had the right to sell the lease to another tenant if he could pay the rent to the *jenmi* and tax to the government. This land was later bought by the migrants by paying meagre amounts or through encroachment. Also there were cases of the *jenmis* selling the land without the knowledge of the tenants, the Kurichias.

Naran wanted to keep his *tharavad* land as joint property; however, an educated member of his household who knew people in the state administration took the lead to convert it into an individual holding without proper discussion with the other members.

53 According to the Government agreement with Adivasi leaders and TRDM criteria, Adivasis who hold less than one acre are eligible to get one to five acres of land.

So there is strife among the members regarding the division of land and they are not paying the tax because the profit from the land is divided among them but the *koottupatta* is for the total land holding and it is still in the *karanavan's* name who is no more. Naran, Karanavan's *marumakan* (nephew) who assisted the *Karanavan* said that because of lack of consensus among the members, they were not approaching the village office to acquire individual *pattas.* The village office also ignores such disputes as they are unfamiliar with the customary laws of Kurichias. Naran reported,

> I am not paying land revenue because the property division is not settled and the property is still in the old Karanavan's name. I am the successor but cannot pay the tax alone for 40 acres as each individual has taken land and its income according to their might. Also, the village office does not ask any question and they are not bothered about settling the issue.

Another Kurichia settlement in the study area, the Tulsi *tharavad* is situated after a stretch of their own paddy fields and garden lands. A *thodu* was flowing at one side of their paddy fields and the *Nalukettu* (traditional *tharavad* houses in Kerala with a yard at the centre and buildings on four sides) in the midst of the gardens gave the impression of a traditional *tharavad*. Balakrishnan (34) from Tulsi *tharavad* says,

> We had 100 acres of garden land and 40 acres of paddy fields before partition. When the government restricted the land holding of a joint family (in the 1970s), our *Karanavar* divided the hundred acres of garden land among 5 *marumakkal*, with 20 acres in each one's name. One of them was my father. Now our *makkal* and *marumakkal* (our generation) constitute 33 families and we hold land in the range of 2 acres to 11 acres. Unlike our earlier generation, my father divided the property among *makkal* and *marumakkal.* Now there are more than 100 acres of land as some members also bought land individually.

Eran (72) from Tulsi *tharavad* narrated the story of acquiring land from the *jenmis*,

> When the government raised the land revenue, *Jenmi* gave 100 acres to us because he could not pay the revenue for all his land. When the *Jenmi* asked it back the *Menon* and *Sipayi* (village man who goes to each household to measure the plot of land) helped us retain it. The Village *adhikari* (village officer) informed us to acquire land and make the documents. The *jenmi's* son being a friend of the *Karanavan* of *tharavad* helped to make the documents. Even after making the documents, the *jenmis* tried to sell the trees in our land and we resisted this move with the help of the officials.

Among the three selected Kurichia nuclear families in the study area, two families held 42 cents each and another family holds half acre of garden land. They said that it was their earlier *tharavad Kaivasabhumi* (land under their possession) and they received

original *pattayam* for it in the 1970s. Among the three, one of the families lost the *pattayam*.

Over the years, the Kurichia community has become accustomed to the concept of private property. They have realised the importance of keeping record for land to save it from alienation. Some of the Kurichia elders from different *tharavads* stated that they have kept a certain amount of land as common *tharavad* land to meet the expenses for the various ritual celebrations including marriage and death ceremonies of *tharavad* members. For instance, Tulsi *tharavad* kept 13 out of 100 acres of their garden land and 10 out of 40 acres of their paddy fields as common property of the *tharavad*. They value the *tharavad* as the institution that hands over traditions to the new generation and binds the joint family.

They started taking the initiative for that through an organisation called *Kurichia Samudaya Vikasana Samithi*. The Kurichias mentioned that they had 107 *mittams* (*tharavads*) earlier but now it is reduced to 56 due to modern development policies and land laws. However, their initiative to keep the remaining *tharavads* as an institution with few acres of common land to conduct all their lifecycle rituals and joint cultivation practices and to sustain their strong bond among its members show their resistance to modern development trends. In such cases, even though the families are technically separated as they have divided the property and made separate houses with government aid, they could keep up the tie with the institution of *tharavad*, and engage in all their rituals and joint cultivation practices.

When government policies restricted the landholdings of the *tharavads* and introduced incentives to individual owners, Kurichias divided up their land. In Chathavary *tharavad,* Naran narrates,

> When the government stipulated that there should not be more than 20 acres of land in one individual's name even in the case of joint property, the Kurichia community also started acquiring individual shares and land records realising that otherwise they would lose land. (indent)

However, the Kurichia elders stated that there are disputes among the members of Kurichia *tharavads* over partition of their *tharavad* lands. According to them, these

disputes have to be settled through negotiation among the community members as well as with the village officials to obtain proper records. Chathavaryl Naran insisted,

> At least now land records should be corrected and updated. A community which was intimately bound and concerned about the collective security of its members than about individual security, now faces daily strife among its members over property division.

According to the Kurichias, the strife is intensified by the ignorance of the authorities about their culture and social organisation and hence indifferent to resolving the problem. Even though Naran was critical about the state policies and local power structures which destroyed their traditional leadership and landholding patterns, he now expressed helplessness and turned to the state to arbitrate. There is no other way to negotiate unless they regain self rule. Krishna (34) and Manjan (56) from Tulsi Kurichia *tharavads* mentioned that there are several court cases which are not settled as the Kurichia tradition is different from the Hindu Act and Christian Act which govern property rights in India. Even though internal conflicts regarding land were reported among the Kurichias in the study area, they had at least small plots for their subsistence unlike majority of the Paniyas who did not hold any land for their subsistence.

The Paniyas and their 'Colony' Land

In history, a 'colony' is a territory which comes under the immediate political control of the state. Even today, Paniya settlements in Wayanad are known as Paniya colonies and they question the entry of their settlement name as colonies in their respective panchayats saying that they have *kudumbapperu* (family or clan name). However, the Paniya community is confined to their government built thickly packed 'tiled and concrete houses'- 'Paniya colonies' as the state calls it.

The Paniya community staying in Arayal colony in the study area, holds only about 1 to 5 cents of land except one woman holding 20 cents and another who bought 10 cents recently. Majority of them have only one small hut and a small yard. There is no space for them to perform their ritual practices or for waste disposal or toilet facilities. Majority of the Paniyas who hold small measures of land (1cent, 2 cent or 5 cent) in this colony had no land records. In the village office also there was no clear record with sketch. While enquiring about the reason, the village offcers said that as per the rule when the old parent

dies they have to do *ozhumuriyadharam* to transfer the property to their heirs. Paniyas are not doing *ozhumuriyadharam* and not paying the taxes regularly.

Arayal colony also had experienced loss of the lands they had used in the early independent period. This colony is situated near the main road and amidst the thickly packed colony houses, there were shops of non-Adivasis. From the location of the shops, we get an impression that those were Adivasi lands before because the colony is divided into two parts on the roadside where these shops are located. While enquiring how they acquired land amidst the Adivasi houses, non-Adivasis as well as village officials said that they bought it from one Chetti landlord of that area. I noticed that non-Adivasis were more curious than the Adivasis about the purpose of my visiting the place, my identity and engagement with the Paniya people. Since I was aware of the court verdict to restore Adivasi's alienated lands and the various efforts of Adivasis themselves to occupy land in different areas of Wayanad, I could understand their curiosity while asking about land details. However, the Paniyas also were reluctant to talk about their land details on my first visit. Repeated visits and stay in the colony helped to break their fear and on further enquiry, Kaippan from a Paniyan colony mentioned that his uncle had one and half acres of land, and that he had given a portion away to non-Adivasis for a meagre amount. He said that one non-Adivasi bought his uncle's land on the roadside, promising land from his share in another area. The non-Adivasis continue to possess the land and cultivate it and the Adivasis never asked for the land due to them. It appears that since resurvey has not been done in that area, no separate sketch has been prepared for Adivasi lands and such transactions became easy for non-Adivasis with the help of the village officer.

There are several loopholes in the law which restricts Adivasis' selling their property to non-Adivasis. One of the village office staff reported that non-Adivasis can buy Adivasi land with the collector's permission. Otherwise, exchange of land is possible by producing written records to show that the present land that the Adivasis occupy is not inhabitable or by showing that they have sold the land for loan repayment to banks. It was evident from the conversation that the non-Adivasi village officials and the people around are very vigilant to protect the non-Adivasis who had illegally purchased Adivasi land by keeping it a secret.

Only one old woman, Raba (75) from Arayal Paniya colony showed an old piece of paper when asked to show the *patta* agreement for land. The written matter using ink was not clear and with effort one could read 83 cents. She did not know how much land she has in that document but showed 20 cents of land around her house as what is remaining after dividing it with her relatives for building a house. Others interviewed revealed that they had lost the record or that they did not have any record for the few cents their houses occupied.

Another settlement of the Paniyas at Valliyoorkavu is thickly packed and each family has a small house and a yard. They have no *patta* for this piece of land they hold, but only *kaivasarekha* (record of right). Pachan Mooppan (80) from Valli colony said that the *patta* was with the temple authorities and that Paniyas were considered the temple's dependents. As dependents, the Paniyas have received 10 cents of land from the hereditary owners of the temple. These 10 cents were again divided when the members increased in the Paniya families and the members built separate houses for themselves. Pachan Mooppan said,

> I had half acre of land. But when my relatives who did not receive any land came and asked, I gave them land to build a house. If I live alone who will be there to do my death rituals?

Pachan being the Mooppan who has to provide the labourers for the temple duties, was allowed to occupy a larger share of half acres by the temple authorities. However, he has divided it among his relatives and married sons and daughters. Owing to lack of space and the conjusted situation now, waste water and rain water from his daughter's house flow towards Mooppan's house, causing the mud wall between their houses to collapse.

Naman (53) from Richur colony, Cheengeri project (envisioned for bonded Adivasi labourers) area reported that due to their continuous struggle to get land records, a few of them received pattas in their settlement in 2004. Naman got a record for 57 cents, Prabhath (68) got 1 acre and 80 cents and other two 1 acre, 20 cents respectively. Naman's children and other relatives could occupy only 10 cents each due to scarcity of land. Resurvey was done and they are waiting for the records. Naman is again involved in strikes for acquiring land for his chidren and relatives according to the government promise of one acre of land.

Generally, the Paniyas preferred community living with their kith and kin and divided the small plots of land their Mooppans had among themselves without keeping it exclusively as one's private property. Because of this arrangement majority of the Paniya houses in the study area did not have space for waste disposal.

Eva from the Paniya community says,

> Now we have no place even to spit or for waste disposal. One of our Mooppans had paddy fields with *patta* but now the stage for performing programmes during Valliyoorkavu festival is being arranged there. He also held the record for our burial land at Vemom. But according to my knowledge, after his death nobody holds the records and non-Adivasis are encroaching.

Lavan (65), the *Oorumooppan* from Kunnil Paniya colony who is an important religious functionary in the community as well as the medical practitioner of the surrounding colonies stated:

> There is no boundary for land among us. We all want to survive on this earth until we die. When our own people are struggling for a small piece of land to make their huts we will not possess it alone without giving them. I have the records for 1 acre and 10 cents of lands. I have given my relatives permission to build houses in my land and the Panchayat asked me for a signature for a written 'no objection' for using my land for building these houses.

In a group discussion, Paniya members revealed that even though there is provision to purchase land elsewhere, Panchayat authorities obtain permission from their Mooppan to build new houses for his relatives from his share of land while sanctioning funds from the Panchayat. It appears that the values of community living and egalitarianism of the Paniya Mooppan is exploited by Panchayat members by making use of their lands for building newly sanctioned houses. It is ironical to note that instead of finding out more land to purchase for the landless Adivasis, the local Panchayat administration, irrespective of the ruling party, again forces them to divide it by sanctioning houses without allotting land for building them.

Lavan Mooppan (65) is a strong supporter of the Communist Party of India Marxist (CPI (M), and he reported that he received help and advice from his party in acquiring land. He applied to the collectorate for land and he agreed to pay the purchase price in instalments fixed by the Government. On the first visit, he mentioned that he has land records and during the second visit he said that he lost his *patta* during heavy rains. While staying with them, I discussed the importance of land records to protect their land from

alienation and during my next visit he showed me some torn pieces of printed papers and when I joined the pieces together we could make out that it was the land record he had received in 1976 according to KLR Act 1963 (photo 33). On enquiry it was found that such records were not found in other colonies in the core areas of study.

The historical advantage of being Pazhassi's warriors and the better political and social status enjoyed by the Kurichias helped them to receive a comparatively better treatment from the state bureaucracy and *jenmis* than Paniyas, who were bonded labourers. However, Kurichia's relationships with the *Jenmis* were far better than with the Paniyas and there were Kurichias who received land from the *jenmis*. The *Jenmis* used to send the Kurichias to meet government officials to carry out the *jenmi's* duties. In the case of Paniyas they stated that, the *Jenmis* frightened them saying that the officers are meat eaters and advised them to keep away from them. The Paniya elders remembered that they would get frightened when a person came in a white and tidy dress and they kept away from all officials and other non-Adivasis except their landlords who employed them. As Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam (2007) point out, when the *jenmi* leased out their land to the settlers, Paniyas who were living on the edges of their land were forced to move out.

Issues Related to Record Keeping

While reporting about the condition of land records, a village officer from Arayal mentioned that a few Paniyas and Kurichias got their land records in the 1970s, when the surplus land and revenue land was distributed to them during the land reform period according to KLR Act. However, the village officer reported that from 1965 to 2004, they had distributed 2 acres and 21 cent among 18 Paniyas in the Arayal colony area. It was evident that village officers also were not very sure about the extent of land given to the Paniyas as in my next visit the amount of land distributed was reported to be more than 3 acres.

The Government *jenmom* (give English equivalent) right was established in the lands assigned for Adivasis if it is not private *janmom* of the *jenmis* as discussed in the history chapter. Thus, to cut trees in the government assigned land, Paniyas and Kurichias had to pay a fixed amount called *vrikshavila* (price decided by the government for trees in

government assigned land) to the village office for each tree they cut for their use or for sale. According to a village officer, some of the Adivasis gave their records to business people who came to buy the trees in their land to pay the *vrikshavila* in the village office as per rule. After paying *vrikshavila*, the business people cut the trees and they went back without giving back the *pattayam* to the Paniyas and Kurichias. For instance, Swathy mentioned that her uncle had *thatkalika* (temporary) *pattayam* for the land and when the business people came to buy the trees, another educated uncle made the original *pattayam* of that plot in his name with the help of the village officer as the original *patta* should be produced in the village office to pay the *vrikshavila*. Now her educated uncle also says that he lost the *patta*. So she assumes that the business people took it to pay the *vrikshavila* and thus they might have lost them. Her eldest uncle Aron approached the village office thrice for making new records, but they refused to give it to him on grounds that they had already issued the original *patta* for that land. While discussing the issue with Aron, he said,

> It is said that laws are created in favour of the Adivasis. However, when we go to the office they do not even show the minimum respect they show to an insect. If they get money, they do things for *Adivasis*. From Adivasis they will not get a *naya paisa* (one paisa), they do not want to do things for Adivasis. One village *adhikari* by name Kunjuraman asked me for a sum of Rs. 10, 000 to make a copy of my lost *patta*. So I could not get it and I am still struggling to get the record. If I know someone in the political circles, things will be easier.

It appears that even now the land records of Adivasis are not settled and corruption is not ruled out fully from the village level to higher offices of revenue.

However, the Paniyas, who had a nomadic culture could not fully perceive even now the logic of exclusively holding private property and paying tax. It appears that the common lands they used were taken by the government as government *jenmam* and part of it is assigned to a few Adivasis by the state to extract tax. The Adivasis' right to the common lands they used was completely neglected by the state while assigning land without giving importance to their perceptions of community right. According to the report of the village officer, they resist paying the tax regularly. A village officer mentioned that they adopt different methods to extract tax when Paniyas show resistance. An Arayal village officer stated,

> Paniya people are reluctant to accept others and they do whatever they want. Even though they are told to pay the tax they will not turn up and they say that it is not possible. If they

> are informed that there is some help from the government they will come and collect it. We use these visits as an opportunity to make them pay the tax money.

As Scott (2010: xiii) points out, "To the degree that the identity is stigmatised by the larger state or society, it is likely to become for many a resistant and defiant identity." However, the negligence in tax payment increases the possibility of alienation of land.

There were no clear land records in the village office too for the meager amounts of land that the Adivasis hold. When the Appappara village officer was asked about it, he said,

> Earlier, when *jenmis* and other rich land owners owned huge chunks of land, we could collect the tax in each *thandaperu* (account number). They sold it as a bulk and it was easy to change the *thandaperu.* But later when many people bought small pieces from the bulk it was very difficult to change the survey sketch and *thandaperu* after each transaction. So all such transactions in which the *thandaperu* has not changed are together included in one account called '14th number account'or *therattu* and in this account we collect tax without separate *thandaperu.* As per the rule, we have to collect a fixed amount of tax for the area. If we can achieve the targeted amount there is no need to check whether each person has payed the tax or not. We have to do resurvey if we have to sketch the land of each individual holder and change the *thandaperu* and to keep separate record for each individual.

However, the village officer revealed that the amount extracted from each individual holder is more than the stipulated amount which has to be paid to the government. So it is not necessary to get tax from each and every individual to achieve the target amount for the total area under each village office. By May 31st the targeted amount of tax has to be collected. Once the target amount is achieved, they cannot record lapse in tax payment. And if there is no *nikuthi kudissika* (laps in tax payment) recorded, they cannot take action for *japti*. If one acre holder has *kudissika* for three years, during his payment, the tax will be triple the amount. Also since the land transaction is happening within a year, more than once the tax comes from different owners for the same plot. So there is no need to track the individual tax *kudissika* every time and there is no provision to take action.

According to the report of one village officer, the Paniya *colony* is in the name of one or two Mooppans who died decades back and the recent inhabitants have no *patta* (title deed) for their land. While enquiring about the *patta*, the common answer was ..."it got burned when the roof made of straw caught fire" or "it is lost in the heavy rains". However, majority of the Paniyas did not get the *patta* for the lands they accessed during the feudal period as they were illiterate and ignorant of the process of acquiring *pattas*

and were not aware of the importance of that document. They thought that the land they cultivated and the land in which they buried their ancestors was always theirs. Arayal colony even lost their burial land and now they bury their dead in the forest nearby.

One Paniya family in Kunnil colony mentioned that they have *patta* for half acres of land. They complained to me about a non-Adivasi who dug on the boundary of their half acres of land to acquire more. I asked them to complain in the panchayat or police station. Then they revealed that they did not have the *patta* for that land even though they had been staying there for more than two decades. On further enquiry, it was revealed that the Paniya family who previously stayed there had a *patta* for that land and when they left for another location, the recent inhabitants occupied that area. In this case, due to the nomadic nature (move from one place to another according to the seasons as a method of subsistence) of the Paniya people, even the family who got the *patta* for a small plot of land left the area without selling the land and did not take care to transfer the *patta* to the next Paniya inhabitants in that area.

It was observed that even though they do not have a *patta,* when Paniyas meet a non-Adivasi, they say that they have a *patta* as they are frightened of losing even their small plots of land. On my first visit many of them told me that they have *patta* even though they revealed slowly that they do not have it or they had lost it. It emerges that even now many Paniyas have either not realised the importance or are unable to deal with the complicated procedural requirements. Thus, it becomes easy for the non-Adivasi people to acquire Adivasi land with the help of village officials. Village officers are not found to be serious about keeping clear land records of the Paniyas and the extraction of tax from them, and in a way it helps in adjustments when non-Adivasis buy or encroach upon Adivasi property. In the case of Paniyas, it was observed that transferring of property to the heirs is not done systematically through the village office and in such cases, the records are still in the name of the Adivasi ancestors.

In addition to lack of land and official documents, the Adivasis as a whole and especially the Paniyas lost the common property resources such as natural forests, grasslands and wastelands on which they depended for subsistence.

Politics of Land, Redistribution and Experiences of the Adivasis

Treating land as private propertyand a commodity for making profit is widespread in Wayanad and the Adivasis' perception of it as a composite, material, cultural and divine entity and a community asset is not taken seriously in the state's redistribution process. However, when the land question of Adivasis became crucial in Wayanad due to their movements, the state was forced to search for land to distribute. But the non-Adivasi perceptions still hold on to the idea that if at all they need land, they need only rocky and unfertile land in interior areas. For instance, in *Deepika* news paper it was reported that in Cee Cee, Kalpetta, Wayanad, 47 acres of revenue land was surveyed for being given to Adivasis. There are reports that non-Adivasis in the area blocked this move by saying that this beautiful landscape can be used for other developmental activities like tourism, educational institutions or other public institutions, and distributing it to Adivasis is described by non-Adivasis in that area as reflecting lack of long term vision of the Ministers. This prevented any further effort at redistribution (Deepika, 29 August 2012). In the study area, I have heard comments from non-Adivasis such as, "Paniyas are not interested in cultivating in their own lands", "Paniyas need land only for making a house", "If they were given land Wayanad would have remained a barren land" and so on. The following section will look in detail into the state policies and interventions related to land and how these affect the Adivasis in their dispossession and marginalisation.

Land Reforms – Reflections from the Field

The Adivasi land issue was a completely neglected area in Kerala's development experience and even the much acclaimed land reform movements alienated them further from the land they belonged to with its neglect of the cultural rights of Adivasis and its preferential policy option for cash crops. Land reforms generally mean the redistribution of land to the landless and deprived classes and it is known as 'land to the tiller' programme. In contrast, as Ajit (2002) points out, during land reforms, the serfs, the real cultivators of land were deprived from self cultivation and permanent settlement, as they were pushed out from the *Jenmi Kudiyan* system. He traces the caste and class continuum in the land reform policies of the state. He challenges the claim that land reform has broken the chains of feudalism. Chantha from Paniya community said, "Our entire life

we worked for the *jenmis* and today where shall we go for land? We lost our lands when the *Jenmis* started giving it away to the migrants for small amounts without our consent."

Chathavary, *tharavadu* Naran narrated,

> The *Ooralars* (hereditary owners) who were also the *jenmis* gave the *Dewaswom* land, to non-Adivasi people as *Marupattam* or sold it for small amounts. Gradually, *Marupattam* holders made records using the Land Reform Act. Some Kurichias could make records for their land as they were cultivating the land on the basis of *Marupattam.*

The executive manager of Valliyoorkavu temple, said that prior to land reforms, temple properties were large and extended more than 1,000 acres, which were administered by the *Devaswom*.54 Gradually the *Ooralars* gave a good amount of land for private cultivation on *Marupattam* basis.

However, the Kurichias were adversely affected as the Land Reform Act stipulated that a joint family (a family with five members and children) could keep only fifteen acres. When the number increased in the family they could add one acre with an upper limit of twenty acres. At the same time, a nuclear family could keep seven acres. So, many Kurichia *tharavads* did partition, realising that otherwise they would lose land. There are also *tharavads* like Chathavary where the record is still in the *Karanavan's* name, but each family member took land according to his power without making any records and there is strife among the *tharavad* members. Naran's *tharavad* property had an extent of 40 acres of land as joint property. Naran reported his experience of assisting the *Karanavar* for fifteen years in the *tharavad* as a responsible *marumakan* (nephew) and secretary and the problems he faced because his *tharavad* did not partition land according to Land Reform Act. He said,

> We were not supposed to keep 40 acres of land and the agricultural income tax (*Vanijya nikuthi*) was introduced for our property. I went to Kannur court and appealed and managed to get exemption from agricultural tax for being from a joint family. The Court set up an enquiry committee and they realised the extent of a Kurichia joint family and exempted us from the extra tax. But, those who got a government job in our *tharavad* wanted individual property and wanted to change our customary laws regarding property. They forgot the

54 Temples in Kerala are managed by *Devaswoms*. *Devaswom* is a socio-religious trust with government or community nominated members as trustees to manage its assets and ensure the functioning of traditional rituals and customs (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Devaswom_boards_in_Kerala) accessed on 17/7/2012.

Prior to the implementation of Land Reform Act temple properties had an extent of 1,400 acres (Jayashanker nd).

> community and joined sides with the government. Now *Ammavan's* (uncle's) own children as well as his *marumakkal* (sons in law) have divided the land according to each one's interest and influence, without negotiating with the other members. Now I am not able to pay the tax for forty acres.

According to Therakam (2009), the customary laws of the Adivasis in Kerala are not yet codified and it is essential to compile, codify and recognise them.

From the statements of the Paniya elders, it was evident that at the time of land reforms, they did not take it too seriously to achieve written documents for their lands, as they had not fully realised the concept of private land and its consequences in their lives. Village officials and non-Adivasis did not inform them about the consequence because the feudal remnants persisted after independence and even after the Land Reform Act was passed. They perceived the Paniyas as slaves and not considered to be worthy of ownership of land. However, one Kurichia *Karanavar* reported that there were Kurichias who got support from the village *adhikaris* and *jenmis* to make records even though there were cases of cheating by *jenmis* and the non-Adivasis to encroach Kurichia land.

According to a newspaper report (*The Indian Express*, September 4, 2008, page 9), in 1968, the government had estimated that 8,75,000 acres of land would be available for redistribution in Kerala. But they could acquire only around 1, 24,000 acres out of which only 96,000 acres were redistributed. The rest of the land has been usurped illegally. Since trusts were exempt from ceilings, land was spirited away through the trusts and by registering deeds in false names or in other ways. According to this report, the non-tenant Adivasis, Dalits and coastal people of Kerala were excluded from this redistribution.

The issue of unauthorised occupations of land by the rich landed class at the time of land reform was under scrutiny by the media and the public during the study period. For instance, even a member of the legislative assembly is under allegation of keeping the government land unauthorisedly in Krishnagiri village, Wayanad. He filed a petition (W.P. (C).No.16422 OF 2007) for assignment of 16.75 acres of government land in his possession which he claimed to have received by succession from his grandfather. In the high court order dated September 9, 2007 and June 1, 2011, it is clearly stated that according to the KLR Act, the maximum limit to be assigned for cultivation is 50 cents of land. The judgement clearly indicates that the Kerala Land Assignment Act and Rules are intended for assigning government land to landless people and the petitioner, who already

owns 50 acres, was not eligible for assignment of government land under any category. Land held in excess had to be surrendered to the government and no compensation was to be paid for the lands so surrendered.55 However, till date (July 2012) the petitioner had not surrendered or the government had not acquired the land for redistribution. Being powerful, the petitioner could even suspend the High Court order. Encroachers were evicted and he also enjoyed police protection for the land for the time being. As Saxena (1988) points out, in the process of democratisation, the bureaucracy has been politicised at all levels and consequently it became self oriented or party oriented.

It emerges that more than acquiring the surplus and untitled land from the *Jenmis*, plantation owners or rich landed class and redistributing it to the landless, the thrust of land reform was spreading plantations and cash crop cultivation. Ajit (2002) critically analyses the land ownership pattern and the special preference to the cash crop cultivation adopted by the government during the land reform period. Isac's (2008) stress in change in the land use pattern as a continuation of the land reform is a recognition of the historical injustice underlying the government policies and thus appreciable. However, he cannot negate a second land reform as the stories of excess, untitled, illegal holdings of land by the rich landed class and plantation owners have been brought to light today. And he cannot compromise a just distribution of land by diverting the attention to the mistakes in land use pattern. For instance, if the Paniyas and landless Kurichias were entrusted with the paddy fields, it could have remained green and protected with its numerous micro organisms and life forms as experience shows.56

Plantations and the Land Politics

The expansion of plantations reduced the availability of common lands for the Adivasis. Adivasi leaders among them reported that there were incidents of forceful eviction of

55 The High Court also mentioned that the petitioner had also not met the terms of Sub Rule (3) as far as in Ext. R1(a) there was a finding that the petitioner is in possession of 62.23 acres of government land. So the judgement dated June 1, 2011 asked the petitioner to surrender all government land in his possession or otherwise the government could take over all the land in his possession within three months from the date of receipt of the copy of the judgement and distribute it to landless scheduled tribe members (Judgement by High Court Kerala on June 1, 2011).

56 In the study area Kurichias did not converted their paddy fields for any other purpose other than using small plots for banana cultivation recently. The water sources like ponds and thodus are also not vanished in their paddy fields unlike in the non-Adivasi fields (photo). Paniyas also could have preserved it as their diet practices were very much connected with paddy fields and its ecco system.

Adivasis to begin plantations in Wayanad.57 According to Rammohan (2008) the persistence of colonial patterns of ownership of plantations remains one of the weaknesses of land reform programmes in Kerala. As Nideesh (2008) points out, in the Land Reform Act, estates were exempt from land ceiling to increase the production in the agricultural sector and considering plantations as social institutions meant giving security to its workers. On the contrary, studies point out that plantations were not worker friendly and that their workers still remain poor and landless (Nideesh 2008). Thus, it appears that even though they amassed the land of people through favourable policies, there were no welfare measures for the workers, many of whom were Adivasis, other than giving them employment.

Allegations regarding the illegal land holdings of different plantations especially against the Harrison Malayalam Limited (HML) were very much alive at the time of the field work.58 The Government appointed a High Level Committee to enquire about the land holdings of HML in Kerala and later a special investigation team. The enquiry report of the special investigation team revealed that illegal ownership of land by plantations and undeserved benefits allotted to the plantation owners is one main reason for landlessness of poor people in Kerala. The court cases of surplus land of HML in Vaithiri Taluk Land Board in Wayanad are still pending.

This illegal acquisition of land is not limited to HML but large areas of surplus land cases are pending in Mananthavady Taluk Land Board (TLB) in the name of various individuals and estates. An individual had 2794.48 acres while another had 324.55 acres of land. Fourteen other people had comparatively smaller extents. An estate was seen to have 649.20 acres (Mananthavady RDO files). In Vaithiri Taluk, 29 cases are pending (*ibid*) but they were very reluctant to give the details. When these stories of plunder became public Adivasis started encroaching land at different sites but they were evicted using police force.

One of the previous sub collectors reported,

> The main allegation is planters holding land without any title, which is actually government land and not even registered as plantation. This allegation cannot be solved by TLB. The

57 Interview with Janu on December 27 2009, at Panavally, Wayanad.
58 HML is a company registered in England in the name Malayalam Plantation (UK) Limited.

> only thing which can be done from here is to deal with the matter if they are illegally holding any land 'in the plantations' beyond land ceiling. This can be found out by checking how much landholding the planters had on 1/1/1970. If they had land more than that, it would imply they had illegal holdings with surplus land. In Mananthavady TLB, I had to hear all the cases. We were dealing with 30 or 40 years old cases and fortunately we were able to finish a bulk of them. However, people think that when the surplus land issue is solved everything will be alright. In the major plantations, the main issue is possession without title and I think nobody wants to address this issue and TLB cannot do anything about it.

This indicates the lack of efficiency of the administrative and legal set up to deal with the land cases since cases had been pending from the 1970s. As one Sub Collector in Mananthavady took personal interest, he could finish most of the cases in Mananthavady TLB except 17 which had been pending due to highcourt cases. The lack of up to date records of land ownership and transaction in revenue offices was also pointed out as a drawback by the Sub Collector,

> Without a title if you have kept any government land it should be tackled by the revenue apparatus. Unless we have a good apparatus in the revenue administration (Village officer and Thahasildar and staff) we cannot do that. According to KLC (Kerala Land Conservancy) Act, we need to deal with it as we dealt with encroachment. But for that again, the Land records should be original. Unfortunately, in Wayanad the land record keeping is not updated. Record mutation (entering the names of heirs in the record of rights) is not done systematically. If record mutation is done systematically, the *thandaperu* will be changed to the legal land holder and illegal transactions can be traced.

This shows how the bureaucratic, political and legal apparatus become a tool to serve the planters and alienate the people who really deserve land to cultivate for their sustenance. Registered as plantations, they are enjoying a large area of land for private use and with that privilege, keeping surplus land and untitled land shows the extreme exploitation of the landless. The Taluk offices hesitated to reveal the extent of surplus land and untitled land the big planters held. They said that plantation owners have cases in the court and thus they could not reveal the extent of land they hold. Even with RTI requests, they were reluctant to reveal the controversial land details. One RDO staff revealed that there was order to acquire 1800 acres of land from HML (according to the special investigation report 1842.22 acres). This has been pending in the high court and so nothing can be done. Here we see that the state and the political system are controlled by the capitalist large scale land owners including international plantations.

In a personal interview, one Tahsildar gave an explanation for the long inaction regarding acquiring the untitled land with the planters,

> The planters are utilising this land for many years and one fine morning we cannot go and acquire their land and give it to the Adivasis. Even though it is unlawful possession, they have the right to go to the Supreme Court. They bring the best lawyers to fight and so these cases take a long time to get settled.

The paradox is that the wastelands used by the Adivasis earlier were acquired by the state and were converted to revenue lands which were then illegally occupied by estate owners and the landed class.

One Taluk officer reported,

> Most of the government land is in somebody's possession today. The village revenue department has the responsibility to protect government land. But we could not take a stand without the support of the ruling party. Also if the land is in one's possession for more than 12 years, then they have possessional lease right and they can approach court if we have taken any action against them. We have already reported many cases to the government. If government takes action and acquires the land, the land owner can approach the court against government. Usually government will not take up the case. Further, in big estates like Harrison, the surplus and untitled land can be located only through satellite survey. Kerala state has only one unit for satellite survey and they are now investigating only in Idukky-Moonnar area.

This indicates that the administrative set up is indirectly forced to serve the capital and the implementation of laws become difficult. However, the myth that there is no land for distributing to the Adivasi people is broken by Adivasi leaders, the few Adivasi sympathisers among administrators, civil society and by Adivasi representatives in Panchayat, Block and District levels. A Kurichia Block president challenged the state and its bureaucracy and said,

> We will show the land available for distribution. Let the administrators distribute it. Other than the illegal holdings of the plantations, even in the projects meant for *Adivasis* there is plenty of undistributed land. In Sugandagiri and Cheengeri Adivasi rehabilitation projects, there is land remaining for distribution. In Priyadarsini, another project meant for Adivasis there are 179 acres of land under survey number 68/ID and it is not utilised for any purpose. There is plenty of land and the Administrators have to be ready to distribute it among Adivasis.

Further, various other policies of the government attract land grabbers from other parts of Kerala to Wayanad.

Land 'Mafia', Tourism and Commercialisation of Land

Land is a very dear commodity in Wayanad since the colonial period onwards. As elsewhere in India, in Wayanad too there is the presence of land mafia which acquires,

develop and sell land in illegal ways. As described in the section on plantations the poor record keeping and the unfinished resurvey programmes create a favourable atmosphere for land 'mafias' to flourish. As Ajith (2002) points out, during land reform, the sustainable production oriented value of land changed and land became a commodity to acquire maximum profit. Thus, the speculative trade of land flourished.

The use of land purely as a commodity by real estate speculators increases the price of land. Also due to continuous transactions, land was not used for cultivation, a way leading to lack of employment and food crisis especially for the Paniya people. Even in the small villages in the study area, there were several land brokers/real estate agents as this 'business' was hugely profitable.

The latest trend of Kerala is the tourism model of development to compensate the loss of foreign money from cash crop in Wayanad. Recently the tourist promotion policies have a message, 'green and clean' (Mathrubhumi, 7 June, 2012). Tourism development was another area the land mafias are involved in to devour land as well as the scarce natural resources of Wayanad (Jacob 2006). Tourism promotion by the state in Wayanad encourages the trend of accumulating as much land as possible on the fringes of the forests for tourism development and this again affects the Adivasis' who still partially depend on natural resources for their livelihood. However, Wayanad was declared one of the tourism districts and Adivasi cultural festivals are widely advertised for tourism promotion from 2000 onwards. As Jacob (2006) observes, other than the cultural and environmental degradation, tourism promotion creates an artificial price hike in the land market which compels the small farmers to part with their landholdings. This trend also affects the ecological balance of the region.

Adivasi leader Janu reported,

> Without distributing the already purchased land in Aralam farm using Adivasi development funds, the government is again planning to buy land for Adivasi people. This is to help the land mafia flourish in Wayanad. To give to the landless Adivasi people in Kannur and Wayanad, they have bought land in Aralam, spending 42 crores from the Tribal Sub Plan fund and from that, the government is giving 3500 acres as free provision to a private company and then again planning to buy land for the Adivasi people. For that the government has entrusted Rs. 50 crores to the Wayanad collector. If there is no land in

> Wayanad, why is the government bringing the strikers from Chengara and Plachimada and giving land in Wayanad?59

However, buying land, keeping it for few months or years and selling it has become the most profitable business in Wayanad today. Land is purchased by a merchant and then sold in an unchanged state at a profit. Refering to Marx (1981), Hardiman (1990) uses the concept 'merchant capital', in which the quantity of the capital increases while leaving the object's essential quality unchanged, to understand such transactions. The profit from such business is huge and in recent times, the 'merchant capital' is being diverted more and more into land speculation in Wayanad. This tendency can be seen at the village level by migrant local land dealers as well as by land dealers from neighbouring cities and towns. On the other hand, the small scale subsistent farmers and large scale farmers are tempted to sell their property due to pest attack and price fluctuations in the agricultural products. Those who buy these lands, sell them for more profit or keep them barren for long without any productive purpose.

Land Acquisition for Development by the State

The Indian state is continuing land acquisition for various development projects and the Adivasis are the worst victims in Wayanad as elsewhere in India. Pinto (1998) points out that the Indian state has operated through the same legal and economic framework and displaced about 300 lakhs of people in the name of development in the last 50 years and 40 per cent among the displaced have been Adivasi people. According to Mohanty (2005), when Adivasis are asked for such a great sacrifice in the name of public purpose, the state has a great responsibility to ensure that they are secure and living in a better situation than before. In the recent Draft National Land Acquisition and Rehabilitation and Resettlement bill 2011, for private acquisitions the consent of 80 per cent of the

59 A newspaper Malayala Manorama (2011, March 23) reported that 30 people who were involved in Chengara land struggle were given land in Kottathara village, Wayanad, but only one family came to receive it. At Chenagara, Pathanamthitta district, Kerala the land struggle started from 4th August 2007, re-claiming ownership of land by the Dalits and Adivasis. The struggle was lead by *Sadhujana Vimochana Samyuktha Samara Vedi* organised by Laha Gopalan.

Plachimada struggle is another struggle lead by Adivasis at Perumatty Panchayat of Palakkad district, Kerala against the Coca Cola company. Government allotted land for few of the strikers of Plachimada and Chengara in Wayanad district.

affected people is stipulated.60 However, even in the new bill there is no provision to ensure the consent of people and Gram Sabhas during land acquisition for Governments projects and industries and this again ignores prior informed consent of the people and their right to take decisions affecting their lives.

The 'prior informed consent' of the Gram Panchayat is just an administrative procedure for documentation and even the people whose land is taken away for the project do not come to know about it until the implementation of the project. For instance, Nippan (65), a Kurichia from Champa colony was shocked to see some strangers on his land. He said,

> When I approached the officers for clarification I found that they are from Bihar and they do not even know Malayalam. Without giving any clear explanation about the acquisition, the officers started giving directions to the wage labourers they had brought from Tamil Nadu to cut the trees on my field for erecting the electricity grid. Within a few days, a lawyer approached me and said "If you are ready to give me 10 per cent commission I will get you maximum compensation". They have begun the work in 2007 and I filed a case for more compensation in 2010.

When local people enquired, the officials mentioned, "Since it is a central government project there is no need to get consent from the Gram Panchayat or the owner of the land. In the *patta* itself it is written that it is government land and only for the trees and cultivation they deserve compensation." One portion of his land was clear felled for the grid construction and since the government was the encroacher, the owner had to keep silent and later filed a case to get maximum compensation. They were also fearful about the possibility of radiation from the electric grid and expressed their wish to move slowly to some other location.

Further, in Wayanad, large scale land acquisition was done for Karappuzha dam project and the project is not fully functional even after 33 years of its sanctioning. Execution of the project started in 1977 for a budget of rupees 50 crores and in 1999 the project was revised for Rs. 253 crores and still the work is pending.

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60 The Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation And Resettlement Bill, 2011 (http://rural.nic.in/sites/downloads/general/LS%20Version%20of%20LARR%20%20Bill.pdf (accessed on 18/7/2012)

Naman from Richur colony, Ambalavayal panchayat said,

> Vast areas of paddy fields were destroyed for this project and it became a real threat to Adivasi livelihood in that area. Many of them who were evicted from the site are still living in sheds and during the rainy season their condition is pathetic. Their employment opportunities were threatened due to this project. There is a lot left to be done to complete the dam even though the inauguration is over and it is partially functioning. If the remaining work was undertaken immediately, Adivasis could have got at least few days of wage labour. Now they are going to distant places for work.

Naman took me to the project site. When I asked an old lady in Paniya community who was evicted from the project area about where she was displaced from, she sarcastically retorted, "We all came from *Thiruvithamkoor* (Travancore, South Kerala) no? You are the people of this area". She murmured to herself and disappeared into the temporary shed they had made (photo 34). Naman, a participant, with whose family I stayed during the field work, warned me not to talk with her and said that she was insane. From her words, I could sense the feeling of alienation that haunted her. The poverty stricken condition in the temporary shed and the expressions of deep dissatisfaction and anger on her face revealed the cultural alienation and livelihood deprivation due to forceful eviction. Naman mentioned that the rehabilitation process of the *Adivasis* was not complete. He said that a few of them received records for 20 cents but the land was not shown to them as yet. Joji, another social worker in that area, narrated the story of an Adivasi Mooppan who hesitated to go to the rehabilitated area saying "If we sink, let us sink and die here".

According to the basic philosophy of Adivasi people, land belongs to the community. But the philosophy of the land acquisition bill still remains colonial and the state claims ownership and acquires land without the proper consent of the people concerned, especially in the case of Adivasis. The Adivasis also lack information regarding land acquisition laws and so they have not been able to protest for their rights.

State Development Projects and Adivasi Experiences

In the post independent period, few projects were planned to rehabilitate the freed bonded Adivasi labourers. An Adivasi settlement project was established in 1958 at Cheengeri to rehabilitate 100 families after developing a coffee estate and teaching them agriculture. The state government bought about 528 acres of land from the Tamil Nadu government at market price to give to the Adivasis, 5 acres each of the developed estate with proper title deeds. Instead of handing the land over to the Adivasi people, 182 acres were handed

over to the state agriculture department. When the government's promises were not met and the social security measures failed, the Adivasi people set up huts and started their struggle on January 26, 1995. The State police brutally suppressed their struggle for the promised land. The local Adivasi organisation, Cheengeri Colony Samrakshana Samithy remained vigilant and continued their struggle. After the Muthanga struggle, the Adivasi land question was widely discussed and in 2004, 61.75 acres of land were assigned to 108 Adivasi people in Cheengeri (Taluk office files). Information received through RTI from Bathery Taluk office showed that, for 227 people 53.3603 hectares of land were given in Cheengeri. However, from the files, it was revealed that even though the order was passed in 2005, very few have got title deeds and now resurvey has to be done before giving the titles to the remaining people and this could pose an 'administrative problem'.

The Cheengeri project was exclusively meant for Adivasis and each family was supposed to get five acres of land at the time of implementation of the project. The extent of land given to them in the recent *pattayamela* (title deed festival) conducted in Bathery ranges from 9 cents to 1 acre. Out of 39 Adivasis selected, there were only 6 who got nearly 1 acre and others received land in the range of 9 cents to 30 cents. This reveals the futility of government promises to the Adivasis even in case of project lands exclusively meant for them.

Later, in the year 1976, Sugandagiri Tribal Rehabilitation Project at Vythiri taluk, Pozhuthana Panchayat in Wayanad commenced to rehabilitate 750 bonded tribal families in 1500 hectares of vested forest land (KILA Survey Report 2011). Even though the Government suggested distributing two acres of vested forest to each family for cardamom cultivation they later decided to cultivate cardamom in the assigned land on a cooperative basis and formed a joint farming cooperative society to ensure better management and economic self sufficiency (Local Support Team, Paniyasadas 2010). The Local Support Team, Paniyasadas (2010) reported that the 'bureaucratic slavery' of the 'freed bonded labourers' was a reality in the project due to official corruption and malpractices, insufficiency of funds and erronius methods of cultivation. Owing to the financial crisis, the provident fund of the labourers was used for payment of wages and the society was dissolved on May 25, 2003 without having any option left for continuation (Local Support Team, Paniyasadas 2010). After the Muthanga land struggle,

the political parties and party based Adivasi organisations were forced to raise the issue of Adivasi land to maintain their hold among Adivasis. As a result, in 2004, 1850 acres of land were distributed among 370 families and 2684 acres are available for further distribution (collected from collectorate office files) in project land meant for them. A newspaper (*Mangalam*, June 30, 2004) reported that in Sugandagiri, land distribution was based on the lottery method and 610 hectares of land were allotted to 305 families that produced the necessary documents.

Prabhath from Richur colony said that his relatives have been staying in Sugandagiri and majority of the land allotted were less developed. Low quality of land and water scarcity are also reported as constraints to earn their livelihood from the land distributed to them. A few of the Paniya families were forced to lease their land as they had no other livelihood option. However, the Government was said to be projecting this as an excuse for not distributing the remaining land to Adivasis in Sugandagiri. The Local Support Team, Paniyasadas (2009) reported that there was no support from the government to develop the land and instead of title deeds only possession certificates were provided for using it for agricultural purposes. As they reported, this land could have been mandatorily distributed to them under the Vested Forest Act earlier. A retired Adivasi Development officer said that the government gives only one time assistance and there is no concept of continuous support or follow up till the Adivasis become self sufficient.

The Pookode Dairy Project was another government intiative in 1979 to rehabilitate the bonded Adivasi labourers by generating employment opportunities and utilising the resources from land for the welfare of the different Adivasi groups in Wayanad. The Dairy project was closed in 1998 and the 100 acres of land meant for the welfare of Adivasis was transferred to the Kerala Agricultural University for the establishment of a veterenary college subject to the conditions of 1) appointment of Adivais as farm labourers 2) priority for other posts within the college for qualified persons from Adivasi community 3) rehabilitation of the 26 families evicted for the college in specially built residential quarters (OMCT report 2008). Even though the farm became operational in 1998, the promises to the Adivasis were not fulfilled and 2002 onwards the Adivasi unrest began growing. The District collector promised appropriate action to comply with the promises. The college was officially inaugurated in 2004 without rehabilitating the 26

families evicted from the site. From 2006 onwards Adivasi protest became strong through public protest meetings with the support of Streevedi (A women's rights NGO based in Calicut), Jananeethi (Human rights NGO based in Thrissur, Kerala), and Neethivedi (Women's right NGO working among Adivasis in Wayanad). Thulsi vijayan the leader of the protest reported that the residential quarters built for Adivasis were allotted to college staff and the associate dean started harassing them through verbal abuse, threats and attacks on personal integrity. Thulsi organized a hunger strike and intensified their struggles and protest meetings from 2007 onwards even as the police harassed and intimidated the leaders and their families. Thulsi said that even tnough the High Court ordered to settle the matters favourable to the Adivasis, the college authorities have not complied with the conditions accepted at the time of transfer of 100 acres of land to the Veterenary College. Jananeethi reported that till June 2012 the matters were not settled, in favour of the Adivasis.

Priyadarshini Tea estate under Mananthavady Tribal Plantation Cooperative (MTPC) was one of the projects in Wayanad implemented to rehabilitate Adivasi labourers in 1989 by employing them as workers in the tea plantation and factory. By 1992, the plantations became fully functional and from 1998 onwards serious allegations of corruption were reported from the estate. There were also cases of Adivasis running away from the project. An earlier Mananthavady sub collector who was also holding the post of Managing Director of the estate recounted the rampant corruption. He reported,

> In Priyadarsini estate starvation deaths were reported in 2005 and 2006 and I found the corruption details and the arbitrary financial decisions of the authorities that ultimately led to the starvation death of the poor Adivasi people in the estate. The net loss as on 31-3-2006 is reported as Rs. 4,25,03,425/- and this was due to corruption and mismanagement in buying green tea leaf for the factory. From the files, we found that no tender/quotation procedures were followed in deciding any of the sales/purchases in the estate. 61 During that period from 2001 to 2005, no action was taken against the secretary even though the corruption history became public. Now the factory is running on profit and I could increase the bonus of the workers.

This sub-collector introduced the mid day meal scheme for the workers as a medical check up found them to be aneamic. During his tenure, he initiated educational assistance to the workers' children and started a nursery for tribal children. Job cards were ensured

61 For futher details see also report send by Mr. Prasanth to the Registrar of Co operative Societies Thiruvananthapuram, E-5060/09 and Paniya Sadas Conference Paper, 2009 by local support team.

for availing NREGS work during lean seasons of employment in the tea garden. Housing programme for the workers was also in progress and 15 cents of land was allotted to each worker's family. This sub-collector who was empathetic towards the Adivasi people and did whatever he could do was soon promoted and transferred to Thiruvananthapuram (*Mathrubhumi,* 3 March 2011).

All these projects envisioned by the State failed to consider the material and socio-cultural practices and aspirations of the Adivasis and became sites for their further alienation, dispossession and harassment. Even in the projects meant for them continuous resistance from Adivasis were required to achieve the minimum conditions for their survival and there was no political will to settle the matters.

Kerala Scheduled Tribes (KST) Act and the Process of its Implementation

In 1988 Dr. Nalla Thampy Thera, a Tamil born physician and a prominent fighter for Adivasi land issues from Sultan Bathery, Wayanad, filed a public interest litigation in the High court which demanded the enforcement of the KST Act of 1975. The High Court gave an order to the state government in 1993 to dispose the applications for restoration of land within six months. The Bill was passed in the Legislative Assembly. Meanwhile the Union Ministry of Welfare raised objections to the proposed provisions of the Bill. The Ministry was against the very purpose of the original Act of 1975 and it is not implemented till now according to the court order.

Geethanandan, a Dalit leader and supporter of Adivasi mobilisation recounted,

> According to Article 744 of the Indian Constitution, in the Vth Schedule area and for all Scheduled Tribes even though they do not have Vth schedule, non-Adivasi people cannot buy Adivasi land and if it is sold, only Adivasis can buy it. And in Vth schedule area if there is government's *purampokku* (public) land even that cannot be given to non-Adivasi people. On this basis, to fulfil a Constitutional responsibility, the 1975 KST Act was passed in Kerala and it has not been implemented effectively and even constitutional rights are denied to Adivasis. (Recent government circular is given in annexure).

He suggested that Supreme Court's judgement of *Samata* in Andra Pradesh in July 1997, was a model to be followed in every state, which reminds the authorities that they should protect Adivasi rights over their lands62. In the *Samata* Judgement, the provisions

62 In *Samata* Judgement the provisions of schedule V is also applied to the transfer of private or government land in schedule area to non-Adivasis. The relevant Andra Pradesh legislation read along with

of Schedule V are also applied to the restriction of transfer of private or government land in schedule area to non-Adivasis. However, in Kerala, no area has been declared as a 'scheduled area' and even after the state's agreement with the Adivasis no declaration was made.

Analysing the implementation reveals that even a demand within the Constitutional provision has not been implemented according to the high court order but manipulated with various amendments.

While visiting the Revenue Department Office for collecting land details of Adivasis, Palu and Sharu from a Paniya family had come to the office to reacquire their alienated land under the provision of KST Act. Palu said,

> I do not remember the exact year in which they have alienated us from our land. We do not have any record. Everything got burned. They have broken our houses and we had to come away. They sold that land to somebody else now63.

One Revenue Department office staff also affirmed,

> In the case of the Paniyas, there was no record of possession and so we are incapable of doing anything. Few Kurichia people were able to get back their alienated land.

The total number of claim applications received in Mananthavady RDO office, Wayanad was 2292 for restoration of alienated lands and the extent of land was 3443.49 acres. Out of these, applications for approximately 2500 acres of land were from the Kurichia community alone (Therakam 2009). According to Therakam's study most of the land that was claimed by Adivasis today is in the possession of Hindus (66%). The remaining land was with Christians (22%) and Muslims (12%) and a negligible area (.74 %) in the

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Schedule V of the Constitution also prohibited transfer of land in Scheduled areas by way of a lease for mining purposes in favour of non-Adivasis. The court also ruled that 20 per cent of all profits, including past profits, accruing from privately run mines or industries set up in these territories to be "set apart" for Adivasis. It ordered the establishment of a committee, made up of senior government officials at the state level to consider the feasibility of permitting the industry to carry on mining operations and if necessary to place this before a Cabinet Sub-Committee to take appropriate action. The court held that similar committees should be set up in other states where similar acts do not totally prohibit granting mining leases of the lands in scheduled areas and also suggested that it would be useful for the Central government to take a policy decision and enact a suitable law in light of the courts guidelines to ensure a consistent scheme throughout the country in respect of Adivasi lands and mining (Facts against Myths, #2/2009 Vikas Adyayan Kendra, Information Bulletin)

63 Personal interview with Palan and Sarada at RDO office, Mananthavady, on 8/7/2010 seeking help to regain their land.

possession of other castes. This study challenges the finding of Centre of Excellence (2006), according to which Christian migrants had snatched away the Adivasi land. However, in Therakam's study, the land occupied for charitable institutions was not included as it was not claimed by Adivasis. Even though there were Adivasis inhabiting those areas, they could not claim it back due to lack of record and Paniya people were the worst victims of such occupations according to the narratives of Adivasis and their empathisers.

The number of valid applications was 1563 after village level verifications and after applying the amendments of the Act the total cases to restore land from non-Adivasis were reduced to 11 cases claiming 35.33 acres and this reveals the failure of the implementation of the Act.64 Sreerekha (2010) criticises the effort of the judiciary that insisted on alternate land for Adivasis and argues that the failure of the restoration of their alienated land compelled them to agree for alternate land.

The 1996 amendment of the KST Act legalised the land encroached upon during the period 1960-86, and those that did not exceed a hectare. Raman (2002) points out that majority of the lands alienated were less than a hectare in area and the greatest number of encroachments had occurred before the year 1986. The 1999 amendment legalised encroachments up to five acres and the land to be given to the Adivasi people is halved from more than two acres to one. According to the Act, if alienated land is developed by the encroacher, the expense amount has to be fixed by the RDO and that amount should be given back to the encroacher farmer. If there is no money with the Adivasi, the government will give it and the Adivasis have to pay back to the government. The process of KST Act implementation after amendments reveals the non-Adivasi inclination of the Act and in effect, Adivasis were denied of their rights even though alternate land distribution is in the process. According to Sreerekha (2010), the Supreme Court verdict of July 21, 2009 validated the 1999 Act and in the case of restoration of Adivasi land this judgement is a battle lost, legally.

From the files in Bathery taluk offices, it was evident that in most of the cases, the original 'encroacher' had sold the land to different individuals or divided it among their family members and the cases of more than two hectares in an individual's name was

64 Mananthavady Revenue Department office files

very rare. Even though there is Constitutional protection against land alienation and the KST Act was passed to protect Adivasi land rights, during the process of implementation after the amendments, it was reduced to an act of giving compensation. When alternate land was given, they were actually displaced from their accustomed place to a different world and this has become a threat to their culture and livelihood. This indicates that the KST Act was not implemented to deal with the substantive issues in the everyday life of the Adivasi people.

Another recent government order related to land distribution was thoroughly criticised by Adivasi leaders. The specific statement in the order is given below.

In the G.O.(Ms) No.23/2010/SCSTDD (copy given in Annexure) regarding allotment of land-guidelines issued, it is stated that "The Government's further order that the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes Assignment of Government Land Rules, 2001 shall be followed strictly in allotment of land to Adivasis, and specifically, that only landless Adivasis having no land in their name or of their spouse, having no right to any land, and whose annual income is below Rs. 30,000/-, shall be considered for allotment of land under the Adivasi Resettlement and Development Mission. It is further ordered that in case there are no Adivasis in a district fulfilling these criteria for allotment of land, eligible applicants from neighbouring districts be considered for allotment of land".

According to government request, the Supreme Court had thrice extended the date in its order to distribute land to the Adivasis. As there was no way for the government to approach the court again for extension of date, with a government order they managed to select only the literally landless Adivasis not even having one cent, thereby avoiding the government promise of one acre to five acres of land to all Adivasis. C.K Janu and other *Adivasi* leaders in the area see this as a trick by the government to avoid the Adivasis who have a few cents of land. Janu questions the order by asking:

> By choosing the people not even having one cent, are they giving land to those Adivasis who go for begging?

While seeing the condition of the Paniya colonies where houses are thickly packed within one or two cents of land, Janu's question appears very relevant.

Further, according to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Development Department (G.O (Ms) No.9/2010/SCSTDD dated 8/2/2010) (copy given in Annexure), the empowered committee of the Adivasi Resettlement and Development Mission (TRDM) at its 20th meeting on 19-01-2010, had approved the proposal to acquire 1,000 acres of land in Wayanad for resettling Adivasi people at an approximate cost of Rs. 50 crores subject to the condition of plots for acquisition under the Fast Track. Based on the Government Order, the collector advertised for available lands. But there was no land available to purchase according to the fair value decided by the government. The District Collector quoted the market value as Rs. 8000/- per cent and it came to Rs. 8 lakhs per acre. But the fair value decided by the government in that area was much less and the project did not materialise.

One village officer stated that there were practical difficulties to move the land acquisition further even though they sent the report to the Collectorate regarding buying land in Thirunelly Panchayat. He mentioned,

> Under Fast Track procedure government has no authority to acquire land for the fair value like the other government sanctioned projects. So unless there is an order to purchase land for market value, purchasing will not be possible.

Also the then functioning village officer shared that the fair value was decided by the government in 2005 and according to that, nobody was ready to sell their land and the purchasing was pending.

This reveals how the government policies itself became a stumbling block in the process of land distribution to the Adivasis. Also the process is getting delayed due to administrative apathy. In addition to this, as mentioned in the earlier section, the presence of land mafia and the booming real estate business in Wayanad also make buying land for Adivasi people a difficult task today.

The distribution of 5 to 10 cents of land after agreeing for 1 to 5 acres of land indicate that even now politicians and administrators tend to perceive that the Adivasis, specially the Paniyas need land only for housing and not for cultivation. On the contrary, the Adivasis's narrations revealed their strong desire for land and its necessity for their material and cultural survival. The narrations of non-Adivasis revealed their vested interest to keep Adivasis as permanent landless labourers and dependents.

Ellan Mooppan from Thirunelli expressed his disgust about the land acquisition and distribution process in his panchayat,

> During elections, party people said that they had bought land for us in Brahmagiri estate and Akkolly estate in Thirunelli Panchayat. But now the land purchasing and distribution process is blocked and till now, nobody among us has got land there. In Parison estate, few Paniyas and Urali Kurumas got 5 cents and a house. But where will they bury their dead? Where will they conduct their marriages and ritual celebrations? Providing us only one cent was not meant for our progress but for killing us by alienating us from our culture. Why is the government not keeping the promise of giving one acre land to every Adivasi? How many *muthalalis* (rich people) have unlawfully acquired government revenue land? If the Government is really interested in our life, they can reacquire those lands and give them to the Adivasis.

The District Collector reported,

> There are roughly 8000 land less people among the Adivasis in Wayand. TRDM has sanctioned the project to buy land and from the total budget of Rs. 100 crores, Rs. 50 crores were given to Wayanad for purchasing land for Adivasis.

According to the Collectorate files for purchasing 424 acres, the procedures are over and the concerned authority has recommended it for final permission. However, on further enquiry with forest officials, it was revealed that there is conflict regarding the boundary of the land fixed for buying in Thirunelly for Adivasis with forest. The Forest Department raised objection in selling the decided plot as they found encroachment of forest by the concerned party and they did not provide No Objection Certificate (NOC) which is a prerequisite for selling it. The Paniyas and Kurichias in the study area informed that till March 2012, land was not purchased or distributed to the Adivasis.

Adivasi leaders expressed their discontent regarding the criteria of selecting only landless Adivasis to go to Aralam, as the agreement in 2001 promises one to five acres of land to all Adivasis. Adivasis expressed their difficulty many times when one family was selected from a settlement and asked to go to a distant place without promising continuous support. They had no wide social network and what was sustaining them was the community support at times of crisis.

Since there were only 308 landless Adivasi families in Kannur District and there was an approximate extent of 1100 acres (after keeping aside 3500 acres for the company) of land in Aralam farm, the TRDM chief requested the district collector (In response to a Writ Petition filed by *Neethivedi* on distribution of land to landless Adivasis) of Wayanad to select 800 landless and willing Adivasi families for allotment of land at Aralam,

Kannur District based on the High court judgement65. Preference was given to the landless Adivasi families at Mananthavady (TRDM circular is given in annexure). Thus, to allot land at Aralam applications with such criteria were invited and it was reported from the collectorate that among them very few were ready to go there. District collector reported,

> Even though 500 people are found eligible to receive land in Aralam farm they are not ready to go there. They do not want to get scattered from their community. They expect to get land in Wayanad district under some other scheme. So the 500 selected Adivasi families have not been rehabilitated till now (collectorate office files).

It is evident that, to get Adivasis from the same area to go as a group, the criteria of selecting only the landless (zero land holding) has to be changed. It appears that the promises and procedures are just to pacify the Adivasis for the time being. If the officials are really interested, the whole colony (at least all those who have <5 cents) can be given land in the same area instead of selecting one or two from each colony to provide a sense of security and assurance to go and cultivate in the given land.

However, Eva from Valli colony has a different experience to narrate,

> I have applied to get land in Aralam farm. Other than this small hut we have no space even to spit. I was not selected while distributing land in Aralam. When I asked the reason for not giving land, the tribal officer told that people who did not receive any help from the government till now is selected for giving land at Aralam. Later I came to know that people who were better of than me got selected for giving land at Aralam. That can be due to official or political preference.

Eva's narration reveals that the political and bureaucratic nexus exists in Wayanad even after the establishment of the Panchayati Raj system. She reported that there was disparity in the selection procedure and the *oorukoottam* has not been given any role in the decision regarding allotment of land in Aralam.

According to the details collected from the office of the Wayanad Collectorate, the total number of records on land distributed were 4958. This include 364 *pattas* of assignment of surplus land, 3842 Record of Right (ROR) under Forest Rights Act, 51

65 The High court Judgment dated 22/06/2010; W. P(C) No.9148/10 had directed government to allot land to landless Adivasis of Kannoor from the rest of land earmarked in the Aralam Farm for settlement of Adivasis.

Bhupathivu pattas and 701 possession rights. Requests for category wise data and the details of extent of land distributed elicited the reply that data was not ready.

It is reported that most of the surplus land identified is under litigation with the plantation owners or rich landed class in Wayanad. Many of these litigations started in 1973 but without final verdict. The greatest number of land distribution was done under the Forest Rights Act 2006 and the following section delineates the processes and experiences of the Adivasis with regard to this.

Forest Right Act 2006 and Present Scenario

The Forest Rights Act (FRA) is a radical step which challenges the state ownership of forest and assigning community right to the Adivasis for the forest area they were using in the past. But this Act is not implemented in Kerala in its true spirit. Satyapalan (2010) points out that implementation of FRA in the Western Ghat region of Kerala ignored community rights and conservation provisions of the Adivasis even though Section 3 of the Act recognises the traditional forest rights of the communities. As individuals, they can use forest land for self cultivation, common occupation and habitation to ensure their livelihood. And at the community level, they can use forest land for collecting minor forest products, for fishing activities, seasonal grazing, access biodiversity and claim intellectual property rights over traditional knowledge and cultural diversity (*ibid*). Also FRA empowers the government to use forest land for building schools, *anganwadis*, dispensaries, fair price shops, electric and telecommunication lines and drinking water facilities (*ibid).*

According to the Act, the Gram Sabha is the authority to initiate the implementation process by constituting a Forest Rights Committee (FRC). First, the FRC clears the application after checking the nature and extent of individual and community right to be provided to the Adivasis under its authority. Their decisions are examined by the subdivisional level committee where tahsildar is the head and forwarded to the district level committee which is headed by the sub collector. In Satyapalan's (2010) study, he stresses the need for sensitising communities to various provisions of the FRA legislation. His study reports that Adivasi promoters were recruited to the FRCs and were trained by the Kerala Institute for Research, Training and Development of Scheduled Castes and

Scheduled Tribes (KIRTADS), but they could not reach out extensively to the entire Adivasi areas of the state due to limited number of trained personnel, geographical challenges of operating in a hilly region and so on. He suggests that it is important to devise an effective mechanism to impart information about the FRA to the Adivasis so that they can articulate their rights.

According to one of the revenue officials at Mananthavady,

> Kerala is a very individualistic state and even the Adivasis are interested in individual rights more than community rights. So in Kerala, the situation is not conducive for community rights. Also, they have not applied for community rights. Further, it is a new Act and the possibility of implementation is not ruled out completely. The demand for community rights may come soon and until the FRC passes community rights we cannot prove that they need community rights.

On enquiring about the possibility of a political party's influence in not giving community rights, he jokingly replied, "Now the ruling party in Wayanad is the Communist Party and they should stand for community rights".

The officials are placing the blame on the people even though they know that the Adivasis are not aware of the different provisions in the Act. This reveals their indifference to Adivasi culture which is rooted in community ownership and customary rights on the one hand, and their negligence to implement the Act in its original intent to reclaim Adivasi traditional rights over forests on the other. It is also evident that the officials have to obey the ruling party and its decisions in implementing the Act. The official indirectly points out that according to the ideology of the Communist Party, they should stand for community rights but avoid blaming them as being committed to the state. However, on different occasions, officials reported that the Adivasis hesitate to go to distant places even though land is offered for one or two individuals from a colony. The District Collector reported that many are hesitating to go to Aralam even though they are promised one acre of land there. It emerges that even now, they treasure community living and realise their need for each other especially at times of sickness and poverty. On the contrary, Non-Adivasis often comment that they live as a group in the colony, and this is why they remain 'backward' without evaluating what material resources they have for self development.

Few interviews and group discussions done in the *Adivasi Bhumi Vitharana Pattayamela* (Adivasi land distribution and title deed festival) site where land was distributed under FRA and other provisions conducted on December 19, 2009 near the Panchayat community hall Sulthan Bathery, Wayanad, (photo 36) revealed that Adivasis are not aware of the provision of community rights under FRA. Many of them were not aware about how much land they are entitled to and what rights are provided to them under FRA. They had not given applications for community right over forest due to their ignorance about the Act.

When asked for an explanation, an official who was responsible for land distribution under FRA for giving a minimum extent of land like 5 cents and 10 cents to the Adivasis mentioned,

> The document can be given only for the land the Adivasis were using. Some of them showed only five cents, hence documents were given for five cents.

Anil, an Adivasi promoter in Ward 2 of Thirunelli Panchayat, reported,

> In Thirunelli Panchayat, the government had distributed *Kaivasarekha* (Record of Right) to around 264 Adivasis according to the government record. But the extent of land given ranges from 2 cents to 1acre. In my ward, 3 people got land and it was 3 cents, 5 cents and 10 cents respectively. Most of the Adivasis got less than 30 cents and very few got 1 acre. Though up to 10 acres can be given to the Adivasis according to the Act, this was not followed as they have no proof of identity to show that they used more land in the past.

According to FRA, Adivasis can get land upto 4 hectares and when it came to implementation, the extent reduced drastically. Satyapalan's (2010) study also points out that Adivasi communities in Wayanad are given only small plots of land which fall below the one acre promised to them. Even though he notes that on an average they received 30 cents of land, in the study area and in the *pattaya mela* (title deed festival) held in December 2009, the land given mostly fell under very small measures beginning from 2 cents as mentioned above.

One village officer in the study area stated,

> They have given huge publicity and advertisement in the newspapers saying that they are conducting *pattaya mela* 66, though they were giving only Record of Right (ROR). This was

66 It is observed that in Bathery, *Adivasi pattaya mela* ground they are given ROR and not *Pattayam* after giving publicity for *patta* distribution to Adivasis. When enquired, the officials reported that *pattayam* is given for 269 people for 76.90 acres. The list revealed that majority of them are non-Adivasi people and the extent of land provided mostly ranges from 4 cent to 15 cents. While enquired to the volunteers on the stage

> real cheating. One Adivasi approached me with the ROR to pay the tax. I revealed that they cannot pay tax with this record and then he got disappointed and realised the futility of the record. Also there was no possibility of getting bank loan or loans from other economic institutions. This will not even help them to take bail from court. With this record they could make a shed and live in that area.

It is observed that in the document 'Record of Right' provided to the Adivasis does not mention any of their rights over the forest such as the right to collect forest products and to conserve the biodiversity of the area as mentioned in the Forest Rights Act 2006. Thus in effect 'Adivasi colonies' are created in the midst of forest instead of 'Adivasi villages' and Forest Department continue to be the sole authority of the forest.

Table 8.2

Details of Claims and Land Distribution in Wayanad under FRA 2006

Total number of claims received as on 14-9-2010	6937
Number of claims cleared by Forest Right Committee as on 14-9-2010	5791
Number of claims cleared by subdivisional committee as on 14-9-2010	4063
Number of claims cleared by District level committee as on 14-9-2010	4025
Number of ROR issued so far	3842

Source: Sub collectors office Mananthavady, Tribal Development office, Kalpetta

According to the Tribal Development Department report, in Kalpetta, Wayanad the number of RORs given was 3842 (collected in the year 2011). In this file, there was an indication of 494 community claims. However, there was no indication of clearing these claims by the committees or issuing of ROR. When the officer in special charge of issuing ROR was asked about the provision of community rights to the Adivasis in the Act, he said that there were 13 cases in which they had given permissions like building an

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that why Adivasis are not given one acre, they answered that this is good land and how can we give patta for more than 15 cents. Adivasis received ROR for forest land. From a random interview conducted in the 'mela ground' it is revealed that the Adivasi people were ignorant about the ROR and how much land they are getting. Also, the record prepared in English was not explained to them (Interview and discussion conducted on December 19, 2009, Bathery panchayat community hall during the patta distribution).

anganwadi, making roads, house electrification, using the river close to them etc. However, community rights include collection of minor forest products, protecting forest, accessing biodiversity and intellectual property rights over traditional knowledge and cultural diversity etc. and on probing about these, he said that in the present situation in Kerala, community rights cannot be issued. However, in the central evaluation report, there was no mention of these 494 claims for community rights in the forest, and they just mentioned that community rights in the forest are not implemented in Kerala and that the Adivasis are not aware of community rights. Then what about those 494 claims, who were aware and who had applied?

A few Kurichias in the study area they reported that the party nominates Forest committees and decides the modalities and allotment of the Forest Right. Generally there were no gram sabha meetings at panchayat level and hamlet level to select FRC's. That means the authorities have violated Rule 3 of the Rules and of Section 6 (1) of the Forest Right Act 2006 and section 2(g) and 2(p) of the same.

One Adivasi promoter in Thirunelli Panchayat reported,

> In my ward, forest committees were selected by the *oorukoottam*. All of them were wage labourers and had no time to contribute to the FRCs. If their signature was needed, we had to go to their houses and get it done. Actually they had to show the land and decide the areas which were utilised by Adivasis when surveyors came to measure forest land for giving records. But that process was not happening and decisions were taken by the tribal department and forest department. In one area, it was difficult to give land as there was some conflict with wild life areas.

A Kurichia, state ST advisory board member reported,

> The Forest Rights Bill was passed in 2006. But the state government was inactive for a long period. When the state government got an order in 2009, pointing out that strong action would be taken if it was not implemented within six months, they called all ST state advisory board members and discussed the FRA. Then government entrusted an IAS officer to implement it within six months and they had implemented it partially. If there was no compulsion from the centre, they could not have done it. However, this is not done in a democratic way. Party supporters were chosen to give records and they occupied vested forests and reserved forests in many places without distributing it in a transparent way to the people who lived there. In Pozhuthana Panchayath, Idiyam vayal one family was residing in the forest for long. But the party people destroyed his hut and cultivation and deprived him of land as he was affiliated to a different party.

The above descriptions indicate the partiality and lawlessness in implementing the much appreciated FRA. Janu the Adivasi leader, pointed out,

> In the Madhava Menon Commission Report recommendations, 50 percent of the vested forest was meant for landless Adivasis for doing cultivation according to the Kerala Private Forest Vesting and Assignment Act67, 1971. In the agreement with AGMS, then Chief Minister, A.K Antony reaffirmed that the state government would take measures to identify and distribute the maximum extent of land especially vested forest land, to rehabilitate the Adivasis with the consent of the union government. 25,000 acres of land was earmarked for Adivasi people by the committee and this could have been enough to rehabilitate the landless Adivasis. However, this did not materialise because of vested interests.

The government appointed Madhava Menon Committee affirmed the presence of a large number of settlements of Adivasis in vested forests and recommended that the Adivasis be given their land (Prakash 2002). The total extent of vested forest reported by the Madhava Menon Committee was 169411.84 hectares and the vested forest specially earmarked for Adivasis was 23058.63 hectares. The vested forest found in Wayanad alone was 11082.02 hectares (26679.671 acre) (*ibid*). As mentioned in Chapter IV, instead of receiving the record for 50 percent of vested forest, they even lost their land which they were using as their own without any record. This clearly reveals the land politics in Wayanad and the hold of plantation owners, *Jenmis* and companies even in the Supreme Court to produce orders in their favour overriding the livelihood rights of Adivasis. Thus, it is evident that after independence, the land mafia and planters worked against Adivasi land rights and they kept the Adivasis away from acquiring a piece of land. However, the government has not taken measures to distribute at least the remaining area to the Adivasis even after the agreement with AGMS or during the implementation of the Forest Right Act of 2006.

It is surprising to note that the rights guaranteed by the government nearly four decades ago through the Private Forest Vesting and Assignment Act (High Court approved but defeated in the Supreme Court) are further defeated when officials decided to give meager measures of land to Adivasis according to FRA. Now the objection is not only from planters and *jenmis* but also from the Forest Department and thus indirectly from the state itself. One Village officer said,

> In a few places like Thirunelli Mallika colony, only the house is given to them. The local leaders asked the *Adivasis* to demand more land but the forest department raised an objection.

67 Forest land was taken away from private land owners and vested it in the government by abolishing the private forest law.

The Report of Visit of National Forest Rights Committee (2010) points out that when a few Adivasis objected and refused to receive the title deed for small areas, the Adivasi affairs Minister after having a discussion with the Revenue, Forest and Adivasi Departments announced that every individual shoud be given one acre of land. The Adivasis submitted revised applications and in some cases tried to encroach one acre and it created a clash with the forest officials. Even after the announcement, there were difficulties in implementation because of the objection of local forest officials. Further, when this process began, a writ petition was filed in the High Court by Wayanad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samiti (WPSS) in the name of conservation of forest. As a result, the High Court issued an order to restrain this development and directed the state government not to consider the revised applications and not to permit encroachment. Even during the Muthanga strike, the environmentalists in Wayanad were against the Adivasis. As Baviskar (1997) points out, when studying development projects, environmental sociology has devoted less attention to the plight of Adivasis and such oppressed groups are not counted as the subjects of environmental sociology.

However, WPSS and the investigating authorities forget that many of the younger Adivasi generation may not know how much land their ancestors had been using, as the forest department installs *jendas* and trenches and make new demarcations at regular intervals. Also it is a relevant question to explore why the forest department and WPSS have been joining hands to stall the distribution of land to the Adivasis. In Muthanga, they objected to the occupation of land by Adivasis by arguing that it was reserved forest even though it was the dwelling place of the Adivasis according to Adivasi narratives. When they were given land according to the Forest Right Act and by Ministers Special Order, WPSS could not freeze the process. It was evident that, the Adivasi's right to possession may contest the FD's authority in controlling forest resources in the name of preservation and the environmentalist's concern for preserving forests. However, this conflict has to be analysed in the context of international environmental protection initiatives and their argument for including corporate investment in forest management and development. The Forest Department and Wild Life Trust of India supported by a UK based NGO, secured land for elephant corridor project in Wayanad and people were already evicted from Pulayankolly, Thirulukunnu and Valia emmidi under this project.

The Adivasi families rehabilitated under this project in Panavally conveyed their grievances about their badly constructed houses and small plots of land.

However, when the central committee came for evaluation, they were happy about the procedure followed in Kerala in implementing FRA. But, the entire report reveals that it was not evaluated from the Adivasi's point of view, their experience and its benefit to them, even though there were attempts to report people's grievances. It was appreciated for the rigorous procedure of giving training to the personnel in Adivasi departments, survey and settlements, forest and revenue to go through the process for implementation systematically (National Forest Rights Committee Report 2010).68 There was appreciation for survey and demarcation using "Total station survey instrument" and the ROR issued with a proper surveyed sketch of the individually occupied land. There is not even a single instance in Kerala, where community forests have been demarcated and plotted and the traditional right to forest resources has been given to the Adivasi people (*ibid*). The Central Committee also reported that non-settlement of community right is contradictory to the directions issued by the Ministry of Adivasi Affairs but not pointed out as a major flaw in the implementation. However, the evaluation report gives thrust to the technical and administrative process rather than the outcome and how it benefited the Adivasis.

One Adivasi promoter from Thirunelly Panchayat reported,

> The Forest department is giving priority to send Adivasis out of forest and they sent out Adivasis from Kambilikkappu, Pulayankolly, Tholpetty and Nedunthana. According to FRA, they can be given up to 10 acres if they traditionally owned it for any purpose. They are told that if they apply for land using FRA they will not be given land outside and instead if they come out from the forest they are tempted with promises of 30 cents of fertile land and good houses outside.

As depicted in this section, according to the FRA, the Adivasis were not given *patta* or the right to self determination and self management of the area they used traditionally through community right. Some officials see it as positive, as Adivasis might again lose the land if they were given the original *patta* as it could be acquired by other vested

68 Report of Visit of National Forest Rights Committee Team to Kerala. Date's of visit: July 2-5, 2010. (It is mentioned in the report that this report is written for the purpose of the committee's ongoing work; any views contained in this are not necessarily those of the entire committee and are not to be taken as final views or recommendations by the committee).

interest groups with record and this would again lead to alienation. However, this was against what was envisioned in the Act and it was advisable to enforce strict laws to prevent alienation rather than avoid giving *patta*. Besides, they neglected the fact that even for getting credit from the Bank to develop the land, they needed a *patta* and it was necessary when government support was reported to be nil to develop the land. It was becoming more evident that giving land to Adivasis was objected historically and the change was only in the groups such as *jenmis*, planters, companies, different vested interested lobbies or the state itself according to each context. The recent land occupation and encroachments by different Adivasi organisations are delineated to understand the context.

Adivasis Collective Responses

The Adivasis have organised under Adivasi Kshema Samithi (AKS), a CPI (M) party oriented Adivasi organisation and are now engaged in land struggle and 'symbolic acquisition' of land for Adivasis by occupying and erecting huts in surplus lands, revenue lands and vested forests.

The AKS became popular among Adivasis as they became very organised and active after Muthanga land struggle by promising land to the Adivasis. There were arguments that CPM facilitated the formation of AKS since they didn't want to lose their followers to Gothra Mahasabha formed under the leadership of C K Janu in 2001. The party support gave them partial assurance against the police brutality during the protests. However, it is reported by the Adivasis that CPI (M) leaders publicly criticised the leaders who fought for Adivasi land right at Muthanga and even used video CDs showing them cheating the Adivasis in order to defame their leadership. The Adivasis also narrated many experiences to show the party's preference for its supporters, while ignoring others.

In Kunnil colony, a few Paniyas shared their experience,

> We were called to a site where they promised us land, but were asked to get letter from the party office. The party office refused to give the letter saying that we are not participating in party meetings. Then we challenged them, "Now do not come to our colony asking for our votes".

This indicates that the main concern of the political parties is not securing Adivasi life by giving them land but strengthening their party membership. The Adivasis criticised the

party for selecting only party people for benefits and making villages into party villages. In 2007, MLA Kunjiraman from Kurichia community said that they have occupied land in 16 spots amounting to 6970 acres of land69. However, while visiting and talking with the people settled in S Valavu and Panavally where AKS captured land with CPI (M) support, the Paniyas had a lot of grievances. In many places they had not settled well and lacked minimum basic facilities, ration cards, opportunities for wage labour and so on. In 2010, in these two places, they distributed ROR but many people were left out. However, eviction from the occupied areas by the government also achieved momentum during this period. Also according to C.K Janu, these are vested forests and project land which were earmarked for the Adivasi people and promised to them during the agreement with government in 2002.

AKS and Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU) together occupied 3 acres and 70 cents of land in Karakkuni in Edavaka panchayat. The Adivasis were found enthusiastic to go with the AKS even though the extent of land promised was meagre. To the question, why they were not demanding one acre, Girijan from Kunnil colony said,

> The Party encroached the land and they are giving it to us. We have no authority to say that we need more. Even if it is five cents, let it be, it is their mercy towards us.

Their crucial need for land made them agree to go on a strike for getting even 5 cents and not seeing it as their right but the party's might.

However, Mananthavady *tahasildar* reported,

> The land at Karakkuni was already given to five Adivasis in the notification 76/November and now they are not keeping that land. Nobody in that locality knows about the real owners of the 3.70 acres of land there.

When Adivasis were promised one acre of land, taking 60 families to a place where only 3.70 acres of land was available was not justifiable. Further, it was under somebody else's possession and there was no surety of the occupants receiving the relevant records. From Kunnil colony all of them joined this strike. It was at a walkable distance from their

69 MLA reported the 16 spots they encroached. S. Valavu (Thavinjal) 300 acres, Panavally (Thirunelli) 65 acres,Poralom -240 acres, Edamunda (Thondarnadu) 400 acres, Nellickachal- 60 acres, Perumkulam (Vellamunda) 140 acres, Muttil-300 acres, Nathamkuni-400 acres, Meppady -600 acres, Idiyamvayal (Pozhuthana) 800 acres, Kuttiyamvayal (Padinjarathara) 1100 acres, C.C Kavala (Meenangady)- 400 acres, Appadu (Meenangady)- 600 acres, Mariyanadu (Pulpally) 1500 acres, Banglamkunnu (Edavaka) -25 acres, Thettamala (Thondarnadu) – 40 acres. (These may not be exact measures as the interviewee has recollected these from memory and given in writing on a paper).

colony and all those who were landless in their settlement were offered land and they were enthusiastic even though the area was small. Besides, they could come back to their original settlement without much expense.

The whole area was filled with red flags (photo 35) and a party member explained,

> Adivasis are attracted towards red flag. Each one was asking for a red flag. A Paniya Mooppan expressed his last wish in the hospital to be buried in the *samarabhumi* (land where he participated in struggle) and the party people were called to the hospital. The revolutionary red spirit attracted them more than the offer of a piece of land. When that spirit dies they go away. I can bet, if you come to this place after six months there will be only a few families.

On the contrary, Nima from Kunnil colony stated,

> For getting land we will go with any party. Now the Left Party is taking the initiative to capture land for us. So we are with them. Otherwise we will have to stand with BJP. Actually, lotus is our symbol, and we also come under Hindus. For the previous election, the Marxist party did not give me a seat to contest the election. So I stood for election with the BJP. Even though I lost the election, I learned many things. This time the Left Party may give me a seat to contest in the election and I will join them.

This clearly indicates that she has no strong loyalty to any particular party or blind attraction towards the red flag. At the same time, she showed shrewdness to choose different parties by practically assessing which party does at least the minimum favour to their community. In an interview, Adivasi leader C.K Janu also expressed that Adivasis are not supporters of CPI (M) and that their party politics were unknown to Adivasis; but when the Party went on a strike to increase the wages, the Adivasis thought they are people who solve practical issues and stood with them (Interview by Rekharaj 2008).

As the CPI (M) member said, while visiting the site after six months there were only around fifteen families out of the 60 families who had erected temporary sheds and occupied the land in Karakkuni. However, the reason for leaving was not because they had lost interest in the land but due to traumatic conditions as explained by the Adivasis who stayed back. They had no water facility. The well close to them built by the block panchayat was taken over by a non-Adivasi family who did not allow the Adivasis to draw water after 5'o clock in the evening knowing that they came back at 5 pm after their wage labour. Many of them also got sick during the heavy rains as the temporary shed did not give them enough protection. They mentioned that if they were not continuously

staying in the area and did not participate regularly in the party committee meetings, they had no guarantee to get *Kaivasarekha*.

There was strong criticism against CPI (M) party that they were supporting AKS, which is their own foster party organisation. But one KSSP member supported CPI (M) saying that,

> The Left Party was organising and leading the struggle. So the supporters of left party joined them first for the struggle and they were naturally getting land. However, their genuine issue was addressed in the struggle and that had to be appreciated. This struggle is only to point out to the government that there is land available to give to the Adivasis and to bring the Adivasi land issue to the forefront. This symbolic struggle was to create a greater thrust upon the government to give land to all Adivasis.

CPI (M) claimed that the state government had formed a tribunal to resolve the land issues of the Adivasis and *Kaivasarekha* (Record of Rights) was distributed to many Adivasis who encroached upon the land under the leadership of AKS and thus contributed to the struggle. The police cases against people involved in struggle in Ambukuthy and Muthanga for a piece of land was pending, though during the elections, the CPI (M) promised to release them all if they came to power (Refer to Ambukuthi and Muthanga struggle in Chapter 4). However, this indicated that Adivasis could only proceed through the party. Any self effort would be blocked and punished and they have to bear the long term consequences of their resistance on their own.

When Adivasis organised under AKS, the Congress party and other Non-governmental Organisations (NGO) also formed their supportive Adivasi wings like *Adivasi Congress* and *Adivasi Forum respectively*. While *Adivasi Congress* claimed to develop leadership among *Adivasis, Adivasi Forum* organised land struggles.

However, the Adivasi Forum took the land issue seriously and conducted struggles to distribute Beenachi estate in Bathary Taluk to the Adivasis. This land was owned by the Government of Maharashtra and the Adivasis demanded that the Government of Kerala buy it and distribute it to them, as this plantation was dysfunctional for long and the neighbours were looting the produce from this estate.

The leaders of Adivasi Forum expressed their reason for organising Adivasis as Janu's (the Adiya leader who organised Adivasis for land strikes) silence and inaction. Also the Forum had a difference of opinion with the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha

regarding emphasis on Gothra (clan) identity. Instead of keeping a gothra identity or caste identity, they preferred to have a pan Adivasi identity for fighting for their social issues and with this intention they organised the Adivasi Forum. According to them, as the atrocities on Adivasi communities after Muthanga were treacherous, they gathered inspiration to begin an Adivasi Forum, to relieve them from their traumatic experience.

Political parties as well as NGOs criticised Janu's inaction. However, a journalist's comment is revealing,

> There is no meaning in saying that Janu is silent. She cannot fight against a party so powerful and involved in propaganda against her. Also she was caught up with too many cases related to Muthanga issue and she is actually a victim of law and order. Janu is an organic leader from her own community and those who favour Adivasis have to support her leadership instead of making rival groups and scattering the Adivasi energy.

Janu also refuted the criticism leveled against her by pointing out "We are protesting now by building huts wherever land is available. We built huts in Aralam when land was not provided as promised and government is forced to distribute title deeds. People see only crowds and noise as protest" (Interview by Rekharaj 2008).

Political parties started organising Adivasi people around the land issue, by including it in the election agenda and assuring them land. However, their strength was scattered due to the formation of different groups fighting with each other. The land issue of Adivasis became a political subject that could not be neglected completely in Wayanad as they have 17 per cent representation in the district unlike other districts in Kerala. Also, the initiative for land distribution to the Adivasis was forced as an outcome of their responses to development through different land struggles. One village officer said, "The reason for party initiated encroachment is the fear that Adivasis may otherwise go behind Janu the Adivasi leader".

As delineated above, the lack of transparency and motivation of the government and different organisations in distributing land was questioned thoroughly by the Adivasis and their empathisers. Ammini narrated,

> After the Ambukuthi struggle, the government promised to distribute land for the landless and they had collected applications from 500 families. We all went and signed the application forms in the village and they informed that every family was to be given one acre

> of land in Aralam farm. They promised that each plot will be numbered and the numbers will be distributed on the 17th of that month. But the number and 17th has not yet come.

In another case, Vasan, a Paniya from Kunnil was furious when he was called from the work place to go to the court for trial for participating in the Ambukuthi land strike[70] which happened almost two decades ago. Every month they had to appear before the court, pay fees to the lawyer and the promise of releasing the strikers was postponed indefinitely. Recently (in June 2012), Chunda and Unni from the study area were called to appear before the court and they had to pay Rs. 500 to the lawyer.

The previous CPI (M) government was out of office before fulfilling the promise of purchasing land for the Adivasis as well as acquiring surplus and untitled land for distribution. The subsequent United Democratic Front (UDF) government completed two years and the 50 crores entrusted to buy land for Adivasis has still not been utilised. Instead as the newspaper *Malayala Manorama* (May 31, 2012, page 4) reported, 115 strikers were arrested and removed from the Pilakkavu land struggle site. Representatives from Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha, Adivasi Kshema Samithi, Adivasi Forum, Adivasi Congress, SC/ST co-ordination committee, Adivasi Sangham and Vanvasi Vikas Kendra participated in the discussions to deal with Adivasi land issues and a four member sub-committee including Adivasi Minister P.K Jayalakshmi was formed (June 15, 2012). Again *Malayala Manorama* (20 June, 2012) reported the pathetic condition of Adivasi strikers at Cheeyambam where temporary sheds were damaged in the rain and people were under threat of infectious diseases. The report said that in Cheeyambam, Moonnanakkuzhy areas, thousands of families were on struggle and that jails became full with protesters. Thus arresting and removal of those on struggle was also becoming impossible.

Even amidst extreme suffering from court cases and arrests, the occupation by Adivasis continued. The Paniyas were reported to be at the forefront of these struggles

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70 132 families entered into that area and built sheds and they were harassed by police and forest department and arrested. Even though it happened 16 years back some of us are under trial even now. Whenever we are called to the court we have to leave our wage labour and have to be present in the court. And if one person could not report on time due to any reason they will postpone the hearing and send us back giving another date. This is the fate of land cases in which Adivasis are accused (Interview with Chantha and Nima from Kunnil colony).

being the most deprived and marginalised due to landlessness. For acquisition of land they were ready to join with any party or organisation and very recently (2012) the Paniyas in the study area reported that they occupied land in Bathery-Moonnanakkuzhy; Pulpally - Cheeyambam and, Mananthavady - Thalappuzha and Pilakkavu. They reported that their children were not able to go to school and that families were suffering due to poverty and there was nobody to bail them out. Their reason for intensifying the struggle was inaction and indifference from government and administrators.

In the specific settlements selected, there were no landless Kurichias but while visiting the occupied areas, there were Kurichias who occupied land but they kept regular contact with their people to access support, unlike the Paniyas who lacked minimum resources to survive in their own colonies as well as in the new place. Since, the land distribution did not consider the community and cultural right of Adivasis, often this prompted Paniyas to leave the new land and come back to their kith and kin as they lacked any support system in the new place. Thus, the process of land distribution began in bits and pieces revealing another fact that state and administrative bodies were ignoring the Adivasi concept of relationship with land, their culture and customary rights and their agricultural practices and survival. It also emerges that political parties are more interested in fulfilling the party agenda than helping Adivasis to occupy land and earn a livelihood.

Adivasis View of Land Centered Development

According to Adivasi perception, land is at the centre of their development agenda and is the most neglected concept in state initiated development. As discussed earlier, all the commons are ‘enclosed’ by the state and private enterprises and Adivasis lost their resources for livelihood one by one. Adivasi mobilisation very forcefully proclaimed a different self developmental perspective which is rooted in land and its resources, ecologically sound agricultural practices and self determination. Adivasi leaders expressed a clear division between their way of seeing land and the nature around as the dwelling place of their gods, as sacred places and the modern perception of seeing it as a commodity.

Ecologically Sound Agricultural Practices

The ecological philosophy of co-existence with nature can be seen among them today even in the midst of threat to their survival. For instance, they avoid collecting herbs in their reproductive season, they keep enough honey for the bees in the bee hive to raise their young, they will not destroy the soil with fertilisers even at the risk of loss in agriculture, they hunt the weakest animal by giving signal through the ritual called *nayakettal* (making loud noises before they and their dogs enter the forest) for the stronger ones to escape (photos). Their belief that they are only caretakers to protect earth for their community and for the future generation is reflected in their narrations and actions. On the contrary, the colonisers converted this relationship into a commercial relationship making land and its resources into a commodity and the process of alienation was accelerated for Adivasi communities. For the government, the forest has its worth for its resources and for revenue but for the Adivasis it is subsistence, leisure and a source of spiritual awakening. The Adivasis generally hold this deeper meaning of relationship with land when they talk about their communal rights over lands. Their 'development' concept as well as livelihood is strongly related to land, its resources and its sustainable use. The sustainable use of land is a value for them even when they see the tendencies of commercialisation around them. This is an important demarcation that Adivasi culture put forward in its critique of current 'development'. But the invasion of modern notions of development sidelines the subsistent technologies of Adivasis. Janu maintained,

> We moved according to nature's clock or a biological cycle and only took things which do not hurt the earth. The *poomi-thai* (land-mother) relationship is interwoven in our culture and we firmly believe that we are part of the earth and earth is part of us.

Most of the Paniyas and Kurichiyas also expressed the same reverence to nature and their rituals begin with adoring the earth and its four directions.

Contemporary global discourse focusses on the environmental crisis and the threat to human survival on planet earth. Bolan, an Adivasi leader from Paniyan community stated,

> The environmental crisis is due to human greed and the Adivasis show a way forward to protect the earth. Adivasi culture protects and sustains the whole earth and its people, all nature and soil. Therefore, I suggest that all people should learn Adivasi culture. When people learn and become part of that culture, automatically nature and earth will be sustained. When nature and earth are protected, our generation and the coming generations

> will become healthy. When Adivasis are given one to five acres of land they start cultivating food crops in it without using fertilisers. Now we will not eat if rice and vegetables are not imported from other states. When Adivasis are given land, our self sustained villages will come back to existence.

An integral part of liberalisation has been commercial exploitation of land and its natural resources. The expansion of cash crops has led to rapid growth of commercialisation of agriculture and monetisation of the economy of the region. The introduction of cash crops, new seed varieties, fertilisers, machinery and irrigation technology were changes seen in the study area. Commercial orientation of land use pattern and introduction of cash crops affected the availability of land to Adivasis for their mixed cultivation practices and subsistence based on that. The Kurichias used plenty of land for their food production, but this has dwindled today because of commercialisation.

Even now, a clear division exists in the non-Adivasi and Adivasi perception and experience regarding land. For the non-Adivasi, land and nature have been free goods to be appropriated and manipulated for making maximum profit. They believe in the capitalist mode of production. On the contrary, the Paniyas as well as Kurichias are interested mainly in subsistence production. They give priority to food crop production than to cash crops and they avoid chemical fertilisers and pesticides and follow traditional methods to save the crop from pest attack. A Kurichia Karanavar put it in perspective and challenged the alienating nature of modern agriculture by saying, "Agriculture cannot be counted as a profit making business, or cannot be counted as loss. It is part of our culture and it has to give us satisfaction more than material benefit."

Eran, a Kurichia elder reported,

> We were mostly producing ragi, thina and cahama in the hill slopes and forest and when the migrants from Thiruvithamkur came they produced *theruvappullu* (lemon grass), cashew, coffee, pepper, rubber etc. We got loan for cultivating cashew plants, rubber etc. I cultivated cashew in my land. Now it is not giving yield due to some pest attack and I have no other way to earn a livelihood. Also *Krishibhavan* distributed chemical fertilisers and pesticides and encouraged farmers to use it by giving it at subsidised rates. Even the banana plants, arecanut tree plants and cashew plants are provided by the agricultural office. Even though people around us convert all their paddy fields to banana and arecanut for profit, we will do paddy cultivation as part of our tradition.

Eran's narrative reveals that state policies as well as migration of non-Adivasis forced them to change from their subsistent food crop cultivation to cash crops. Aiyappan and Mahadevan (1990) pointed out that the cultivation of oil producing grass throughout

Wayanad by the migrants affected the entire ecological set up of this hilly district. However, large scale oil grass cultivation is stopped due to scarcity of forest based fuel (ibid).

Kurichias also reported that Agricultural Department had started giving them new paddy seed varieties like Athira, Jaya etc. instead of their traditional varieties. The Government had given incentives and fertilisers to encourage *Puncha Krishi* (second crop of paddy) and taught them to use chemical fertilisers. Even though they were against using chemicals, they slowly realised that quick yield was necessary for their next cultivation to start on time and a small amount of fertiliser was necessary for double cropping. Other circumstances which forced them to use fertilisers in small amounts was the fear of pest attack in their field since new seeds were not resistant to pest attack. Also as all others around them used fertilisers and pesticides to protect their crops there was more chance of pest attack in their field. Amidst all these compelling circumstances to use chemicals and pesticides, there were *tharavads* that preferred to stick to their traditional practices and values and used only natural methods for controlling pest attacks using branches of *karpuram* (*cinnamomum camphora*).

Manjan from Tulsi *tharavad* recounted,

> We used to do the paddy husking by ourselves and used to add the husk in the paddy fields. We also added leaves and ashes according to the corresponding seasons. In the past, the straw we used for roofing the house was used as manure when it got old. Today there is no place for rearing cattle, since we lost the forests and have partitioned our property among the members of the *tharavad*.

Since the slash and burn cultivation was banned they could not do *ragi* cultivation in the forest land. It was observed that a few of them cultivated *ragi* in very small measures in their paddy fields. They reported that there was no support or incentive from the government to preserve their rich cultivation practices in their traditional ways which were eco friendly.

Maani from Champa colony says, *"Land loses its ghee if we use chemical fertilisers"* which meant that land loses its organic fertility if we use chemicals.

Velan from a Kurichia tharavad narrated another story of exploitation of the land,

> Since we have taken loans from the bank and we were not able to pay them back within the stipulated time, we gave our paddy fields on lease for ginger cultivation to the non- Adivasi people. The non- Adivasi people used so much urea and salt that they got a good yield but the fertility of the land was destroyed. We planted banana and paddy after that but the yield was poor. Now we have to put cow dung and leaves to bring it to the original form and have to wait for three years for good yield.

A Kurichia youth said,

> My non-Adivasi friends call me a fool and advise me to add some chemical fertiliser and make some profit when I cultivate paddy. The modern trends are tempt us to leave our traditional values as we cannot survive with our old traditional ways.

The continuous contact with the non-Adivasis bring slow changes in them but those who are using chemicals also use it less compared to the non-Adivasis.

The Adivasis are aware of how non-Adivasis use development schemes. Lampan (45) from the Paniya community narrated an incident. The non-Adivasis staying in the hill opposite their colony had made pits in their land for water harvesting and they collected money for soil and water conservation from the agricultural department. However, after some time, they planted banana plants in the same pits and converted the soil management programme into a profit making venture totally uncaring for the earth. He commented, "Human beings are intelligent creatures, but if they use their intelligence to do harm to the earth it will get destroyed".

These narratives of the Adivasis indicate not only their wisdom and belongingness to the land but of the non-Adivasi communities greed to extract maximum profit within a short period depriving both the land as well as the future generation. According to Josavic and Shanmuga Ratnam (2007), Adivasi communities are self sustaining communities and in their world view, the socio-economic security of the individual was intimately bound to the collective security of the community. As Bijoy (2001) points out, there still exist the negative stereotyping of the sustainable subsistence economy of the Adivasis. He stresses the significance of the Adivasi subsistence economy in the midst of a profit oriented economy. According to him, the disregard for their culture is based on the wrong perception that production of surplus is more important than the social reproduction in co-existence with nature.

Adivasi leader Janu and many of the Kurichia and Paniya leaders expressed the indigenous concern of healing the earth and its people through sustaining nature's wealth

and through subsistence agriculture, without polluting the earth through chemical use. They expressed that their respect for nature and its resources and their experiential knowledge about nature were seldom recognised by the administrators and development planners and were often described as backwardness. According to Pathy (1998), the contemporary imposition of the supposedly universal model of development and the consequent dispossession of Adivasi communities has been built on the unequal socio-political structure, both at the national and global levels.

The Adivasis have been living a life of subsistence believing in the reproductive value of land more than extracting from it for commodity production and profit. Even in their tryst with modernity, majority of them treasure their values and are engaged in agriculture and collection of its produce in subsistent ways. O'Connor (1998) discusses the ecological crisis and destruction of subsistence oriented economies in the context of modern capitalist development, which is useful to understand the Adivasi context in Wayanad. He has incorporated culture and nature in his conceptualisations of forces of production and relations of production, however he does not engage with the cultural critique of superiority assigned to modernity. Appadurai (1990) points out that the core values of sociality existing among communities have been threatened by the commercialisation of agriculture. He explains the processes which divorce agriculture from agricultural relationships in the current commercial trend of maximising output and profit and draw a person away from the social demands of village life.

In this regard, Jacob (2006) criticises the organised move to promote organic farming as it does not benefit people. He points out that only duly certified farms by donor agencies and NGOs will be acceptable as organic farms and obtaining certificates is not economical. He points out that the common man becomes a victim of these sophisticated patterns of development and a few elite accrue to these church sponsored or NGO sponsored ventures. However, indigenous practices of cultivation are very much organic in nature and it was the Adivasi tradition from the beginning, but there has been hesitation to give credit to the Adivasis or promote it among them when it achieved a scientific rationality. Both the Paniya and the Kurichia communities held strongly to the practice of organic farming (Paniyas if they have a small piece of land) and fought against neo liberal tendencies in agriculture in their everyday agricultural practices, but they have been

branded as 'backward'. However, the Adivasis are aware of the appropriation of their philosophy and culture of agriculture.

The Kurichia community was enthusiastic to share their culture of cultivation and experiences. Suran Tulsi *tharavad* reported,

> We have firm faith that if we do cultivation without harming the land there will be prosperity. We were the ones who did organic farming since the beginning. In olden times, we used only organic manure like green leaves, ash and cow dung in the paddy field. We used to have herds of cattle and we used to tie them in the field itself. Our lands used to regenerate its fertility by itself but today its fertility is lessened by unwise human intervention of adding chemical fertilisers. We used to believe that applying chemical fertiliser to land is like hiding explosive bombs in the land.

Lampan (45) from Paniya community, Kunnil said,

> We have half an acre of paddy field, and we don't use fertilisers even in small amounts. If our paddy plants get over after cultivating half of our paddy field, we prefer to leave it barren instead of getting paddy plants from our neighbours since they all use fertilisers. Even though we are sticking strongly to organic farming we don't get free organic manure from the agricultural office since it is necessary to have one acre land for getting the benefits from there.

The Adivasis are the ones who practice organic farming more than the non-Adivasis, who get the benefits of it from the *Krishibhavan* and other development agencies. Jacob (2006) points out the increase in the use of chemical fertilisers for cultivation and highlights that in Kerala there are markets where bananas from Wayanad are banned from sale due to their high pesticide content.

A panchayat president from the study area reported,

> We are promoting organic farming and for organic products we are finding a separate market for better prices. We have formed nine groups who do organic farming.

He further revealed that there was no Adivasi among these groups. However, the natural organic cultivators are not counted when it was organised under branded names.

One Kurichiya Karanavan reported,

> I know the non-Adivasis who are members of the organic farmers' group and indulge in unethical practices of adding chemical fertilisers. In one group of organic farmers the membership reduced from 20 to six due to unethical practices. Nobody can test the whole produce in a laboratory and the only way is to cultivate love for earth and its inhabitants.

The Adivasis who were the real practitioners and promoters of organic farming in Wayanad through their indigenous cultivation practices and land use patterns were not given any consideration when it was introduced as a modern concept. The 'scientific' contributions of these people were neither recognised nor were they included in the new movement even though they use the most modern trends of ecologically sound cultivation practices and life sustaining practices in their daily lives. Adivasi culture is dynamic like all cultures and it cannot stay permanent forever. It seems to stagnate, because of the lack of space they are experiencing for its evolution and expansion. For instance, the real innovators and practitioners of eco-friendly farming became traditional and were left out when traditional knowledge achieved a 'modern trade mark' of organic products from the MNCs and TNCs. Today this trend is so widespread that Adivasi practices and knowledge are stolen by elite groups in new internationally accepted terms for business and profit.

Instead of promoting Adivasi participation in the modern world, they have been branded as underdeveloped, and the paternalistic state and its bureaucracy have seemingly assumed the 'responsibility' to 'develop' them. Today indigenous knowledge and their rights are not important when development programmes are planned. So what is controversial is not a traditional- modern divide but the fact that modernity has to stick to the core of traditional values to sustain the earth and its life forms. However, when indigenous knowledge is used for modern scientific development, traditional people are not given any credit for it. Appadurai (1990) criticises the formal announcement of the gap between 'official' agronomic knowledge and the traditional knowledge of farmers and highlights the formation of indigenous agronomic discourse in which the knowledge of the farmers is absorbed into a larger rationalised discourse without giving credit to the actual practitioners. However, Adivasi's indigenous knowledge and values are today becoming the core values for human existence in society. When Adivasi tradition becomes the core, resource redistribution and ecologically sustainable small-scale projects will flourish. From that core, modernity can move like a spiral and acquire different forms promoting their knowledge as well as the knowledge to sustain the earth.

Subjects of Development or Objects?

The objectification of land and its resources and thus the objectification and colonisation of Adivasis are continuing in the modern development planning also. The Adivasis use symbolic representations to explain the top down development programmes and the objectification of Adivasis that underlie these programmes. Nellan from Paniya community was furious,

> We are like chained dogs. As dogs wait for their food we have also been waiting for the pittance from government. We were never taught to be self reliant. Authorities bring a full pot before us and we are fed with one full shovel and they take away the pots with the remaining share. The Government has tied us in 5 cents. We have no other place to go and we cannot even sell this to others. They are making us dogs and calling us *'patti' kajathi* (sarcastic stress here is on the first two syllables of the term 'pattika jathi' and *patti* in Malayalam means dog) Even the name 'tribal' is given to us by the government and it is not ours.

The above description of government initiated development indicates their discontent in making them dependent forever instead of developing self reliance by treating them as subjects rather than objects. They reported that they are not happy with the welfare measures which are steeped in corruption and they believe that what is provided for their development is looted by different rungs in the power structures. From the narratives of Adivasis it is clear that the colony culture was alien to them and what they have been seeking is self sufficient communities where they can affirm their world views. As Joshi (1998) points out, Adivasi community's participation in different development programmes are accepted in various departmental documents and it should not remain ceremonial but has to be practised by including their world views effectively. He stresses to regard their contexts and capabilities and give them the space to develop from within.

The author of *Mavelimantam*, K.J Baby stated,

> The Paniyas could not develop a dream about their life or their cultivation as they were caught as slaves after their nomadic life. They just did what the master suggested they do without planning for their well being. Being a *jenmi's* slave there was no chance to think about 'self development'. When they commited themselves to a landlord during Valliyoorkavu festival, it was the duty of the landlord to provide them labour opportunity, food, housing etc.

Thus, the Paniyas did not get the opportunity for self development in the past as well as in the present being deprived of land - the hall mark of Adivasi existence and survival. In a similar way, C.K Janu affirmed that without land and better economic circumstances,

the Adivasis cannot develop independent thinking and a vision of their own (Interview by Rekharaj 2008).

However, criticising the state development programmes does not mean that they have not been aspiring for modern facilities. Today, their youth and children are attracted towards modern facilities. However, the panchayat and government machinery has clear plans about even the shape and area of a Paniya's house and facilities. Even the toilets are not in a usable condition in many Paniya colonies as they are left incomplete (photo).

Naran, a Kurichia Karanavan criticised the technical exercise of planning without considering their living context. He assertively asked

> If we are put in the middle of the sea, what will we do? Now we are swimming without knowing the shore. The government is saying "we are giving you everything…" They say that from the helicopter we are dropping things via a rope and why are you not catching them? But I am swimming in the sea without seeing the helicopter and rope and I am not getting anything to hold on to.

In their narratives, development has drawn these forest dwellers to the middle of the sea. The changing metaphors express the contrast, the uncertainties and conflicts they experience with modern development. Many Kurichia elders strongly feel that development planning is away from their cultural context as their worldviews on land, agriculture and social organisation are not reflected in it. Naran was unhappy about the loss of traditional community leadership and the dissipation of the community with government interventions. He expressed the cultural conflict they face in the top down development policies and programmes. Naran asked,

> If our communities are disintegrating with the development envisioned for us, how can we call it progress? The love relationship among the members also has to be developed with material advancement if it is to be perceived as progress. In pre-independent period, we lacked money. However, there was cohesion and cooperation in our community. Now it is diminishing mainly due to conflicts around property division.

Naran further stated:

> Instead of top down plans, leaders have to come to our midst to plan for us and to settle our conflicts regarding land as the power of our traditional leadership is taken away by the state and its bureaucracy. The Government is making us inactive and not allowing our intelligence and culture to evolve in solving our problems. Government is not concerned about the basic elements and values in our culture to make us grow

> accordingly. Our settlements were known as *mittam or tharavad* and the government has now named them as 'colony'.

According to Naran, there is no meaning for material progress after destroying the warm relationship that existed among the Adivasis towards the earth and the nature around them. For him, the government has to realise that it is the conflict within the community which has destroyed them.

This does not mean that the Kurichia elders are against any kind of progress and ready to sacrifice their needs for satisfying the greed of the dominant cultures. They seek an integral development which gives due consideration to their culture and values. They seek inclusion at the conceptual level rather than superficial 'adverse inclusion' like exhibiting their dance or songs for entertaining the tourists in the name of inclusion of their culture.

In the narratives of Paniyas and Kurichias in this section, we have noticed the difference in the expressions even though both groups are discontent. The Paniyas expressed that even their human existence is not respected by the development planners. They are treated as lesser humans and the pittance distributed among them is being stolen by the powerful. They are totally in a dependent state and this force them to criticise the development initiatives. As the extent of marginalisation and deprivation is higher they are at the forefront of resistance movements for land and its resources. All the more, the youngsters are not able to stand the marginalisation and they are forming a defiant and resistant identity.

Naran, the Kurichia Karanavan was also mocking at the planners' lack of common sense which could not see the difference in their cultures. At the same time, as they are able to build their minimum subsistence with the resources they have, they are far less dependent on state sponsored development. Thus, as a whole they were not totally defiant or rebellious to the development initiatives but have tried to elicit maximum benefits with the better material and cultural capital that they possess. Interestingly however, their utilisation of development programmes has not blunted their analysis of the state, bureaucracy and the non-Adivasi model and culture of development.

State's Perceptions vs. Adivasi Perception

What is perceived as ‘commons’ (common lands) by the Adivasi people is perceived as ‘waste land’ by the state and non-Adivasis. During the feudal and British times there were plenty of common lands with open access to all social groups but owned by none. The concept of private property (exclusive ownership of land) and the administrative regime by the state began from when the British legalised the exclusive power of the private owner, thereby restricting the access of others. The Adivasis who believe in the philosophy of communal ownership and customary rights hoped that the resources from land and forest will permanently be theirs and would be inherited by their future generations. For them, land was not a private property but they belonged to the land. This perception of land by the Adivasis has been totally altered by the British law; even now the Paniyas have not freely internalised the concept of private property. Their need for communal ownership is articulated in manifold ways like ‘we have dug only a root’, ‘but “they” are calling us thieves’. However, today they have started rejecting these comments and during an interview, Nellan a Paniya affirmed,

> We are taking the fruits of the earth. We do not go for stealing money from the bank or steal gold like the non-Adivasi people.

A Paniya youth Viju reported,

> Even if non-Adivasis are not using different edible roots such as Noorakkizhangu, Narakizhangu and firewood by themselves, many of them hesitate to give it to us. Then the only way left is to take it without their notice.

Here we can sense two levels of consciousness and two kinds of world views. The Paniyas are called thieves when they take firewood or some food material from the neighbours’ land which was the common land they freely accessed decades ago and now an unknown law imposed on them has banned their access to those lands. It is noteworthy that the Paniyas are generally not caught for stealing valuables, like the non-Adivasis. What they collect from their neighbourhood is part of their nomadic culture and out of necessity for their survival. The tendency to describe Paniyas as thieves, murderers, and naxalites re-emerged especially during the Muthanga land struggle to stop them from land acquisition.

In the everyday as well as the organised struggles of the Adivasis, we see that accessibility to land and resources was their greatest dream. Historically, most of their conflicts and contestations revolved around right to land and its resources than a protest

for more benefits and concessions from the Adivasi department or government. The government, Adivasi development departments and non-Adivasis were deaf to this cry. The perception that "Adivasis need land only for housing" persisted for long and this view was reflected in all development planning for Adivasis in Wayanad. In the Muthanga struggle, as we shall see below, Adivasis attempt to reformulate this development frame of the state.

Muthanga Struggle – Reclamation of their Material, Cultural and Political Worlds

Muthanga struggle described in Chapter IV highlighted the material, cultural and political importance of land in Adivasi life. At Muthanga, they challenged the 'mainstream development' process and proclaimed that another development is possible which respect the pluriform expressions of life.

Ammu an AGMS activist from Kurichia community stated,

> Janu has shown us the way. Through Janu, I realised that without people's mobilisation and action in a movement, thegovernment is not going to give us land. Even though there is a rule for us to acquire revenue land and vested forest, political parties had hidden the fact from us for long. The political party's goal is to spread their stronghold among us and not our self development. On the contrary, the AGMS organised the people who do not have land and empowered us to ask for our rights and it was a long process. Under Janu's leadership, we acquired land in Panavally in 1995. Around fifty families occupied the land from Paniya, Kurichia, Kattunayaka, and Adiya communities. But till now we have not been provided with house numbers and ration cards. We are not called for any meeting in the panchayat. After we acquired this land under Janu's leadership, the Marxist Party acquired another hill called Kappikkunnu to show that they are also capturing land for Adivasis. The Party tried its best to alienate our group from here but since we are informed by Janu that this is vested forest meant for Adivasis we resisted their move and they could not displace us from here.

Panavally in Thirunelli Panchayat stands as a victorious symbol of Janu's land struggles where Paniya, Adiya, Kurichia and Kattunayaka communities live together to prove that they even abandon their clan structure and differentiations when they gather around the issue of land.

C.K Janu said,

> All Adivasi issues are related to the issue of land and I could organise all the sections of Adivasis throughout Kerala under this issue. The Adivasis are forgetting all their differences and being united around the issue of land. The Paniyas and Kurichias

> fought together for land as they realised landlessness is powerlessness and being landless, they become subservient to the landed class.

When Adivasi people are at the verge of extinction, AGMS's priority is survival of their people and according to them that survival is related to land and its resources. Janu and other Paniya leaders were of the opinion that if they cease to survive with dignity, where is the need for schools, health facilities and infrastructure? They stressed land as the basis of their culture and basic asset for their day to day living, and distribution of land and the relationship they attach to land has to be given first priority for other developmental programmes to become meaningful.

AGMS is against the development policies of the government, which aims at making profit at the cost of their tradition, culture and food patterns. The leaders of Muthanga struggle asked, "Development is for whom and for what if it is killing people and nature by selling the resources to the multinational companies?" Janu said that Adivasis still perceive the sacredness in the land, trees, mountains, streams and animals. Janu challenged the 'mainstream development' by saying "Adivasis never privatised water or asked user fee to anybody who came to share it with them, nor did they destroy it in the name of development". She expressed their efficiency to take responsibility for their development as it is happening in Aralam Farm. She stated,

> When the company was in charge of the farm, all the products were taken by multinational companies. Now the local market at Aralam has developed and become so lively since the Adivasis prefer to sell their produce in the local market. Their produce is poison free and can be used by the local people as they do not use fertilisers and pesticides in their field.

According to the Adivasis, their land struggle rooted in their culture is not only for them but for the entire humanity. In this regard, they recalled that in Plachimada, in Palakkad District, Kerala the Adivasis had gone on struggle against ground water exploitation and environmental pollution caused by the Coco Cola Company towards the protection of their land and water rights. The stoppage of the running of the Company helped the Adivasis to retrieve the stream they depended for domestic use. They can go and have a bath in the *thodu*, wash their clothes and bring water in small pots now. But as per their narratives the non-Adivasi large scale farmers became the main beneficiaries of the Adivasi struggle as they could continue the use of pump sets for irrigating their agricultural land as before.

Many Dalit leaders also supported the Adivasi way of treating nature as a superior unlike majority of the non Adivasis who see it as foolish. A Dalit supporter of Adivasi struggle said,

> Today life in its pure form exists only among Adivasis and if others are not able to see it and practice it, they are on the way towards destruction. For instance, the relationship between human being and nature is so alive among them. On the contrary, modern science has become a profit making, comfort making machine and neglects this relationship with nature.

According to Roy Burman (2010), the Adivasi cultures are distinct and they adapt to their specific historical ecological contexts but a common thread connecting all these cultures is their rootedness in the surroundings and empathetic extension of self to the animate and inanimate world around them. However, we cannot deny the fact that they very quietly promote a life culture against the death culture of 'modern development' trends. Janu stated, "We are going to heal the environment spoilt by an industrial paper company in Muthanga".

Steur (2009) expresses the environmentalist's views, "Real Adivasis would never be so militant", "Janu is just an innocent girl (*pawam kutty*)" and so on. In the interview with another environmental activist, he said that the Paniyas are people of dance and song and that they had been forcefully taken for land strike by Janu. This indicates that even environmentalists are trying to romanticise Adivasi culture to stop them from using cultural assertion as a political tool for achieving their basic rights–their land and livelihood around that. The environmentalists very easily forget the fact that land is their dancing ground and ancestral worship place which promises them a living. However, by symbolically restricting non-Adivasi's entry to the area occupied and by symbolically declaring self rule, Adivasis negated the romantic ideas people attach to them and proved that they are a politically conscious group and can assert their rights in forceful ways. Adivasi leader C.K Janu affirms, "We will have to build huts again and again. There is no other method of struggle that catches the attention of the government. We are finding out all the places where land is available" (Interview by Rekharaj 2008).

Cheran (63) an AGMS worker, called out the slogan *"Enkada poomi Enkakku"* (Give our land to our people) with so much spirit and enthusiasm and he explained the story of the land in Aralam farm. Before the government acquired this land in Aralam, this land

was Paniyas' land and from them a Haji owned it. From Haji, the government took it and declared it as government farm.

The Paniyas settled there reported that Aralam is one of the most fertile lands in Kerala and when the government was running the farm, it was running on loss. After the Adivasis' continuous agitation for land, th government used the state's Tribal Sub Plan (TSP) fund for three consecutive years (2003, 2004 and 2005) and bought this land from the Centre for Rs. 42 crores to distribute it to the Adivasis. Altogether, it was 7500 acres. The Government again put the condition that only 3500 acres will be given to the Adivasis and 3000 will be given back to the company. Nearly 840 families have got one acre land each and most of them are Paniyas. According to the contract, 1780 families were promised land in August 2007. Adivasi leader C.K Janu claims that they got 3500 acres in Aralam farm and that they have to plan strategies to get the remaining land (Interview by Rekharaj 2008).

The Adivasis expressed their plan to continue the strike until they get the benefits, which were promised, in the contract by the government like economic help for five years. In the agreement made with AGMS for land government mentioned that a five-year livelihood programme is to be implemented in the land until it become fully productive for Adivasis to sustain themselves but it is not fulfilled.

Malu from Alippura Paniya colony shares, "We went on a struggle for getting land. We have no place even for burying our dead. We have only four cents of land where our house is situated. We need some land at least to plant a few tapioca to eat. We are not getting even wage labour today and how can we survive."

Non-Adivasi people and even government and non-government agencies used to say that the Paniyas are slaves and they do not have the history of land ownership to escape the injustice done to them by capturing all common properties through different laws and policies. But Paniya elders affirmed that their accessibility to land, forest and its resources, has never been threatened at any point in history, as it is today; they maintain that Wayanad has become the battle ground of land mafias. Private property right 'enclosed' all their common property resources, including the small *thottirampu* (sides of small rivers and streams). While the government postponed the resurvey due to lack of

infrastructure and personnel, the eagle eyes of land mafia survey each nook and corner and fix prices for land as it is found the most profitable commodity in Wayanad. And they very well know that they can get the *Pattayam* for any land with money. So land has become a rare commodity in official records to distribute to the Adivasis even though there were few favourable laws and policies during the 1970s and a historical agreement with Adivasi people in the year 2001.

The Adivasis were disheartened and they agitated against the brutality unleashed on them at Muthanga. Affected with the rumours spread by political parties and settlers, some of them even believed that Janu had cheated them and abandoned them when they met with police atrocity.71 The AGMS could not strengthen their grassroots mobilisation after Muthanga, defending CPI (M) and the settled community, which used all its might and tactics to defame the Muthanga struggle by attributing the support of Tamil Tigers, Naxalites and foreign agencies in the resistance movement. Also the huge number of court cases in Adivasis' name paralysed them as it demanded time and money and they could not continue the mobilisation. However, there were Paniyas and Kurichias in the study area who affirmed their determination to continue their struggle inspite of their enormous suffering. For instance, Kunjiparu from Alippura colony stated,

> If Janu is calling us for strike and if it is for land we will go again. We are beaten and harassed for going on strike. But we believe that without land we cannot survive any more. It is not to make big mansions as everybody does but just to earn our livelihood and to educate our children and to continue our cultural traditions. Even though we have to suffer hunger or death, we will go on strike. Being part of AGMS, my fear has gone. I am illiterate, but I stood for the panchayat election. And I am proud that I got Adivasi votes without distributing liquor, money or food as the party people do it in our colonies.

AGMS's strike is so much related to the relationship they hold to their land. That gave them energy and they became one group as Adivasis forgetting their past slavery and restrictions and differences. Adivasi Mooppans become the spiritual performer and through him, they respond to the call of their ancestors. They realised this call as the re-acclamation of their lands for their survival and to keep it for the future generation without wounding it more than its limits and AGMS became a great channel to realise

71 In Thirunelli Panchayat Paniya and Kurichia communities said that CPI (M) party has shown CD's depicting Janu deserting her own people at the time of police brutality and they convince *Adivasis* that she makes money for herself and not for Adivasi cause. Her house (incomplete due to lack of money) with three rooms, veranda and kitchen is depicted as a mansion by many of the party leaders while I was interviewing them. Also Janu reported that one Marxist party follower published this news in the Malayalam magazine and she sent a lawyers notice against it.

that call. History reveals that when Adivasi land and natural resources are looted in the name of development and when they face threat to survival they resisted in many areas like Bastar72, Kalinganagar73 etc. In Muthanga, the Adivasis realised that their 'culture itself is a site of political struggle'. Baviskar (2008) discusses the cultural politics underlying the natural resource struggle and how it treats identities, interests and resources and involved in the dynamics of cultural production and reproduction. In Muthanga, the Adivasis could disseminate their political consciousness of cultural superiority by challenging the development agencies interventions in destroying the land, forests and environment their resources for survival in the name of development.

Baviskar (2008) highlights that the enclosure movement, which was part of the great sweeping change in property relations, turned peasants into proletarians in Britain. She points out that the commons were crucial to the subsistence of English peasants who protested fiercely against the institution of draconian laws like the Black Act that cut off their resources previously guaranteed. However, the moral economy that asserted the right of commons to the landless Adivasis is threatened by privatisation of biodiversity and land. Paniyas and Kurichias in Wayanad too considered the fallow lands and forest resources as nature's bounty which is not manufactured by humans and thus not to be privately appropriated or commoditised. They never believed in the incorporation of these sources of subsistence into an economy of profit. However, the land and forest policies during the British and Independent period neglected the cultural right of Adivasis over common land and forest resources. Further, the encroachments and the cultural politics played by the dominant groups alienated them from their remaining commons like *kavus*, trees and burial lands which they kept sacredly as extension of their own selves, and the abode of their gods. Thus, the loss of natural resources leads Paniyas and Kurichias to alienation from their own culture and identity and leads them to illhealth. Anderson and Huber (1988) point out that to the corporate, a tree is a resource for cash flow, to the forest department it was capital to be reserved and protected from Adivasis and to the bankers and planners, it was a substitute for other trees as sources of paper. They points

72 Adivasi resistance against the Industrial development planned for Bastar by the World Bank to convert Bastar forest into a pine plantation and establish pulp and paper industry during the seventies (Anderson and Huber, 1988).

73 Adivasi resistance against the Jindal Stainless Steel project in Kalinganagar, Orissa displacing Ho, Mundal and Santal tribes.

out that the outsiders consider forest as an environment but for the Adivasis, it is their home. Through land struggles they own up their marginality due to landlessness and assert the need for land for their development.

Conclusion

The development of Adivasis from the colonial period onwards does not resonate with their culture and customary rights and there is conflict and apathy with state initiated policies and programmes. In the Adivasi world view, land not only has material value but also assumes symbolic significance; they bestow special reverence to land and its resources. Thus, landlessness is a denial of their material and symbolic worlds. Lack of recognition of Adivasi rights on land and their relation with land by fully succumbing to the land policies of the British is the cognitive violence underlying the land reforms and it has to be acknowledged and addressed by implementing a second set of land reforms. However, the landlessness and continuous struggle and resistance of Adivasis and Dalits for land and the surplus and untitled lands held by the plantation owners and rich landed class in Wayanad even today reveals the futility of land reforms to the Adivasis in Kerala.

An unfulfilled effort is being made to address the land question of the Adivasis and the historical injustice done to them. However, there is lack of political will to give land to the Adivasis as the state and judiciary are allied with the powerful group as capital determines the power relations. The positive policies and programmes are not reaching the landless Paniyas or they are not of much use to both the communities since these policies and programmes do not consider their knowledge and world views or their cultural and ecological setting. However, the Kurichia community is in a comparatively better position in accruing benefits due to its land base and the socio, political and cultural advantages associated with that.

The Adivasis strongly oppose the commodification of land and its resources and have been asserting for an economy that is embedded in the societal relationship and ecologically grounded practices. In an era of modern capitalist development and the various ecological problems accumulating around it, the Adivasis' attempt to show a way forward to upgrade the life sustaining capacity of nature and its resources centred on land and production of life rather than commodification of life sustaining resources for

economic progress and ‘development’. However, the modern discourse rooted in hierarchical power relations neglects the cultural values they hold and pull Adivasis towards this capitalist developmental model. Despite being in the midst of this push and pull and enormous amount of suffering, they put forth a powerful critique of state development programmes which neglect their relation to land and nature, and which deny their cultural evolution. The Adivasi leaders are found to be very optimistic about their ability to build another development culture which protects nature and human beings if they are provided with land.

The state and the capitalist society deny the material and symbolic worlds of the Adivasis and thus exert violence in manifold ways and this presses them towards resistance to regain their worlds which is centered on land and related resources. Their resistance at Muthanga put forth a different pattern of human and social development based on plural cultures and values of ecological, social and cognitive justice. Their resistant movements highlight another discourse on Adivasi identity, culture, politics and development different from the ‘mainstream’ articulations of them as ‘other’ and ‘backward’.

CHAPTER IX

Conclusion

Until the lion can tell his own stories, tales of the hunt will be told by the hunter.[74]

-Old African Proverb

This study intended to gain an insight into the perceptions and experiences of development of the Adivasis in Wayanad and their responses to state initiated development policies and programmes. By exploring the experiences of development of two different Adivasi communities, this study attempted to understand their differential development outcomes, the processes of marginalisation and the reproduction of historical advantages and disadvantages. When profit oriented economic rationality rules the entire world, the Adivasi world views pose a challenge by believing in the philosophy of living for the day respecting the limits of the earth. The Adivasi narratives affirm that the development policies and programmes envisioned for them by the state do not recognise or acknowledge their world views and epistemologies and only contribute to their marginalisation.

Schools and states' various educational programmes not only assume inferiority of Adivasi culture and knowledge but are structures that actively reproduce Adivasis marginal positions in society.The Adivasi culture and languages are not recognised as official languages in school and their usage is labeled as 'backwardness'. So Paniya and Kurichia children do not dare to speak in their own languages in school and also try to hide their natural identity by claiming the dominant Hindu religious identity within the classrooms. It appears that educational institutions run by religious agencies are together with the government in 'redeeming' Adivasi culture and helping them 'merge' with the

74 Taken from Lincoln and Denzin (2008)

'mainstream'. As Sundar (2009) argues, the state's acts of omission and commission are central to the enterprise of religious mobilisation in educational institutions.

The establishment of separate Model Residential Schools (MRSs), hostels or special schools for Adivasis does not address the issues of social and cultural alienation that they face without changing the dominant discourses on what constitutes legitimate knowledge and finding legitimate space for Adivasi perception and their knowledge within the formal curriculum. The mismatch between formal schooling and the everyday lives of Adivasi children resulting in their intrinsic exclusion is neither recognised nor addressed through the state's policy reform processes. The National Curriculum Framework Review reports that the organisation of the Indian education system reflects clearly the caste, class and tribe stratified structure of the society, and its hierarchical ideology (NCFR 2005). The cultural hegemony of the dominant groups/classes, the identity as tribe, dominant, asymmetric gender constructions, the identity as slave caste in the feudal and colonial periods, and the complex interface of all these play their role in perpetuating inequality in the education of Adivasi children. Inequality ingrained in society gets transferred to the school through non-Adivasi teachers, and the school and the educational administration. The educational system has evolved a performance evaluation system entirely based on the non-Adivasi student's performance, to evaluate the Adivasi students.

The two communities, the Paniyas and the Kurichias cope with or resist the process of education in different ways. The Kurichia students are more resilient although they too experience exclusion and exploitation, but to a lesser degree. They respond differently due to their material, social and cultural advantages and the consequent assertion of power as a community. In the case of the Kurichias, their land provides them better economic security and social identity as it acts as a social, cultural and symbolic capital in the Wayanad context where Brahmin *jenmis* were considered the sole owners of the landed property. Also the landedness and subsistence built on it reduced the dependency of the Kurichias on dominant classes and the government, and provided them with better bargaining capacities unlike the totally dependent Paniya wage labourers. This provided Kurichia children better acceptability in schools located in their neighbourhoods. However, their generic identity as tribes gets crystallised in the broader context of

National citizenship beyond their locality even within Kerala. Both the communities undergo different degrees of violence and conflict that form their subjectivities differently interfering with their learning and curtailing their cognitive capacities.

Along with a critical understanding of social structures as well as their ideological reproduction through educational institutions, understanding the subjective experience of violence and exclusion in everyday schooling is very important to explain the differential educational experiences and outcomes among Adivasi communities. The responses of the communities reveal that systematic violence can cripple the individual's and community's ability to resist domination and even to access policies and programmes purported to 'empower' them such as schooling and education. In fact, in many ways, educational institutions and programmes meant for Adivasis exacerbates their marginality by rendering their knowledge and culture illegitimate and their bodies and subjectivities sites of overt and symbolic violence.

It emerges that the state supported, hegemonic social and cultural constructions of knowledge negate the specific culture of the Adivasi communities. Instead of pluralising the learning spaces, the state, through its policies and programmes, tries to consolidate the inequitable monoculture by legitimising and reproducing the inequalities and dominant cultural practices. The education system and the pedagogic actions resist recognising and legitimising Adivasi knowledge, perhaps because it carries elements that contest the dominant mono cultural trends of society. Thus, trends like establishing model residential schools and hostels or incorporating a lesson on their slavery and exploitation or including one of their cultural programmes in the curriculum, or beginning an archery academy cannot solve the exclusion and marginalisation they face. A wide range of issues such as the cultural hegemony of the dominant groups/classes, their identity as tribe, gender, their identity as a slave caste in the feudal and colonial periods, and the complex interface of all these play their role in perpetuating inequality in the education of Adivasi children and this has to be addressed by remoulding the curriculum and pedagogy by giving space to Adivasis world views and epistemologies.

Cognitive violence is meted out to Adivasi children in their everyday schooling in subtle forms such as attributing genetic backwardness, poor IQ and learning capacities to them and considering them 'lesser human beings'. The Kurichias as well as the Paniyas expressed in manifold ways that their cultural evolution is curtailed through today's education, and that their knowledge of agriculture and their different culture which respects all life forms have no place in the education offered to them. A rich culture with pluriform expressions have no space to flourish. Thus, as they assert, without addressing the epistemic violence which exclude Adivasi world views, vast knowledge base and ways of knowing, there cannot be an educational development which is meaningful to Adivasis.

This monoculture trends however, are not limited to education alone but to the entire life situation of Adivasis and their habitats. For instance, the spread of monoculture cash crop and the resultant deforestation and degradation of environmental resources have far reaching effects on the indigenous knowledge systems as well as Adivasi survival and health. Chapter V discusses how resource depletion, knowledge depletion and the hegemonic interventions of the state are detrimental to their health and well-being. It emerges that Adivasi culture is against universal models or universal cause effect relations like that of the western medical model, which is centered on the antagonistic biological perception of health that negates the significant influence of culture and environment.

The Adivasis believe in several interpretations of the same reality and the context and the experience of the subject becomes the basis for their interpretations. Thus, in understanding health they include social, cultural, environmental and spiritual concerns along with biological interpretations of ill health. Their conceptualisation of health and illness encompasses land, environment, community, rituals and their spirituality and the disconnection with any of these areas cause imbalance and lead to ill health. The compartmentalised fragmented approach to health is alien to their culture and they point out the chances of objectification in this approach. While the dominant constructions of modern medicine alienate them from their culture and healing practices, the commercial trends destroy their wealth of herbs and clean and natural environment. Adivasi world

views are dominated by a ‘moral order’ encompassing the whole cosmos and is therefore superior to the ‘technological order’ which is bound by things. Adivasis thus put forth a critique of the superiority of a biomedical paradigm perpetuated and reproduced by state institutions through special support at the cost of other systems including their own Adivasi *vaidyam* (medicine).

Further, the unequal power relations in the health system become acute for the Adivasis as they experience double alienation. The world of medical knowledge is alien to them and at the same time, they experience the discriminatory social practices and alien cultural practices of the medical institutions. They experience discrimination in the same institutions which provide assistance to them. Their etiquette and social relations are described as ‘primitive’ and their rituals and spiritual healing practices are considered superstitions by the modern world of medicine. The Paniyas and Kurichias offer a strong critique of the modern medical system, which gives them aid on one side and marginalises them on the other. The Adivasis affirm that through their naturalistic and spiritual healing practices, they regain balance as individuals and as communities. They point out that their *vaidyans* and healers have proved that their herbal medicines can cure diseases that modern medicine cannot cure.

Even though Adivasis still hold strong faith in herbs to heal sickness, they acknowledge the diminishing sources of herbs through various development interventions and remain open to other systems of medicine. They are also aware that the lifestyles and food consumption patterns have changed and do not blindly believe that all poisons can be removed from their bodies through herbs. They acknowledge that they are facing new health risks, which were not common earlier and are thus open to other systems of medicine. They are pragmatic in choosing medical assistance according to their specific contexts.

The healing practices of the Adivasis are context specific. The Paniyas’ slave history and lack of access to herbs forced them to develop more spiritual healing practices as compared to herbal healing practices. In contrast, the Kurichias were able to continue their healing with more elaborate herbal medicines. Their small landholdings, access to

various resources and minimum government support helped them to hold on to their herbal healing practices along with spiritual healing.

From the analysis in the various chapters, it emerges that the Adivasis have a different world view. They do not bifurcate the sacred and the secular, the material and the cultural but seek harmony in the pluriform expressions of life. The human and the non-human world merges in the stories of their elders and through these stories, they teach their youngsters that nature and animals too have feelings and a consciousness like human beings and they learn to revere them all. A Paniya teacher conveyed that their stories and folk songs are fading from their memories and she cherished her childhood memories of her grandfather telling her these stories at bedtime. As Roy Burman (2010) points out, one common trait of Adivasi culture is their rootedness in the surroundings and their empathetic connection with the animate and inanimate world around them. The realm of the living and the departed unite in their ritual practices and the material world and the world of the spirits merge while subjectifying the god experience through their ritual practices. The ancestors are living spirits who have the power to bless and punish them. They believe in the energy emanating from the animate and the inanimate, from the spirits of the living and the dead, from their thoughts and emotions. Nature becomes an extension of their being and they move according to the natural cycle more than the time space concept of the modern world which indulges in rational calculations for the future and acts as the main pillar of capitalist progress.

The power structures as well as development discourse failed to perceive the cultural distinctiveness of tribal people and their embeddedness with land and nature. When the state and its hegemonic structures perceive land as a productive force with a commercial interest, tribal people hold a material and spiritual relationship with land and call it ‘mother’. Land becomes a prerequisite for them to receive blessings from their ancestors as it is perceived as the abode of their ancestors. The spiritual connection with land helps them to keep away from commercial interest and the profit motive and hold on to a moral economy which sustains nature as well as people harmoniously. Shah (2011) analyzes the indigenous politics, environmentalism and insurgency in the newly formed Jharkhand state and explores its limitations to address the issues of the Munda tribe and advocates

the need for a moral politics endorsed by the Munda spirits that is neither self interested nor divisive, and which is reinforced by the values of egalitarianism, consensus in decision making and mutual aid.

Thus, the inability of the Paniyas and the Kurichias to participate in the development initiated by the government should be considered a form of epistemic violence. Unless there is epistemic and cognitive justice, they will continue to remain at the periphery. In the spheres of education and health and generally in the development discourse itself, the state continues to negate the epistemic significance of tribal knowledge.

The Adivasis, especially the Paniyas, are facing a situation of second slavery as they are still deprived of land and resources. Their labour and their women are exploited in different ways through Kodagu labour, other forms of migrant labour and domestic labour. Without addressing these core issues, the development programmes of the state will remain ineffective. However, the Paniyas are well aware of these attempts and have started problematising the development programmes and policies which deprive them of their basic rights and continue to keep them in a dependent existence as wage labourers without any protection. The Paniyas, especially some of the men folk, resort to alcoholism and develop a defiant identity as they face increasing alienation and dehumanisation. The Kurichias had minimum subsistence, which gave them basic protection and as a result they experienced less alienation when compared to the Paniyas. Their resistance towards the state and its development apparatus was found to be less. As mentioned earlier, land acts as material as well as social and cultural capital for the Kurichias and they accrue the benefits of their landedness. Their subsistence agriculture gives them a sense of belonging that helps to consolidate their community ties with both officials and non-Adivasis in the area. The Kurichia leaders used this symbolic and cultural capital centered on land for asserting their identity, culture, politics as well as the self sustaining systems of agricultural practices in Wayanad.

The NREGS and the promise of 100 days of wage work is a pittance to the Paniyas in the midst of the trauma and violence they experienced. It emerges that the cultural alienation of the Paniyas is more in NREGS than in other wage labour opportunities in

the locality, as it did not cater to even the food and firewood needs of the people. Again, it did not provide space for their creative participation incorporating their knowledge of the specific work undertaken. For instance, their knowledge and skills in paddy cultivation, forest regeneration and protection of ponds and river banks have been totally ignored while designing and implementing NREGS work. Thus, even in NREGS, Kurichias landedness provided them better creative involvement in decision making. Thus, the differential experiences of both communities in development indicate mainly the centrality of land in Adivasi life.

The Adivasis have a deep connect with land. Even after years of 'mainstreaming' and policies that alienate them from land and forest, their connection with land has not reduced. The Adivasi relationship with land is not just material but cultural and spiritual and they want to pursue a development which is different from that of dominant society. They never uttered the word 'profit' while discussing their land and agricultural practices, but criticised the non-Adivasi tendency to produce maximum profit at the cost of killing earth and its micro-organisms through uncontrollable use of chemicals and pesticides. Generally, words such as 'market' and 'profit' were absent in their vocabulary, unlike the non-Adivasis who invariably begin their conversation by saying, "Agriculture is not profitable today". All their cultural and spiritual practices are tied to land. Moreover, they are not projecting a romantic relationship with land but their knowledge and wisdom about nature is contextual. It has been developed through years of observation and coexistence as they lived a life close to nature and made a living from the fruits of it. As a Kurichia Karanavan revealed, they still have knowledge of more than 50 indigenous seed varieties of paddy. A Paniya youth shared that her mother had knowledge about more than 80 varieties of leafy vegetables and edible roots; a Kurichia youth said that they had better knowledge than the forest officials about trees that can be grown in different parts of the Western Ghats according to the contours and altitude. The practical knowledge and wisdom they gained cannot be belittled. However, as this study has shown, development of modern science and technology excluded the Adivasis by labeling them ignorant and irrational and rejected the rich wealth of their traditional knowledge. The Adivasis are given little or no credit for their vast knowledge as their language is not domineering and

as their knowledge is subjugated by the colonial legacy and post colonial power structures.

Further, the Adivasi community is built around land which binds them instead of isolating them into private enclaves as in the case of other dominant cultures. They had customary laws for protecting land and for accessing its resources for the survival of the communities in the past. The tradition based on community stewardship made the caring of nature and the sharing of its produce easy and natural to them. At present, in Wayanad, Kurichia *tharavads* attempt to keep this community spirit alive through joint cultivation practices in their paddy fields and ritual practices around their *kavu*. The Paniyas keep this community spirit alive by sharing their small plots of land with other Paniya community members who do not have any land even for constructing a hut and by keeping at least a tree as a symbol of reverence and for ritual practices where they have no land for keeping a *kavu*. Trees symbolically represent the last frontiers of the Adivasis' right for space and territory. However, keeping a patch of land barren or as *kavu* is considered foolish by the dominant capitalist culture and the big plantations are depicted as the glory of Wayanad as the cash crops guarantee foreign exchange for the state.

This study reveals that the development policies of the state strongly perpetuate the belief that private ownership is efficient and that state management is better, as according to them, it generates revenue, increases production and foreign exchange, and facilitates progress. The establishment of plantations and the establishment of private and state forests at the cost of community management are the best examples of this misleading notion. However, today Adivasis are forced to accept the law of private ownership of land. It emerges that their fight for private property (one to five acres of land) did not convey the urge for private accumulation and increased production, but focused on their need for security and survival. Through asserting their land rights, the Adivasis are seeking protection from the rage of the 'masters' who call them 'thieves' when they fetch firewood or an edible root from the 'masters' private property. Even though they are not for 'isolated spaces' and 'private enclaves', they are forced to abide by the Roman property laws which are grafted in the Indian soil by the colonial rulers as it is the only option left for them. The community rights promised in the Forest Act 2006 is a ray of

hope to assert their customary rights as it has legal sanction, though it has not materialised in Kerala till now. However, the Forest Right Act 2006 brought out through the people's movement forced the state to acknowledge the need for community support especially Adivasi support in protecting forest resources. But the state refuses to impart the right to Adivasis while accessing their help to protect the forest and collect its resources that are sold through government cooperatives. Only the British law of land acquisition and private property laws are acceptable to the state and the territorial right or the customary right that people have enjoyed for centuries has been banned by an alien law. Varghese (1970) observes that British writers themselves acknowledged their unwise decision in considering the entire land of Malabar including waste land as private *jenmam* or government *jenmam* lands.

The state's interventions indicate that it has not yet perceived the Adivasi traditions and customary rights or their material, cultural and spiritual connection with land an important factor. The land distribution process, which was forced by Adivasi struggles, does not take into consideration their world views such as community ownership of land even though it is stipulated in the Forest Rights Act 2006. The Adivasi agency affirmed on different platforms that it is necessary to establish the link between land ownership and Adivasi life and their development instead of sticking to the policy of assistance. Thus, it is all the more important to recognise the link between Adivasis landlessness and the history of state policies and the link between landlessness and their marginalisation. As Veena Das and others observed, the State's violence can affect the subjectivities of the people. The State's continuous violation of the promise of giving land to the Adivasis and the brutal suppression of their resistance through police force as described in the chapter on land has caused mistrust among the Adivasis. They may remain stateless within the state structures by not paying taxes and by not paying user fees to the state and to the agencies that looted all the natural wealth, which they had accessed freely for centuries.

However, the Adivasis assert that without addressing the issue of land, there cannot be any inclusive development. The Adivasi narratives reveal that they received land only through their continuous struggles and that too only in very few cases. The state's land distribution plan still remains on paper and is confined only to five cents or ten cents per

family. Not only the capitalist producer but the state also perceives that land is only for productive purposes to make profit, and thus profit oriented development projects become the priority of the state.

The development experiences of the two communities affirm that the material, cultural, environmental, moral and spiritual factors are important in assessing their development trajectories and it is through their relation with land, their own land - common land and forest land - that they realise and reproduce their world views, epistemologies and community life. Alienating them from all these lands and denying them access are strategies that reproduce the structural inequality that marginalises them not only materially but also culturally and cognitively. In the following section, we revisit the theories that help explain Adivasi realities in the light of their experiences.

Ecological crisis is widespread and has become a global issue in current capitalist development. Finance capital continues its drive for profit and faster technology at the cost of environmental destruction. Modern science disregards traditional wisdom and knowledge about sustainable models and divides the whole complex reality into parts to control and establish power through technology. At this juncture, ecological Marxism explored by O'Connor (1998) and Foster (2001) looks critically into development projects and proposes self management and conservation more than accumulation and unending growth at the cost of human beings and nature. It believes in the production of life and regeneration of natural resources instead of surplus generation and thus reflects the Adivasi world views about nature partially. Thus, ecological Marxism helps to understand and analyzes Adivasi development as it promotes earth centered ethics and local sustainable models of production. Adivasis firmly believe that they cannot limit earth and its resources as 'conditions for production' as ecological Marxists formulate in their theories, and thus Adivasi world views go beyond the ontological and epistemological limits of ecological Marxism. However, as Roy Burman (2004) observes, as people having cultures permeated with closeness to nature and empathetic identification with specific forms of nature, one cannot avoid the vanguard role of Adivasis in the 21st century to protect nature as the working class had enacted in the 19th century.

Adivasi narratives reveal that there is need to move beyond the ecological Marxist perspective and draw attention to the cultural politics and the agency of the people involved in reproducing and challenging inequalities and exclusions around resources and world views. Polanyi's (1964) concept of embeddedness in contrast to market commodification of land and labour contributes to the Adivasi vision of sociality and land relations. As Baviskar (1995) argues, there is need to move beyond the ecological consciousness and embrace the cultural traditions of Adivasis to develop a powerful visionary critique of development despite the contradictions embedded in their lived reality. Further, Baviskar (2008) unravels the cultural politics around natural resources and elaborates on how this affects the lives of the poor and backward classes. According to her, 'a cultural politics of natural resources treats identities, interests and resources not as predetermined givens, but as emergent products of the practices of cultural production and reproduction' (2008:7). In Wayanad, this role of Adivasis is crucial, because environmentalists and even KSSP, the most radical science wing, were against giving ecologically fragile land to the Adivasis (Chathukulam and Jose 2006). The non-Adivasi perceptions and land distribution processes in Wayanad reveal that the land, which was suitable for production or other purposes is not meant for Adivasis as they are 'lazy' and do not generate maximum profit or foreign exchange through the commodification of land.

Eco feminists and feminist environmentalists recognise that women care for the environment more than men do due to their subsistence roles in the family. They believe in the 'production of life' rather than the 'production of profit' and this is especially true about Adivasi women. Adivasi women are more involved in subsistence roles of caring and nurturing than Adivasi men. The destruction of natural resources, their commons and land affect Adivasi women more as it affects their subsistence roles. For them fetching firewood, water and food items take longer hours and did not suffice for their day today needs. The economic contribution of women was appreciated when common resources were plenty. Today, women are entrusted with non-wage labour due to scarcity of wage labour. Women's dependence on men has thus increased, which in turn, diminished their status and increased the violence towards them. Sanskritisation promotes the trend of

controlling women and confining them to the household. Among the Adivasis, religious identity has become a tool to claim modernity; patriarchal norms are inherent in modern religious identities rather than in Adivasi identity and lifestyle, which gives due respect to nature and women. However, assimilation into other religions is an ongoing process initiated by various religions through charity, preaching and training. It is initiated from within the communities for assuming a modern identity. As Dietrich (1988) points out, there is need to create a mode of production which does not exploit nature, women and labour. As a second step, she draws our attention to the need to understand the connection between ecological and cultural crisis caused by the development model which is neo colonial, capitalist and patriarchal and violent towards the material and spiritual survival of people. These theories help understand the plight of Adivasi women in Wayanad, the threat to their life and other ill effects of development.

When we actually analyze the subjective experiences, we understand the inability of the Adivasis to participate in the development programmes because of the violence inherent in state interventions. The indigenous methodology advocated by Smith (2005) enlarges the scope by looking beyond well defined models, prioritising practice based theories and by incorporating an inclusive theoretical perspective including the Adivasis own critique of development.

The colonial mindset of seeing Adivasis as primitive and backward is still alive in Wayanad, even though the term, ‘primitive tribe’ has been changed to ‘particularly vulnerable groups’ in official records. It is evident from their critique that the huge corpus of administrative machinery arranged for Adivasi development fails to recognise the pluriform expressions of their culture and they involve a piecemeal approach that scatters their energies and neglects the existential rights of the Adivasis. They plan top down development models that do not resonate with Adivasi culture and philosophy. Thus, if the world views and epistemologies of the Adivasis are not taken seriously and incorporated into all their developmental plans, they cannot come out of the deep rooted alienation they face and it will perpetuate their distrust in the state and its administrative machinery.

The government policies and programmes for tribal development based on different approaches during the colonial and post colonial periods have made the indigenous life support systems of Adivasis weak and fragile. The creation of 'state' during British rule and its consolidation in the post independent period used the tactics of scientific rationality and progress to expropriate the resource base of the Adivasis in the name of national development. India's development is linked with Western industrialisation that relies to a great extent on the natural resource base on which the traditional communities depend for their survival. Thus, the experience with Adivasis led Elwin (ref) to advocate a strong isolationist approach. However, in the Wayanad context, they do not claim isolation but assert their identity, dignity and political sovereignty in 'mainstream' society through their movements for land rights and self rule. Assimilation and integration are buzz words to represent the state's approach towards Adivasis. It emerges that the concepts of 'social exclusion' and 'adverse inclusion' that Xaxa and Nathan use for representing their reality are more appropriate to represent the present situation of the Adivasis in Wayanad. They are excluded in the decisions regarding their self development and exploited. Internal colonialism as well as involvement of the external agencies and state deprived them from their traditional resource base and majority of them are confined in government established 'colonies' depending on the dominant non-Adivasi majority for their survival. The dominant cultures in Wayanad still attribute an uncultured, primitive and backward identity to the Adivasis. The administrators who work for Adivasi development pose that they know better than Adivasis themselves about what is good for them and plan development programmes. What is happening as a result of all these dehumanising experiences and use of violence is the ethnocide of a distinct group of people. The lifestyle of the Adivasis is generally considered inferior and the administrative machinery that has been set up destroys all their traditional resources and choices in the urge for modern development. The presence and growth of a parasitic society around Adivasis is the reality in Wayanad today and the exploitation of Paniyas in Kodagu is a grave example.

Literature on tribal development shows that worldwide, a whole lot of territorial resources of the Adivasis were taken away in the name of development by the state,

powerful individuals, private enterprises and trans-national corporations. The commercialisation of forest lands, agriculture and other common property resources in Wayanad caused maximum damage to the Adivasis and they have nothing to fall back upon and depend totally on the market for their survival. They are displaced from their own cultures, community and knowledge systems and the alien values of the dominant societies are superimposed on them. This system has evolved from the colonial systems of production and appropriation and developed through the industrial capitalist system, which is projected as modern and efficient. Through this process, the collective rights of people and command over their resources are substituted by the supremacy of the market. These modern development programs are counterproductive and have resulted in the erosion of the resource base, knowledge and power to self determination of the Adivasis. As a whole, the process of development has destroyed their traditional social economic and cultural structure without offering a better alternative.

The model of development that is centralised, authoritarian and non-participative caused a breakdown of the traditional life support system. Through their lived experience, they realised that resistance is the only way to restore their rights as equal citizens of India. Through resistance they are not only asserting their rights but showing another path to development of community ownership, subsistence economy, participatory democracy, consensus model of decision making and so on. The capitalist model of development has marginalised the tribal people as the concentration of means of production continues to be in the hands of plantation owners, the rich peasants and the state. The political lethargy in distributing land to the Adivasis and the history of the Adivasi movement based on self assertion through land rights affirms that resistance is the only way to create a political will favouring the marginalised.

When we look at the livelihood issues and development scenario of Adivasis in Wayanad, we realise that they share issues similar to those of other Adivasis in India. The state, its administrative machinery and the dominant ‘mainstream’ society try to hegemonise the Adivasi mind to maintain their inferior position and powerlessness, as the Adivasi hamlets are internal colonies to exploit as cheap labour. In the modernisation

paradigm of development, they lose control over natural resources, land and livelihoods and along with that they lose their rich traditional knowledge.

The various development policies and programmes implemented for Adivasis in Wayanad failed as the Adivasi world views and epistemologies have been ignored in the process of planning. Thus, before addressing corruption, mismanagement and non implementation of the programmes, there is need to check how much each programme resonates with Adivasi world views. The tribal development programmes actually conceal and perpetuate their conditions of marginality by pacifying them and by destroying the unity among them with their piecemeal approach. The tribal movements in Wayanad continuously tried to reveal their critical position and dissatisfaction with the development envisaged by the state. Thus, tribal development in their view point is nothing less than regaining the power to self determination and their right to forest, land and livelihoods. As their narratives reveal, the assimilation and so called integration approaches are tools for further exploitation. Self assertion through emerging movements is the alternative to rebuilding their socio economic political and cultural rights as Karlson (2000), Dietrich (1988) and Escobar (1992) point out.

Some Kurichiyas are better mobilised and hold onto their cultural identity as majority of them own land and are able to cope, resist and negotiate with the dominant development model compared to the Paniyas who resist or 'wither' away in the process of 'development'. Kurichias' landedness is the most important factor which gives them a superior cultural identity. The structures of inequality among different sections of tribal groups like the Paniyas and Kurichias are bound to produce and reproduce different levels of inequality. This is perpetuated in the asymmetries of modern development. Even the tribal development programs do not take into consideration their heterogeneity and the policies are designed and implemented without considering their specific contexts and subjectivities and both groups cannot participate in it equally.

The Kurichiyas and Paniyas do not want to own a common Adivasi identity, but their common struggles are centered on their land and resources in which both communities share different degrees of marginalisation. Their struggles are not identity struggles in the

true sense. What they want to affirm is not their Adivasiness or indigenousness, but they want to affirm their cultural and political rights to live a decent life. So in their struggle, they claim a pan Adivasi identity; in their everyday life, they chase the modern identity to escape the humiliations they face. They do not want to essentialise their Adivasiness, but want to claim back the land and resources that they lost by acknowledging and fighting against their marginality. Their narratives clearly indicate that they are aware of the second phase of slavery that they are getting into, which is crucial even though it is not visible like the first phase of slavery in the feudal period. More than physical brutality, the epistemological violence leads to their exclusion and marginalisation. Their struggle and initiatives to get out of their marginality by acknowledging and arresting the growth of multiple processes of marginalisation is important in the discourse of development.

Further, their land struggle clearly indicates the gap between the state's perception of development and the Adivasis own perceptions. The Paniyas and Kurichias expressed that land is the most important asset for their cultural assertion and self development and the struggles reported by them are mostly around land. Initiatives such as erecting the monument of Thalackal Chandu by the Kurichias to reclaim their leadership in the anti-colonial struggle in Wayanad, and mobilisation to erect the monument of Paniya Mooppan Karinthandan who disclosed the route from Thamarassery to Wayanad and was brutally killed by the British colonizers, are all part of rewriting the colonial history in Wayanad and reclaiming their identity. As Das et al (2001) have shown, when official history erases their great contributions against the colonial forces, the present generation uses its collective memory to rewrite history and challenge the officially constructed version.

In the context of dysfunctional *Oorukoottams*, the Adivasis in Wayanad demand PESA, which is within the limits of constitutional provisions, at least to enter into a dialogue with the dominant world views and to create a small space for their world views. The state is indifferent towards implementing PESA and thereby acknowledging the voice of the Adivasis and their minimum needs, which is land. The struggles of the Adivasis in Wayanad demand a different state and governance which involves less state intervention, more autonomy and self determination.

The Adivasis are the ones who articulated the intrinsic value of the earth and its resources when they came into conflict with the colonial power. Their fights were centered on *jal, jangal, jamin* and if others joined them in this struggle, neo-liberal colonialism and exploitation could have been blocked by the dawn of independence. While other freedom fighters fought against material slavery, the Adivasis recognised the cognitive slavery in implanting a British developmental model with its land laws and positivist epistemology. They spread this message to the rulers in the national and international arenas through the indigenous working group and this group contributes a great share to decolonise development. A transition from state domain to community domain of resources and knowledge is most important for the minimum survival of Adivasis today.

A reconstruction of Adivasi ideology and assertion of their rights is possible in the framework of another pattern of development, which asserts their agency, pluriformity of different cultures and their specific contexts. The lived ideology of the Adivasis and their world views certainly bring forth a development discourse to save their own lives as well as the life of the entire world. The sacred and the secular, the material and the cultural coexist in their world views unlike modern ideology which treats religion, economy, politics and law as separate entities. All forms of cognitive and physical violence can be reduced by incorporating Adivasi world views and epistemologies. As Smith (2005) advocates, an indigenous methodology that takes a critical position for decolonising Adivasi knowledge and wisdom is essential in the Wayanad context. Without giving due recognition and promotion to the epistemological meaning attached to land by Adivasis, there is no possibility of giving them historical and cognitive justice. As Smith points out, decolonising methodologies, which give due importance to culture, values and behaviour, are essential in knowing the life world of the Adivasis. Smith stresses the pluriformity and diversity and the need for resistance to incorporate Adivasi epistemologies. She affirms their need to survive, to work out Adivasi ways of knowing, to reflect, to preserve and protect, to defend and attack, to have a social system that enables them to do things. However, as Adivasis affirm through their narrations and struggles, land rights and self determination are a must in challenging their marginalised position and in occupying

central roles in their self development. It emerges that without addressing the cognitive injustice of epistemological colonialism imposed upon the Adivasis, there will be no development that is equitable and just in resource sharing as well as in knowledge creation.

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Mathrubhumi, Kozhikodu, 3 March 20

APPENDIX-1

Glossary

Adalat	Court
Adhikari	Village officer
Adichuthali	Washer man
Adivasi Bhumi Vitharana Pattayamela	Adivasi land distribution and title deed festival
Adyathwam	Of high social rank, prestige
Aivu	The code and conduct of the daily life of the Kuruman community in their oral tradition.
Ambalam	Temple
Ancham pani	Measles
Arati	A Hindu ritual
Aratti	A fold of cloth worn round the waist as a miscellaneous container by the Paniyas
Asupathri Marunnu	Hospital medicine
Attali	Paniya religious functionary
Ayus	Life
Bala Sanskara Kendras	Children's Cultural Centers
Bhajan	Devotional songs
Bhajan mandali	Devotional songs sung in groups (in temples and in villages before going to Sabarimala)
Bhandarappetty	Box kept in a temple to collect offerings in cash
Bhasha	Language
Chalas	Huts
Chama	Paniculam sumatrease, a kind of millet
Changathi	Kurichia religious functionary
Cheengakkaya	Soap nut seed

Cheera	Spinach (Amaranthus dubius)
Chechy	Locally used word to address one's sister
Chela	Unstitched cloth used by Adivasi women to cover their body
Chembu	Colaccasia
Chetty	A former landlord caste residing in Wayanad
Chingam	Malayalam month coinciding with the month of September
Churli	A variety of edible leaves (Diplasium esculantum)
Chutterachi	Roasted meat
Daivakkaran	Healer
Daivam	God
Daivapura	Special room for ancestral gods in Kurichia homes
Daivam Kanal	Literally seeing god, a ritual of the Paniyas and Kurichias
Deenam	Ill health
Devaswom	Deva' means God and 'swom' means ownership
Dosa	Breakfast dish in South India
Eetta	A plant which grows along the banks of streams and canals of Kerala
Eettukarathy	Midwife in the Paniya community
Ekatmatha Manthram	A special chant in worshipping Hindu gods
Ezhavas	A caste group in Kerala
Gayathri Manthra	Special chant in Hindu religion
Gothra fest	Literally clan festival, (special festival arranged for Adivasis in primary schools)
Gothra	Clan
Goundar	A caste group in Kerala
Goonda	Hired thug
Idly	Breakfast dish in South India

Puttu	Breakfast dish in South India made of steamed rice flour and coconut
Kanji	Rice gruel
Ippimala	Paniyas' native place in their origin myth
Iruttady	Severe beating
Jati	Caste
Japti	Confiscation of property
Jendas	Cement stones that demarcate the boundary of the forest
Jenmam	Unquestionable ownership of landed property, considered as birth right on property
Jenmi	Landlord
Kudiyan	Those who live in jenmis land without any right on the property
Kadavu	Entrance to river/stream
Kaitha	Pandanus, a plant with thorny leaves that grows along the banks of streams and canals
Kaivasa rekha	Record Of Rights
Kaivasabhumi	Land under possession
Kakkappolai	Adivasi ritual starting on the 7th day after death
Kambalanatti	A Paniya art form in which they do the work with music and rhythmic movement of the body and hands.
Kanamkars	One who lease land on Kanom basis
Kanom	A kind of lease deed that existed in Wayanad related to land
Karanavan	Kurichia male head in *tharavad*
Karanavathy	Kurichia female head in *tharavad*
Kari Nair	Special caste position atributed by some authors to the Kurichias
Karpuram	Camphor, Cinnamomum camphora
Kathinavedi	A kind of traditional firework
Kavu	Sacred grove
Kayyala	Contour bunding

Keni	Small traditional well made using Palmyra stems
Krishibhavan, Krishi bhavan	Office of the Department of Agriculture
Kodimaram	Flag pole
Kodiyettam	Flag hoisting
Komarakkaran	Healer in the Kurichia community
Pachamarunnukaran pooppan	Healer in the Kurichia community
Panam nokkal	Tossing a coin
Koottam parachil	Asking each other pardon
Koottupatta	Joint title
Kudissika	Debt, payment to be made
Kudiyans	Those who live in jenmis land without any right on the property
Kulapperu	Clan name, family name
Kundal panikkar	Term used in Wayanad to denote bonded labourers
Kunjoottikal	Women folk in the *tharavad*
Kurichiya Muni	Kurichiya Ancestor God
Kuzhal	Musical instrument of Paniyas similar to a pipe
Makkal	Sons and daughters
Marumakkal	Nephews
Malai	Chain
Mami	The term used for Aunty in the Paniya community
Mantras	Devotional Chants
Marumakan	Nephew
Marupattakkar	A lease holder according to marupattom lease
Marupattam	A lease deed that existed in Wayanad
Mathrubhumi	The mother land

Meenam	Malayalam month falling in March
Melas	Fairs
Mittam	Earlier name for Kurichia joint family
Mooppan	Paniya male head or leader in a Paniya settlement
Muhoortham	Auspicious time
Mundu	Loin cloth
Muni	Ancestors who are venerated as God
Murukku	Chewing betel leaves, tobacco leaves, pieces of arecanuts and lime
Muthalali	Rich man, usually Paniyas use to call their Employers
Muthari	Ragi, a kind of millet
Nadanpattukal	Folk songs
Nadi	Pulse
Nadibalam	Physical stamina
Naad	Local term for denoting native place
Nairs	A caste group in Kerala
Nalukettu	Traditional tharavad
Nambiars	An upper caste in Kerala
Namboothiris	A brahmin caste in Kerala
Narakizhangu	An edible root used by the Adivasis in Wayanad
Nattu Vaidyam	Indigenous medicine
Nattukaran	Local term for migrant
Nayakettal	Making loud noices before they and their dogs enter the forest for hunting
Nayattu	Hunting
Nekal	Ancestral spirit medium
Nellukuthal	Pounding paddy with a wooden log

Nercha bhakshanam	Food blessed and offered to devotees
Nikuthi kudissika	Lapse in payment of tax
Nilavilakku	Lamp with many layers
Nippupanam	Money given to the bonded labourer in advance to promise his labour for one year, starting from Valliyoorkavu festival to the next festival
Nizhal	A term used by the Paniyas to refer to the spirit of an ancestor
Njaval thottam	Garden of black Jamun
Noorakkizhangu	A root which Adivasis boil and eat
Olipporu	Guerilla type war
Onam	A Kerala festival
Ooralars	Hereditary owners
Ooru mooppan	Headman appointed by the panchayat
Ooru sabhas	Tribal Gram Sabha
Oorukoottam	Tribal Gram Sabha
Orappura	A separate house built in Kurichiya tharavads to separate the polluted
Ozhumuriyadharam	To transfer the property to their heirs
Padanaveed	Study centre
Padi	Traditional name for a Paniya settlement
Padichavan	Paniyas call god Padichavan
Pandal	Sheds
Pandams	A torch made out of cloth tied to a stick dipped in kerosene
Paniya bhasha	Paniya’s language
Paniyante makal	Paniyan’s daughter
Paniyante makan	Paniyan’s son
Paniyichi	Paniya woman

Pantham	A torch made out of cloth tied to a stick dipped in kerosene
Pathayappura	Room to store Paddy
Patta nikuthi	Land tax
Patta	Title deed
Pattam	Lease deed
Pattayamela	Title deed festival
Pawam kutty	Innocent girl
Pena	Diseased spirit
Pena pattu	Song of the spirit
Penpanam	Bride price
Peruman	Great man or the exalted one
Petromaxes	Lanterns
Pittan	Head of the joint family
Ponnamkanni	Edible greens, Atternanthera sessilis
Pooja	Worship ritual in Hindu religion
Poomi thai	Mother Earth
Prasadam	Food blessed by god which is distributed during rituals
Pratha Smarana	Prayer in Sanskrit language worshipping Hindu Gods
Punam	Slash and burn agriculture
Puncha Krishi	Second crop of paddy
Puram pattam	A kind of lease deed that existed in Wayanad
Purampokku lands	Commons lands
Ragi	Eleusine indica, millet
Res nullius	Absolute ownership of the state
Rishis	Sages

Rouny land	Term used for revenue land by a Paniyan
Mooppan	Head man or leader in a Paniya settlement
Sakha	The expression of bowing down before the saffron flag and then doing mass drill and prayers before the flag
Sakhavu	Local term for an active member of Communist Party
Sakkath	Gift in kind or cash given by Muslims during fasting as a preparation for Eid celebration
Samarabhumi	Area where land strike is conducted
Sipayi	Old term used for a villager who goes to each household to measure the plot of land.
Tali	A symbol of marriage union in south India
Tali kettal	Ceremony of tying the *'thali*' or chain symbolising marriage
Tarpai	Thick mat made of cloth
Terra nullius	Literally, nobody's land
Thaal	Leafy stalk of colacasia
Thakara	Edible leaves, Cassia tora
Thalikettu kalyanam	Engagement
Thambai	Kurichias use this term to denote their gods
Thampuran	Deity
Thandaperu	Account number for land
Thara	Sacred space
Tharavad Kaivasabhumi	Land under their possession
Tharavad	Kurichia joint family
Thatkalika	Temporary
Thazhuthama	Edible leaves, Boerrhavia diffusa
Therandum kalyanam	Puberty celebration
Theendari	Menstrual cycle
Theendaripura	A separate house built in Kurichiya *tharavads* for the 'polluted'

Therattu	New Account number for the new landowner after transferring land
Theruvappullu	Lemon grass
Thettu theerkkal	Pardoning mistakes during a ritual in Paniya culture
Thina	Setaria italica, a millet
Thira	A temple festival in Wayanad
Thodu	River
Thoran	A special preparation of vegetable, also called *upperi* in Kerala
Thottam	Cash crop garden
Thottirampu	Sides of small rivers and stream
Thozhilurappu	Term for NREGS in Kerala
Thudi	Musical instrument (small drum) of the Panaiyas
Thulyatha pareeksha	Examination equivalent to Standard X
Tulam	Malayalam month coinciding with October
Ucharal	A festival celebrating the fertility of earth
Upasakha	Branch
Uthappan	Ancestor God
Uthishta	A Sanskrit word meaning wake up
Utsavam	Festival
Uttappanmar	Ancestors
Vachanasthalam	Burial ground
Vadakkan pattukal	A collection of Malayalam ballads of medieval region which present the Saga of Nair heroes like Aromal Chekavar
Vaidyan	Healer
Valliyooramma	Godess of Valliyoorkavu temple
Vananadu	The land of forests
Vanijya nikuthi	Income Tax

Vanvasi	Literally forest dweller and word used by RSS to denote Adivasis
Varambu	Small bund made in paddy fields to separate plots
Vayalchully	Edible leaves, Hydrophyila Auriculata
Vayalnadu	The land of paddy fields
Vedars	Adivasi community in Wayanad in earlier period and considered as Kuruma community in recent times
Veerakkallu	A special stone installed to commemorate Kings, military officers and Chiefs
Veliyan	A traditional paddy variety used by Kurichias in Wayanad
Verumpattam	A kind of land lease in earlier times
Verumpattamkars	Those who take land on lease on verumpattam
Vetti	Midwife in Kurichia community
Vilanattiutsavam	The paddy transplanting festival
Vilarcha	Local term used for anaemia
Vishu	A festival of Kerala

ATTENTION
SUNIL

Ext. D12(c)

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1130/D2/09

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Abstract

Scheduled Castes /Scheduled Tribes Development Department - Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission - Selection of tribal beneficiaries for allotment of land - Guidelines issued.

SCHEDULED CASTES/SCHEDULED TRIBES DEVELOPMENT (D) DEPARTMENT

G.O.(Ms)No.23/2010/SCSTDD Thiruvananthapuram, Dated 24-02-2010

Read: 1. Minutes of the 20th meeting of the Empowered Mission Committee o f the Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission held on 19.1.2010
2. Government Letter No.830/D2/09/SCSTDD dated 18-2-09

ORDER

The Empowered Mission Committee examined in detail the experience of distribution of land to tribals in the sites taken up for resettlement and rehabilitation by the Mission so far. It was seen that the Mission has not been able to harness the participation of the community / Oorukoottom so far in the resettlement areas. It was also seen that one of the important factors for this failure was the difficulty in getting the tribals to act together as they belonged to different gothras.

The Committee recommended that in future allotment of plots in TRDM sites should be to families from the same gothra as far as possible.

The Committee also observed that to get the maximum benefit out of a site taken up for resettlement and rehabilitation, resource mapping should be first undertaken and a spatial master plan for land use made before allotment of sites to families.

Further, in such settlements houses should be planned in clusters of 50 to 75 houses, so that joint farming and other group activity can be planned in the remaining area of the site.

Government accept the recommendations of the Empowered Mission Committee and hereby order accordingly.

Government further order that the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes Assignment of Government Land Rules, 2001 shall be followed strictly in allotment of land to tribals, and specifically, that only landless tribals having no land in their name or of their spouse, having no right to any land, and whose annual income is below Rs.30,000/-, shall be considered for allotment of land under the Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission. It is further ordered that in case there are no

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~~Ext. R2(c)(2)~~

...ais in a District fulfilling these criteria for allotment of land, eligible applicants ...m neighbouring Districts be considered for allotment of land.

All District Collectors will ensure that all future allotments of land in Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission sites shall be carried out as above.

By Order of the Governor
sd/-
PAUL ANTONY,
Principal Secretary to Government

To

All District Collectors
The Chief, Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission, Thiruvananthapuram
The Commissioner of Land Revenue, Thiruvananthapuram
The Director,
Scheduled Tribe Development Department, Thiruvananthapuram
Revenue Department
Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes Development (B) Department
The Principal Accountant General (Audit), Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram
The Accountant General (A&E), Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram
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Forwarded/By Order

Section Officer.

This is a true copy of the document marked as Ext- R2(c) in the above affidavit- ap.

GOVERNMENT OF KERALA

Abstract

Scheduled Castes /Scheduled Tribes Development Department – Tribal resettlement & Development Mission - Acquisition of Land for Resettling Landless Tribals in Wayanad District - Sanction accorded - Orders issued.

SCHEDULED CASTES/SCHEDULED TRIBES DEVELOPMENT (D) DEPARTMENT

G.O. (Ms) No.9/2010/SCSTDD Dated, Thiruvananthapuram, 08.02.2010

Read: - 1. G.O (Ms) No.331/2004/RD dated 05.11.2004.
2. G.O (Ms) No.1/2010/SCSTDD dated 01/01/2010.
3. Minutes of the Empowered Mission Committee of the Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission dated 19-01-2010.

ORDER

Government as per the reference 2nd read above issued orders directing that acquisition of land for resettling tribals may be taken up under the Fast Track Procedure laid down as per the reference 1st read above.

The Empowered Mission Committee of the Tribal resettlement & Development Mission at its 20th meeting on 19-01-2010 had approved the proposal to acquire 1,000 acres of land in Wayanad for resettling tribals at an approximate cost of Rs.50 crores subject to the condition that plots for acquisition under the Fast Track Procedure shall be identified through a transparent process of advertising for offers from willing sellers of plots with a minimum area of 25 acres, and the suitability of the plots for tribal resettlement and rehabilitation got certified by the District Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission.

Government have examined the recommendation and are pleased to accord sanction for the same.

The Director, Scheduled Tribes Development Department will draw and disburse Rs.25 crores from the Head of Account 2225-02-800-37 - Resettlement of Landless Tribals (TRDM) (Plan) and Rs.5.75 crores from the Head of Account 2225-02-800-37 - Support to Tribal Mission for Resettlement of Landless Tribals - (ACA) (Plan) from the current year's budget to the Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission to meet this expenditure.

By Order of the Governor
PAUL ANTONY
Principal Secretary to Government

To
The Director, Scheduled Tribes Development Department, Thiruvananthapuram
The Chief, Tribal Resettlement & Development Mission, Thiruvananthapuram
The Commissioner, Land Revenue, Thiruvananthapuram
The District Collector, Wayanad
The Finance Department
Planning Department
Revenue Department
The Principal Accountant General (Audit), Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram
The Accountant General (A&E), Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram.
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Section Officer.

F.4789/09 Date: 03-11-2009.

CIRCULAR

Sub: The Kerala Restriction on Transfer by and Restoration of Lands to Scheduled Tribes Act, 1999 – Reg.

Ref: 1. Circular No.C.6091/93(1) dated 05-02-1994 of this office.

2. Hon'ble Supreme Court's Judgment in CA-104,105,899 and 7079/01 dated 21-07-2009.

As per the circular referred first it was ordered not to accept basic tax from the land holders who bought land from the Scheduled Tribes. As per reference 2nd cited, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has upheld the validity of the Kerala Restriction on Transfer by and Restoration of Lands to Scheduled Tribes Act 1999. Thus, it derives that any transfer by a member of a Scheduled Tribe to a person other than a member of a Schedule Tribe effected during the period, 01-01-1960 to 24-01-1986 is valid if the extent of land does not exceed two hectares.

In this circumstance, the basic tax from such land holders can be accepted, subject to the following norms:

i) The first transfer of land from the Scheduled Tribe shall not exceed two hectares.

ii) The first transfer of land from the Scheduled Tribe had occurred during the period 01-01-1960 to 24-01-1986.

It is however clarified that, basic tax shall not be accepted from the present land holders, if the first transaction of land from the Scheduled Tribe exceeded two hectares. So basic tax is not acceptable in this case even if the present land holders posses less than 2 hectares.

Further, the transfer of land from Scheduled Tribes after 24-01-1986, without the prior consent of the District Collector, is invalid. So basic tax should not be accepted from the land holders in such cases.

To

1. Tahsildar Mananthavady, Vythiri and Sulthan Bathery
2. All Village Officers of Wayanad District
3. District Collector, Wayand (with covering letter)
4. Land Revenue Commissioner (with covering letter)



Photos of Hindu Gods in a Paniya house



Photos of Hindu Gods in a Kurichia house





Sacred Spaces for Paniya, Kurichia, Hindu Gods in a Paniya Temple



Malakkari thira by Kurichias in thonichal temple



Paniya thira dance in Thonichal temple



Paniya thira dance in Valadu temple



Kurichia ritual performance in Valad temple



Vishu celebration in Paniya settlements



Kurichia Marriage Celebration in a Tharavad



Rituals before Marriage in a Paniya Settlement





Paniya Attaly immersed in ritual singing



Paniya Attali in Trance



Kurichia Nekal in trance



Kurichia Karanavan and Karanavathy



Paniya Mooppan and Mooppathy








Adivasi students in Model Residential Schools




Adivasi Students in a Multi-Grade Learning Centre



Paniya women teaching gospel using colourful cubes



Kurichias are experts in archery



Paniya Dance









Bhajan mandali and preparations in a Paniya settlement







Healing practices in Paniya and Kurichia households








Paniyas-Older generation healthier than younger generation



Waste dumped in a well in a Paniya colony (100 mt away from PHC)





Empty water tanks and pipes of jalanidhi project in Paniya and Kurichia settlements



Incomplete Giridhara water tanks in a Paniya colony



Drawing water using buckets from tube wells



Incomplete Toilets without water facility in Paniya Settlements



Kavu maintained
in a Tharavad (Kurichia Joint Family)



Kavu maintained
by forest department



Kurichia Rituals before Nayattu on Tulam 10





Paddy cultivation in Kurichia Tharavad



Torn pieces of land records of a Paniya Mooppan



Paniya women displaced in Karappuzha dam project





Land occupation by AKS in Edavaka Panchayat









Bhumivitharana pattayamela (Patta Distribution Festival)