

**HISTORY AT THE MARGINS OF MODERNITY:
THE MUTHUVAN TRIBE OF IDUKKI**

*Dissertation Submitted to
the University of Kerala for the award of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History*

by

JOJY THOMAS

Under the supervision of

DR. SURESH JNANESWARAN
Professor and Director
School of Social Sciences
University of Kerala

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF KERALA
KARIAVATTOM
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM
JANUARY, 2016

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the PhD dissertation entitled '**HISTORY AT THE MARGINS OF MODERNITY: THE MUTHUVAN TRIBE OF IDUKKI**' is an independent work carried out by me and it has not been submitted anywhere else for any other degree, diploma or title.

Kariavattom Campus
Date: 11 - 01 - 2016



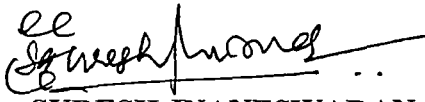
JOY THOMAS

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the work embodied in this dissertation entitled, **'HISTORY AT THE MARGINS OF MODERNITY: THE MUTHUVAN TRIBE OF IDUKKI'** is a *bona-fide* work carried out by Mr. Jojoy Thomas under my supervision and guidance.

Kariavattom Campus
Date: 11 - 01 - 2016




Dr. SURESH JNANESWARAN
Professor and Director
School of Social Sciences
University of Kerala

CONTENTS

	Page No:
Preface	i - v
List of Illustrations	vi
List of Tables	vii
Abbreviations	viii
Glossary	ix - xi
Chapter - I : Introduction	1- 58
Chapter - II : Epistemological Review	59-87
Chapter - III: Social, Cultural and Material Life of <i>Muthuvans</i>	88-147
Chapter - IV: External Impacts and Permeations in <i>Muthuvan</i> Life	148-204
Chapter - V : At the Margins of Modernity: The Changing <i>Muthuvan</i> World	205-255
Chapter - VI: Summary and Conclusion	256-287
List of Publications and Presentations of the Candidate	288
Appendices	289-311
Appendix - I : The Kerala Hill men Rules, 1964.	
Appendix - II : The Kerala Scheduled Tribes Act, 1975.	
Appendix - III : Kerala State planning Board Report on the Assistance to Co-operative Societies.	
Appendix - IV : Kerala Forest (Amendment) Bill, 1986.	
Appendix - V : The Kerala State Scheduled Tribes Rules, 1986.	
Appendix - VI : The Kerala Restriction on Transfer by and Restoration of Lands to Scheduled Tribes Bill, 1999.	
Appendix - VII: The Kerala Assignment of Government Land to the Scheduled Tribes Rules, 2001.	
Bibliography	312-324

PREFACE

The past hundred years have witnessed remarkable development in human life. Never before in history had so many discoveries and developments taken place in such a short period of time. The effects of modernization had crept into all sectors of society. The political system, economy, family relations, forms of entertainment and all other basic institutions were affected. While spectacular achievements are central parts of modernization, there have also been deplorable outcomes of human motives and behavior. Mankind now is marching towards greater and greater homogeneity - racially, culturally and linguistically. This march encompasses a variety of dimensions and agonizing implications. The oldest surviving cultures are either dying or being exterminated. In this broad category comes a great segment of humanity known by a bemusing variety of names such as primitive, tribal, aboriginal, native, indigenous, etc. Some major characteristics of these groups have been simple pre-machine economy, unsophisticated rituals and social customs, lack of a script for their speech which itself is not developed, small local community organization and homogeneity.

The native tribes living in proximity with their so called 'civilized' neighbors are being stripped of their tradition, culture and habitat. The modern industrial civilization is accelerating the destruction of the tribal life and cultures. The perceptions of the 'civilized world' hold that drastic modifications of these cultures are necessary for progress. They consider this as inevitable, natural and in the long run beneficial to the people involved. Scholars and environmentalists however firmly believe that modern civilization is destroying the tribal environment, its people and cultures. An attempt is made here to interrogate the wisdom of endorsing and encouraging the final disappearance of the tradition and culture of a people who reject 'modernity' and instead find satisfaction in a technologically simple life in close harmony with nature. Dominant cultures attempt to brand the tribal economic system in an ethnocentric fury as backward

and wasteful, and their customs and traditions as crude and ignorant. This calls for cultural introspection and rational analysis. The complexity and multiplicity of problems faced by the tribal people demand a better and clearer appreciation.

The dissertation studies the *Muthuvans*, a prominent tribal group of Idukki district of Kerala, in all its historical ramifications. The origins of the *Muthuvans* in history and legend; their socio-economic and politico-cultural traditions; their land problems; contemporary challenges to their Identity; and the myriad interventions of modernity in its multifarious implications are subjected to scrutiny and analysis.

Organization of the Thesis

The study is divided into six Chapters. The first Chapter introduces the topic in the backdrop of Tribal studies at the national and international level. Germane concepts, models and theories are also explored. The chapter takes up *inter-alia* the related theoretical concerns. The Second Chapter entitled Epistemological Review attempts to provide an extensive idea on the knowledge produced by scholars who studied Indian tribes in general and on the tribes in Kerala in particular. The Chapter provides a comprehensive epistemological review on tribal studies carried out in India and especially on the tribes in Kerala including *Muthuvans*. The next chapter is an exhaustive attempt to analyze the various socio- cultural traditions of *Muthuvans* and depicts how they glue up with the myriad aspects of *Muthuvan* life. The fourth Chapter dwells into the details of the interventions of modern society on *Muthuvan* life and society in the historical backdrop of their peaceful and homogenous life in Idukki. The subsequent Chapter analyses the impact of Modernity on the *Muthuvans*. The metamorphosis in life styles - mode of Production, Dress, Food, Occupation, Construction of Settlements, Health, Hygiene, Education, language, Communication, Cuisine, Religion and Beliefs, Perceptions, Interpersonal behavior, Culture, values, etc., are studied in all its ramifications. The concluding Chapter brings out the quintessence of the study.

Hypotheses

1. The contraction of tribe and modern society initiated during the native rule continues to be exacerbated in the post colonial scenario.
2. The dominance and supremacy of the urban and modern over the tribal after independence assumes hegemonic dimensions leading to cross cultural interventions in tribal society most often to the detriment of the latter.
3. A Reading of the *Muthuvan* sociology and culture by themselves is conspicuously absent and external value laden readings pre dominate knowledge formation.

Research Methodology

The present micro study is based on intensive fieldworks in *Muthuvan* settlements of Idukki. Both primary and secondary data have been collected and utilized for the study. Intensive fieldworks were carried out in the course of research which covered all the *Muthuvan* settlements in Idukki district. The tribal settlements; Andavankudi, Edalipparakkudi, Shedkudi, Puthukudi, Kandathikudi, etc., in Edamalakudi panchayath; Kammalakkudy, Iruttalakkudi, Vellakkalkudi, Olikkudi, Thayannamkudi, etc., in Marayoor Grama Panchayath; Ollavayalkudi, Soosanikudi, Nakkupettikudi, Theerthamalakudi, etc., in Kanthalloor Grama Panchayath were visited. Historical, Anthropological and sociological research tools were used for collecting qualitative and quantitative data. The researcher had stayed with the *Muthuvans* at their settlements and developed good rapport with the *Muthuvans*. It helped in collecting qualitative ethnographic data, case studies and other in-depth information. The household visits were made to obtain information relating to members in the houses, demographic characteristics, housing, land holding, type of family, family composition, economic status, development benefits received from the authorities, etc. Structured and unstructured interviews with both tribes and officials were conducted to collect data regarding implementation of development programmes and the participation of people in them. Comments and opinions of tribals and officials regarding

schemes implemented by various agencies were collected through group discussions held in the settlements.

Throughout the field works, both participant and non - participant type observations were made for verification of data collected through interviews. Participation in some religious practices and rituals helped to understand the role of rituals in *Muthuvan* social life. The officials like Tribal extension officers, Tribal promoters, teachers of single teacher schools in tribal settlements, forest officials, doctors providing health service in tribal settlements, etc., were interviewed.

For a profound understanding on pre - colonial, colonial and post - colonial constructions of the tribe, the researcher had referred the books of historians, anthropologists and sociologists on the theme. A re - reading of the *Census reports* from 1872 to 1901, the period when the caste and tribal identities in India were re-defined and consolidated in the reports, have been made.

Acknowledgements

In the pursuit and consummation of the dissertation I am indebted to many persons and institutions whose support and assistance I received in ample measure.

The first person to whom I owe a special debt that cannot be requited in any way is my supervising teacher, Professor (Dr.) Suresh Jnaneswaran, Director, School of Social Sciences, University of Kerala, Former Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences and Former Head of the Department, Department of History, University of Kerala, for his constant encouragement, tireless efforts and valuable directions. His unremitting and unrestrained academic and intellectual scholarship helped me throughout my research work. He punctiliously took time and care to guide and develop my dissertation. Thank you Sir.

I am profoundly thankful to Dr. V Sathish, Dr. A Shaji, Dr. P Jinimon and Smt. A Sajna, faculty members of the Department of History, for their unsparing encouragement and support.

During my field visits, I have enjoyed the selfless love, friendship and help of numerous *Muthuvans* and Forest officials than I can possibly name here. I express my deep gratitude to all of them.

During my data collection, I have been generously helped and supported by many officers and staff of tribal department, health department, Panchayat and village offices, Collectorate of Idukki, etc., I am indebted to them.

I extend my sincere gratitude to the Librarian, Mr. Gopikuttan Nair, all the Staff, Research Scholars, M. Phil Students, Post Graduate Students, etc., of the Department of History, University of Kerala and especially to my friends for their suggestions, association and help.

The Secondary Data pertaining to the key areas of the study were collected from various sources such as the Annual reports and other publications of the Planning Board, Census Report of various Censuses, Reports of Scheduled Tribe Development Department, etc. Various institutions like Public Library - Trivandrum; University Library - Palayam; KIRTHADS Library - Calicut; Library, Dept. of History, University of Kerala; CDS Library, Trivandrum; Madras University Library, Chennai; JNU Library, New Delhi; Jawaharlal Nehru Museum and Library, Teen Murthy; National Archives, New Delhi; Library, School of Social Sciences, M.G. University, Kottayam; Library, U. C. College, Aluva; Office of I.T.D.P. Idukki, Thodupuzha, etc., were collected and utilized for the study which was inter disciplinary in nature. The Librarians and Staff of all these institutions owe a debt of immense gratitude.

My major debts are to my Parents, my wife Hima, my daughter Theres and all family members for their constant encouragement and support.

Above all I thank God Almighty for his blessings.

Thiruvananthapuram
11 - 01 - 2016

Jojoy Thomas

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

1. Picture 1. *Muthuvan* men and women building a house with mud and bamboo sticks.
2. Picture 2. Young *Muthuvan* women wearing *sari* in *Melpudava* style.
3. Picture 3. *Valamapura* in Nadukudi.
4. Picture 4. Inside of a *Thinnaveedu* in Andavankudy.
5. Picture 5. The celebration of *Kondakettu*.
6. Picture 6. *Pukari* worn as a symbol of marriage by *Muthuvan* women.
7. Picture 7. A newly married couple in Puthukudy.
8. Picture 8. Researcher with a *Muthuvan* Family in Societykudy.
9. Picture 9. Long walks - for sustenance: Pregnant woman carrying firewood.
10. Picture 10. A Multitasking *Muthuvan* mother.
11. Picture 11. Slash and burn cultivation in Shedkudy.
12. Picture 12. Tree House in Iruttalakudy, Chinnar.
13. Picture 13. Single Teacher School in Edaliparakudy, Edamalakudy.
14. Picture 14. Government Lower Primary School in Edamalakudy.
15. Picture 15. Girijan Society and Public Distribution Centre, Edamalakudy.
16. Picture 16. Indran of Shedkudi carrying 50 kgs of rice from Pettimudy to Edamalakudy Girijan Society (a distance of 28 kms.).

LIST OF TABLES

1. Table 1.1 Percentage Distributions of Tribal Groups in Idukki.
2. Table 4.1 Educational level of the literate people among major tribes in Kerala.
3. Table 4.2 Percentage of School Going Children between 5 - 14 years.
4. Table 5.1 Percentage Distribution of Land among *Muthuvans*.
5. Table 5.1 Percentage Distribution of Land among *Muthuvans*.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADSS	- Adivasi Dalit Samara <i>Samiti</i>
ASHA	- Accredited Social Health Activist
CBD	- Convention of Biological Diversity
DFO	- Divisional Forest Officer
DGSCSL	- Devicolam Girijan Service Co-operative Society Limited
Ed.	- Edited
EPW	- Economic and Political Weekly
GO	- Government Order
IPR	- Intellectual Property Right
ISDL	- International School of Dravidian Linguistics
ITDP	- Integrated Tribal Development Project
JIH	- Journal of Indian History
JKS	- Journal of Kerala Studies
KDHP	- Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company
Kg.	- Kilogram
Km.	- Kilometer
LDF	- Left Democratic Front
Mal.	- Malayalam
NGO	- Non - Governmental Organizations
OUP	- Oxford University Press
PPA	- Peermade Planters Association
SRH	- Sexual and Reproductive Health
TEO	- Tribal Extension Officer
TTEC	- Travancore Tea Estate Company
UNCED	- United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UDF	- United Democratic Front
USA	- United States of America
WB	- World Bank
WEIRD	- Western Educational, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic
WHO	- World Health organization

GLOSSARY

<i>Akki</i>	- Sweetness
<i>Arani Log</i>	- Forest people
<i>Aranyakars</i>	- Forest people mentioned in <i>Arthasastra</i>
<i>Asaippattu</i>	- love song
<i>Atavikas</i>	- forest people mentioned in <i>Arthasastra</i>
<i>Camcari</i>	- Landlord
<i>Celai</i>	- A long piece of cloth worn by <i>Muthuvan</i> women
<i>Chavadi</i>	- Dormitory for <i>Muthuvan</i> boys, unmarried men and widowers
<i>Cherapambu</i>	- Rat Snake
<i>Edavapathi</i>	- South West monsoon in the month of June-August
<i>Elamtharimakkal</i>	- A group of adolescent or young unmarried girls
<i>Gotul</i>	- Bachelor hut of Muria tribe
<i>Hindoo</i>	- Hindu
<i>Janapada</i>	- Realms, republics and kingdoms of Indian Vedic period
<i>Kalucelli</i>	- Trap
<i>Kani</i>	- Headman
<i>Katti/korangatti</i>	- Food item prepared out of <i>katti</i> , finger millet
<i>Kella</i>	- Necklace
<i>Keninjiattu</i>	- <i>Muthuvan</i> festive dance performed by young women
<i>Kichuki</i>	- Dormitory of Angami Nagas
<i>Kilayam</i>	- Disease
<i>Kinkilar</i>	- Servants
<i>Kokkira Caumural</i>	- Turban tying ceremony for adolescent boys
<i>Kondakettu</i>	- It is the kind of hair style that the <i>Muthuvan</i> women follow

<i>Koottam</i>	- Clan
<i>Kudi/ Kudy</i>	- The word used for hamlet in <i>Muthuvan</i> language
<i>Kummippattu</i>	- Songs sung at workplaces
<i>Kunthirikkam/thelli</i>	- Frankincense
<i>Kuriveppu</i>	- A divination ritual conducted by <i>Muthuvan</i> ritual healers
<i>kutta /vatti</i>	- A round basket used for carrying things
<i>Malampambu</i>	- Python
<i>Malayaladasam</i>	- Kerala
<i>Marady</i>	- The way of draping the sari with a knot in the right side of the shoulder. Unmarried <i>Muthuvan</i> girls and married women till they give birth to child, drape sari this way.
<i>Mel Vakka</i>	- Head of entire <i>Muthuvan</i> community
<i>Melpudava</i>	- The way of draping the sari in ordinary Indian style. The <i>Muthuvan</i> women who draping <i>marady</i> style, shift to <i>melpudava</i> style after child birth.
<i>Mleccha</i>	- Barbarian people in Vedic period
<i>Moopan</i>	- Headman of a <i>Muthuvan</i> Settlement
<i>Muni</i>	- Evil spirit
<i>Muttukeppai</i>	- Ragi
<i>Ocakkam</i>	- height
<i>Olippu</i>	- A divination ritual conducted by <i>Muthuvan</i> ritual healers
<i>Ooru</i>	- <i>Muthuvan</i> household
<i>Ooruvilakku</i>	- Refers total isolation imposed on a man, woman or a family, for violating the rules or norms of the <i>kudy</i>
<i>Orumura</i>	- <i>Muthuvan</i> hamlet council with judicial powers
<i>Payal</i>	- Green algae
<i>Pey</i>	- Evil spirit
<i>Pukari</i>	- A comb, made of a particular bamboo.

<i>Pulthailam</i>	- Lemon grass oil.
<i>Rudraksha</i>	- A seed traditionally used for prayer beads in India.
<i>Talattu</i>	- Lullaby
<i>Tandal</i>	- Firewood
<i>Tatain</i>	- <i>Muthuvan</i> dance performed by young men
<i>Tayam</i>	- Talisman
<i>Terami</i>	- Beauty
<i>Thinnaveedu</i>	- A place for night stay of <i>Muthuvan</i> girls and also used as isolation huts for women at the time of delivery
<i>Tikku</i>	- to know
<i>Tippodi</i>	- Fire pit built at the centre of <i>Muthuvan</i> dormitory
<i>Urumalkettu</i>	- A ritual that marks the maturity of a boy
<i>Valamapura</i>	- Isolation huts of <i>Muthuvan</i> women at menstruation period
<i>Vathy</i>	- Senior most medicinal practitioner in a <i>Muthuvan</i> settlement

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

This study was carried out at a time when the tribes in Kerala like the indigenous people in many other parts of the world are in a state of flux. They have to make a choice between modernity and their age - old ethnic identity and traditional ways of life and existence. The tribe as groups or communities have been there, constructed and re - constructed by the “mainstream” society. What is new is the opposition of this by the tribes or *Adivasis* themselves in a language that is accepted and legitimized by their social norms and culture. This research deals with mainstream society that can be perceived as a ‘dominant culture’ and the subordinate tribe which is affected by the dominant constructions, sometimes using it, sometimes rejecting it but most often negotiating with it. The ‘dominant’ signifies a difference in power and that is what the study endeavors to highlight as far as the relation between the tribe and non-tribal are concerned. To be more specific the study tries to examine the dominant group’s construction of tribal identity and the tribal response to the dominant cultures adaptation of modernity, focusing on the Muthuvans of Idukki, as a specific instance to analyze the tribal problem. The study attempts to find out various factors of modernity that had influenced and changed the original tribal culture and also the extent of that change.

Why Study Traditional Societies

The importance of traditional societies is that they retain features of life all of our ancestors lived for thousands of years. Traditional life style and culture are what shaped us and caused us to be what we are now. A shift from hunting - gathering to agricultural farming began only about 9th century B.C., the first metal tools were produced only about 7,000 years ago, and the first

state government and the first writing arose only in 4th century B.C.¹ The so called modern condition of today have prevailed for only a tiny fraction of human history, all human societies had been traditional for far longer than any society has been modern.² Today, we the modern people take farm grown and store - bought food rather than wild food hunted and gathered daily, use tools of metal rather than of stone and wood and bone, have State government and its associated law courts and judicial system, police and armies and reading and writing.³ But all of these seeming necessities of a social system are relatively new, and thousands of people within these modern socio-political organizations still live today in partly traditional way.

Embedded in one modern 'civilized' society are regions where a number of traditional mechanisms still operate. In many rural areas of our contemporary society, especially among the tribal areas, disputes are still resolved and crimes are controlled by traditional informal mechanisms rather than by going to police stations or court. They don't seek assistance of the police to settle their disagreements or disputes instead rely on traditional methods like negotiation, compensation, intimidation, war, etc. In a traditional society one person knows everybody else in the clan or everyone knows what everyone else does and expresses their opinion about it. They have spouses from within their own clan; i.e., endogamous marriage is strictly practiced, spent their entire lives in their own village.

Traditional societies in effect put forward a number of natural experiments in how to construct and maintain a human society. They have come up with a number of natural solutions to human problems, solutions entirely different from those adopted by our own so called WEIRD (Western, Educational, Industrialized, Rich and Democratic) modern societies.⁴ We shall see that some of those solutions - for instance, the ways in which some traditional societies raise their children, treat their elderly, maintaining health and physical fitness, talk, spend their leisure time and settle disputes may strike

¹ Levin Wallerstein, *The Modern World System, and Cultural Survival*, New York, 1974, p. 9.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, p.10.

⁴ Marques Barrett, *Writing Culture: The World until Yesterday*, London, 2006, p. 4.

you - as clearly superior to normal practices in the modern world.⁵ The 'civilized society' could benefit by selectively adopting or regaining those traditional practices. Some of us already do so with demonstrated benefits to our health by adopting ethno - medicines of the traditional societies. In some respects we the moderns are misfits, our bodies and our practices now face conditions different from those under which the traditional societies evolved, and to which they became adapted. The social system and world of yesterday had not been completely erased and replaced by a new world of today; much of that world is still with us. It is another reason for the need to understand the traditional societies.

However, we should not go to the extreme of romanticizing all the customs and practices existing in traditional societies in general. The practices that exist in some of these societies are traditions that have been justly discarded from an objective perspective. Traditional societies not only propose to us some better living practices, but also help us admire some advantages of our own society that we take for granted.

Evolution of the 'Tribe'

Even today, there are large areas beyond modern state control operating traditional and simpler political systems. The relations between the state societies familiar to us and those traditional societies are the subjects of discussion under this heading.

'Bands', the smallest and simplest form of society which consists of just a few dozen individuals, many of them belonging to one or several extended families (i.e. an adult husband and wife, some of their parents, their children, siblings, and cousins).⁶ Some nomadic hunter - gatherers and some garden farmers, traditionally lived at low population densities of Africa and South America in such smaller groups. The members of a Band are sufficiently few in number and everyone knows everyone else very well, group decisions can be reached by face to face discussion, and there is no formal political leadership or

⁵ *Ibid*, p. 6.

⁶ Michael Redford, *Beyond Society and Time: How Anthropology Make its Object*, Paris, 1996, p. 34.

strong economic specialization. A social scientist would describe a Band as relatively egalitarian and democratic; members differ little in 'wealth' (there are few personal possessions any way) and in political power except as a result of individual differences in ability or personality and as tempered by extensive sharing of resources among band members.

As far as we can judge from archeological sources and evidences regarding the organization of past societies, probably all humans lived in such bands at least till the 9th century B.C. When Europeans began to explore, expand around the world and to conquer non-European peoples living in non-state societies especially after Columbus's first voyage of AD 1492, bands still occupied all or most of Australia and the Arctic, plus low - productivity desert and forest environments of the Americans and sub - Saharan Africa. Bands include the Kung of Africa's Kalhari Desert, the Ache and Siriono Indians of South America, the Andaman Islanders of the Bay of Bengal, the Pygmies of African equatorial forests and Machiguenga Indians of Peru.

Bands evolve into more larger and more complex type of society, termed by social scientists as 'Tribe' consisting of a group of hundreds of individuals. Many tribes are still just within the group size limit where everyone can know everyone else personally and there are no strangers. A society of hundreds means dozens of families, often divided into kinship grounds termed clans, which may exchange marriage partners with other clans. The increased number of population of tribes than of bands require more food to support more people in a limited area and so tribes usually turned as farmers or herders or both, but a number of them remained themselves as hunter - gatherers inhabiting productive forest environments like that of Japan's Ainu people and North America's Pacific North West Indians. Tribes tend to be sedentary, and to live for much or all of the year in settlements located near their gardens, pastures or fisheries. However, Central Asian herders and some other tribal people practice transhumance, i.e., moving livestock seasonally between different altitudes in order to follow the growth of grass at higher elevations as the season advances. In various aspects, many tribes still resemble large Bands; for instance, in their relative egalitarianism, weak economic

specialization, weak political leadership, lack of bureaucrats and in their face to face decision making. Some tribes have a 'big man' who functions as a leader, but he leads only by his powers of persuasion and personality rather than by recognized authority.⁷

In a bigger tribal society of thousands of people it is impossible for everyone to know everyone else or to hold face to face discussions that include every member. A bigger tribal group confronts with two new features that Bands or small tribal groups did not. First, strangers in the tribe must be able to meet each other, to recognize each other as fellow but individually unfamiliar members of the same tribe, and to avoid bristling at territorial trespass and getting into fight, a tribe has to develop shared ideologies and political and religious identities often derived from the supposedly divine status of the Chief. Second, there is a recognized leader, the Chief, who takes decisions, possesses recognized authority, claims a monopoly on the right to use power against his society's members if necessary and thereby ensures that persons within the same tribe do not fight each other. The Chief in many tribes is assisted by non-specialized all purpose officials (proto - bureaucrats) who collect tribute and settle disputes and carryout other administrative tasks, instead of there being separate tax collectors, judges, and restaurant inspectors as in a new State system.⁸ Red Indian tribes of eastern part of North America are an example of such a big tribal group. The economic innovations of some tribes are termed as a re - distributive economy. Instead of the mere direct exchange between individuals that exist among several tribes, the Chief collect tributes in the form of food and labor, much of which is re - distributed to the people who serve the Chief.

Even during the year of Columbus's first Trans - Atlantic voyage of 1492, people were living in different types of societies in different parts of the world? At that time some people (especially Eurasians) were already living under state governments with writings, metal tools, intensive agriculture, etc. while at the same time many other people lacked the hallmarks of so called

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 37.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 38.

'civilization'. Aboriginal Australians, Kung of Kalahari desert and the African Pygmies still preserve many ways of life that had characterized the entire world until 9000 B.C. How can we account for such striking geographic differences? A formerly prevalent belief, still held by many individuals even today, is that those regionally different outcomes reflected innate differences in human intelligence, biological modernity and work ethic. Supposedly, according to that belief, Europeans are more intelligent, biologically advanced and hard-working, while aboriginal Australians, New Guineans or other tribal people are less intelligent, more primitive and less ambitious. However there is no clear evidence to prove those postulated biological differences, except for the circular reasoning that tribal people still continue to use more primitive technologies, political organizations and subsistence modes and were therefore assured to be biologically more primitive.

Instead, an explanation for the difference in types of societies co-existing in the modern world depends on environmental differences. Increases in political centralization and social stratification were driven by increases in human population densities, driven in turn by the rise and intensification of food production (agriculture and herding).⁹ But surprisingly few wild plant and animal species are suitable for domestication to become crops and livestock. Those few wild species were concentrated in only about a dozen small areas of the world, whose human societies consequently enjoyed a decisive head start in developing food production, food surpluses, expanding populations, advanced technology and state government. The Europeans, living near the world region (the Fertile Crescent) with the most vulnerable domesticable wild plant and animal species, ended up expanding over the world, while the Kung or aboriginal Australians did not. It means that peoples still living or recently living in traditional societies are biologically modern and advanced people who merely happened to inhabit areas with few domesticable wild plant and animal species, and whose life style are otherwise relevant to us.

⁹ R Firth, *Elements of Social Organization*, London, 1962, p. 32.

Defining 'Tribe'

It is interesting to see that the anthropologists, sociologists, historians and administrators who have been dealing with the tribes and their problems either on theoretical plane or on practical grounds are still not on the same wave length regarding the concept and the definition of the term Tribe. No doubt with the passage of time the differences on the concept and definition of a tribe have certainly narrowed down to an appreciable extent, but a theoretical discussion seems imperative to understand this problem in its proper perspective.

When we begin to understand a tribe, the identity 'Tribe' itself creates problems. One of the questions which haunt us should be the question "What is a Tribe?" or "How do you define a Tribe?" Various dictionaries give definitions to the term. They included definitions such as "any aggregate of people united by ties of descent from a common ancestor."¹⁰ The origin of the term was supposed to be from the Latin word *tribus* which mean "each of the three divisions of the Roman people representing the Latin, Sabine and Etruscan settlements."¹¹ Oxford dictionary explains, "A tribe is a group of people in a primitive stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding them as having common ancestor."¹² According to Ralph Linton, "In its simplest form the tribe is a group of bands occupying a contiguous territory or territories and having a feeling of unity deriving from numerous similarities in culture, frequent contacts, and a certain community of interest."¹³ Lucy Mair defines, "A tribe is an independent political division of a population with a common culture."¹⁴ G W B Huntingford opines, "A tribe is a group united by a common name in which the members take a pride by a common language, by a common territory, and by a feeling that all who do not

¹⁰ *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, New York, 1989, p. 1511.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Oxford Dictionary- Large Print*, London, 2005, p.895

¹³ Ralph Linton, *The Tanala: A Hill Tribe of Madagascar*, Chicago, 1933, p.16.

¹⁴ Lucy Philip Mair, *Primitive Government*, USA, 1962, p. 46.

share this name are outsiders, ‘enemies’ in fact.”¹⁵ All of these definitions assure us of the present derogatory use of the word. Yet, all that was less than a definition. It raises a whole lot of questions in our minds. Did any of the communities that we are familiar with as Tribes fit into these definitions? On the contrary, didn’t many of the communities who do not claim any status as tribes fit in perfectly under these specifications as Tribe?

Clear distinctions exist between tribes and non - tribes. We all know intuitively, that a *Brahmin* or a Parsi in the present society couldn’t be categorized under the rubric of Tribe. There are some distinctions to be made. There is a particular way in which tribes are seen - the origin of the derogatory feeling came from their primitivism and lack of modernity. No clear definitions exist since the category itself is constructed for specific purposes. It is clearly the examination of the notion of primitivism that might lead towards a contemporary understanding of how the dominant cultures look at Tribes.

Constructing the category ‘Tribe’: A Western Idea

It is a fact that any identity in colonial and post colonial times has to talk to and sometimes talk against the dominant western Enlightenment construction of identities. The Victorian Anthropology of the nineteenth century, a carryover of the enlightenment philosophical tradition becomes important in the coining of the category ‘Tribe’.¹⁶ In this respect, the category ‘Tribe’ shares similarities with many other modern concepts. The indigenous people all over the world have been affected seriously by the phenomenon of colonization by the West; whole cultures had been wiped out, transformed or completely marginalized. Due to all these, the social constructions of the Tribes do have a universal resonance and can be studied only by going into the Western dominant constructions of the Tribe.

The ‘Tribe’ was constructed primarily as ‘primitive’ by the Western culture. Among a number of sites where the primitive was produced, the academician can claim its own share. The academic interest in the exotic and

¹⁵ George Wynn Brereton Huntingford, *The Nandi of Kenya*, London, 1953, p. 42.

¹⁶ Fuchs Stephen, *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*, London, 1982, p. 18.

the primitive was almost always combined with the colonization of these very people. The ways in which the histories of tribes all over the world have had written; however diverse, non-diverse or non-universal they have been, illustrate some common features. The condition of many of the indigenous people all over the world had been described as containing the features of the primitive. The terms 'Tribe', 'Aborigine', 'Savage', 'Barbarian', etc., have been used in this dissertation to denote the traditional societies. There are of course obvious differences and connotations connected to each term, yet they point out to a common assumption. The terms that are used in Indian languages to signify tribes also indicate this connotation. For instance, words like *Kadan*, *Adivasi*, *Vanavasi*, etc., have been used in different parts of India to describe the tribal people. Though most of these indigenous terms signify only the place of their residence, the forest, they are usually used derogatorily and very often connote primitivism. In English language, a 'barbarian' almost always has the connotation of a tribal person.

Needless to say, these terms are generally negative stereo types associated with the notion of Tribe. These contrasting stereotypes have functioned as different ways of seeing the tribal people by the dominant, non-tribal cultures. These stereotypes, when analyzed, lead towards the history of the dominant society's gaze on them. To understand the term 'Primitive' it is necessary to understand it as a notion rather than as reality. The Primitive as a notion inhabits a realm in the distant past of humanity. But since this very same notion is applied to gaze at all existing societies, it is necessary to deconstruct this all pervading stereotype.

'Primitive' and 'Tribe' as Academic Discipline

The concept of the term Primitive has a long history. It is intimately connected to the various notions of race that have circulated in the western imagination. George W Stocking traces some of the words that have been used to indicate the tribes back to the origins of western civilization itself. To quote from his work, "The cultural contrast implicit in the idea of 'civilization' is

surely as old as civilization itself. And some of the words by which it has been expressed go back to Greece and Rome. 'Barbarian' derived from the Greek contrast between those who spoke intelligibly and those who are beyond the pale of civil life whose language seemed simply reiterative mumbling - notably the Scythians, who for centuries were the archetype of the barbarian nomads of the Eastern steppes. The second contrastive term derives not from language but from habitat; 'Savages' (derived from Latin word *Sylva*) were those who lived in the woods, rather than in the City - and who, with the era of discovery, were more apt to be encountered by sea faring European venturing West than to thunder out of the East on horseback."¹⁷ Though it has its pre - modern articulations, the notion took on particular shapes with the modernity. The term 'Tribe' was forced to bear a lot of theoretical weight (very often not justified) due to the peculiar intellectual and social situation of the late 19th century. The discipline anthropology along with many other disciplines was one among the main sites where these articulations took shape. As Adam Kuper says, "Speculations of the primitive society took a distinctive and novel version and crystallized with anthropology between 1860s and 1870s."¹⁸

The classification and objectification of the groups branded as 'primitive' had helped the Europeans in justifying their colonization and continuing the exploitation. The colonization processes controlled by the Europeans had even led to some of the traditional groups being wiped out in a genocidal manner or at other times, they have at least been transformed into cheap laborers for the running of the colonial system. Kaushik Ghosh, for instance, comes up with the constructions of primitivism in the 'coolie narratives' of the late nineteenth century India and connect the way in which the image of the 'primitive' have conveniently altered with that of the exotic classified object under study and that of the cheap laborer.¹⁹ According to

¹⁷ George W Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, New York, 1987, p.10.

¹⁸ Adam Kuper, *The Invention of the Primitive: Transformations of an Illusion*, London, 1988, p.54.

¹⁹ Kaushik Ghosh, "A market for aboriginality, Primitivism and race classification in the Indentured Labour Market of Colonial India", in Gautam Bhadra *et.al* (eds.) *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society X*, New Delhi, 1999, p.9.

Ghosh, “Colonial obsession with the ‘Primitive’ on one hand reifying it through the display and classification of aborigines and on the other hand fetishizing that same aboriginality as a magical solution to the Colonial demands for labor.”²⁰ The disciplinary incarnations, not just of Anthropology, but of other disciplines also have been of special significance to us in the academia.²¹ This has led to a mutual sharing of ideas between the academicians and the other wings of colonial machinery. The dominant cultures construction of the Primitive draws very centrally from this rendering.

The interest in studying primitive societies had taken a distinctly different shape in the Europe after the latter part of the nineteenth century. This marked as the immediate aftermath of the publication of the work on evolution, *The Origin of Species* in 1859.²² The work not only influenced Natural Science, but also found its exponents in such diverse fields like Economics, Sociology, History and Anthropology. Before going into any discussion on the evolutionist origins of the discipline which had immense influence over the destiny of the people named tribes, let us examine what are the characters of the primitive society, as imagined by the discipline. Kuper, who worked on the nineteenth century anthropologists, think that they drew the primitive society in the following colors.²³

1. The most primitive societies were ordered on the basis of kinship relations.
2. Their kinship organization was based on descent groups.
3. These descent groups were exogamous and were related by a series of marriage exchanges.
4. Like extinct species, these primeval institutions were preserved in fossil form, ceremonies and kinship terminologies bearing witness to long - dead practices.

²⁰ *Ibid*, pp. 9-10.

²¹ *Ibid*.

²² See, Charles Darwin, *On The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, London, 1859.

²³ Adam Kuper, *op.cit.*, p. 56.

5. Finally, with the development of private property, the descent groups withered away and a territorial state emerged. This was the most revolutionary change in the history of humanity. It marked the transitions from ancient to modern society.²⁴

Though the suspicion and embarrassment about using words like ‘primitive’, ‘savage’ and ‘native’ had started boggling the practitioners itself by the 1950s, they still subscribed to the essential idea behind the primitive. Dozier describes the primitive society or how the classical subject anthropological study understood it in the fifties as having the following characteristics.²⁵

1. Absence of a written language.
2. A relatively simple technology.
3. Social institutions which are cast in a simpler mold.
4. Smaller numbers.
5. Relative isolation, and
6. Societies whose cultures are in general characterized by slower rate of change.²⁶

When we analyze what the characters of the primitive society are and if it were imagined by the nineteenth century fathers of Anthropology, another society appears before us; that is the mainstream society of modern Europe. The intention behind the imaginings of the primitive society was to see one’s own society as radically different or perhaps superior to the earlier one. In fact, the late nineteenth century intellectuals saw their own times as a period undergoing serious changes; “Europeans believed themselves to be witnessing a revolutionary transition in the type of their society. Marx defined a capitalist society emerging from a feudal society. Weber was to write about the rationalization, the bureaucratization and the disenchantment of the old world; Tonnies about the move from community to association; Durkheim about the

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Edward P Dozier, “The Concepts of Primitive and Native in Anthropology”, in William Thomas L Jr. (ed.), *Current Anthropology: A supplement to Anthropology Today*, Chicago, 1956, p. 188.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

change from mechanical to organic forms of solidarity. Each conceived of the new world in contrast to traditional society and behind this 'traditional society' they discerned a primitive or primeval society"²⁷ If the primitive society was nomadic, ordered by blood ties, sexually promiscuity and communist, it was because the modern, society was defined above all by the territorial state, the monogamous family and private property and the primitive society had to be imagined as the direct opposite of all this.²⁸

One of the main tenets on which this imagination of the primitive rested was that of progress. Society was supposed to be progressive in various stages. The idea of progress took upon itself many contemporary sciences and their vocabulary transferred them on to the study of 'man'. The Evolutionists among scholars were drawing some popular interpretations on theories from Darwin. According to them, all species were seen to be evolving from the one celled creature to the rational human being; the same model worked for societies as well. Thus, the social evolutionists were conveniently translating some version of Darwin's theory into human societies. They showed that society evolved from simpler systems or organizations based on kinship ties, progressing towards a more complex organization of power and state systems based on social contract. The Primitive Societies were imagined to be on a lower rung of the social evolution ladder than the 'developed' Western societies.

Almost all the anthropologists, who were contemporaries of Darwin, are now considered as evolutionists. They include Bachofe'n Maine, Fustel de Coulanges, Lubbock, Mc Lennan, Morgan and Taylor. But Kuper says that most of them were drawing from Lamarck, who used his own brand of social Darwinism, more than Darwin.²⁹ This idea of 'progress' on which the evolutionists based their theory necessarily involved a judgment of the so called older races, and along with it, the so called contemporary tribes as inferior.

²⁷ Quoted in Kuper, *op.cit*, p.70.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

In the views of evolutionists, all human societies were imagined to be moving towards a common destiny. In this imagination, different societies were placed in a pyramid like structure of progress with the Western Culture placed on the top and other societies given a place in the pyramid according to their nearness in achieving the status of the western Society. To quote Morgan for instance, “The inferiority of savage man in the mental and moral scale, undeveloped, inexperienced and held down by his low animal appetites and passions, though reluctantly recognized, is nevertheless, substantially demonstrated by the remains of ancient art in flint, stone and bone implements, by his cave life in certain areas, and by his osteological remains. It is still further illustrated by the present condition of tribes in a low state of development, left in isolated sections of the earth’s monuments of the past.”³⁰

The early evolutionists even went to the extent of dividing the whole of human society, contemporary as well as historical into three stages; savagery, barbarism and civilization. Taylor views, “while the general tenor of the evidence goes far to justify the view that on the whole the civilized man is not only wiser and more capable than the savage but also better and happier and that the barbarian stands between.”³¹ The evolutionists who put their arguments on the basis of idea of progress would have been disappointed to know that Darwin did not attribute any idea of progress or direction to evolution. Kuper had argued, “Darwin’s natural selection worked upon more or less random individual variations.”³² This would have been unacceptable to most of the evolutionists who re-interpreted Darwin’s theories as suitable for explaining the evolution of human society.

In the comparative method, which many of the early evolutionary theorists adopted, the terminologies used for comparison might seem almost offensive to the twenty first century readers who are familiar with the arguments raised against these stereotyping by the so called indigenous people themselves. Unlike the new generation anthropologists, Morgan and many

³⁰ Morgan, quoted in Edward Dozier, *op.cit.*, p. 188.

³¹ Quoted in, *Ibid*, p.189.

³² Kuper, *op. cit.*, p. 57.

others following him used the scales of comparison that divided the whole human kind into clear stages of savage and civilized with the barbaric in between. Though the discipline moved forward from its evolutionary origins, the ideas of the primitive still seems to be haunting the world at large.

The 'Other' in History: The Primitive as Barbaric

The most common stereotyping of the primitive in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was that of the 'barbarian' which has now being removed from civilizations. During the eighteenth century, this racism even reached up to the extent of not considering the Black people especially in Africa as human and comparing these groups to Great Apes. Words like 'species', 'race' and 'kind' were used interchangeably in the eighteenth century. The physical appearance and looks of the 'aboriginals' evoked so much curiosity (and perhaps disgust as well) among the Europeans. The Anthropological discussion of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century tried to mask this disgust in the endless objectifications around the size of the nose, the eye color, texture of hair and other physical features of the aborigine. For instance, Thurston, following these ways of his more illustrious anthropological predecessors wrote in the beginning of the twentieth century about Todas thus, "The typical Toda man is above medium height, well proportioned and stalwart, with leptorhine nose, regular features, and perfect teeth. The nose is, as noted by Dr. Rivers, sometimes distinctly rounded in profile."³³ This should be read in comparison with the lack of any physical description as far as 'higher civilizations' are concerned. These kinds of lengthy descriptions of the primitive distance the viewer/speaker from the gazed object. The gazed other becomes the race and nothing but the race.

The notion behind all these constructions of the primitive contains another related concept; the division between nature and culture. Nature was seen as wild, untamed and dangerous. Culture on the other hand, was pruned, contained and sophisticated. Along with the division between nature and culture, the notion of the primitive was also part of another related concept,

³³ Thurston, *op. cit.*, Vol. VII, 1975, p. 121.

which was actually the hallmark of western modernity, rationality and its 'other' intuition or emotion. In a world where rationality was considered as the hallmark of humanity and only one kind of thinking (European) was seen as rational, it was impossible to call a culture other than White culture to be rational. Primitive society was definitely marked by a lack of rationality in the imagination of modern cultures. As mentioned earlier, their social organization was based on blood ties and not on contract. The rationality becomes significant when one realizes that social contract is seen as that which makes the modern human being different from a 'brute'. The 'other' defining characters like sexual promiscuity, a religion based on fear of nature, etc., all seemed to highlight this very character of the primitive society.

The above discussion makes it clear that the primitive conceived as barbaric is the 'other' in the view point of the western society in every sense. Such contrast which mark the 'dominant society' as positive and the 'other' as negative clearly betray the fear of the other. In positioning the primitive as barbarian, what the dominant culture is doing is to construct the latter as civilized. We can say that this fear of the other is not just the fear of difference. It is the fear of oneself. The 'primitive' is so interesting and so loathsome to the dominant culture precisely because it is seen by them as 'other'.

Appropriating the 'Other': Victimized Aborigine and Noble

Another way of branding the primitive, again by the western society after enlightenment, is by invoking the figure of 'the noble savage'. There are different approaches in which the primitive was seen as noble. One was the evangelical way of seeing them as 'victimized aborigine' instead of the evil barbarian in the eighteenth century. This categorization evoked the debates on the abolition of slavery. Lively observes that, "The abolitionists in a twist characteristic of evangelical Christianity - exalted victimhood to a state of masochistic nobility."³⁴ He mentions about the most dominant image of the Negro in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century as the abolitionist

³⁴ Adam Lively, *Masks: Blackness, Race and Imagination*, London, 1999, p. 52.

medallion which silhouetted the figure of the kneeling slave, “manacled hands raised in supplication, framed by the words, Am I not a man and a brother?”³⁵

In this portrayal of the poor victim who is noble in suffering, the actors as well as the audience are the white people. The abolitionists dealt with most of the questions raised by the racist portrayals by appealing to the mercy of the white society, mostly by evoking their religious sentiments. In these narratives, the main character is always the white, either portrayed as cruel or as generous. The aborigine is shown as the passive recipient of either of these sentiments. Here, the abolitionists dealt with the ‘Criticisms’ of the white society against the so called savages by very often not directly confronting them. A good example is the question of primitive promiscuity that they didn't even touch but just elided over. Only the victimization of the slave/ aborigine is considered with.

There is another important way in which the ‘savage’ has been portrayed as ‘noble’. It does not deal with the victimization of the ‘aborigine’ at all. Instead, the ‘savage’ is seen as more noble than the ‘civilized’. In this view, the primitive is conceived as inhabiting a pure space before corrupt civilization happened. The primitives figure here comes to represent again all that modernity has not. Quite unlike the barbaric primitive, he/she is in a state of pure nature. This portrayal is apparently positive, compared to either the barbaric primitive or the victimized aborigine.

A Debate on Primitivism and Modernity

While the general notion in which Enlightenment saw the primitive was, as described above, the more complex reaction was of romanticizing the same things that were degraded. The most famous exponent of the idea is supposed to be Rousseau.³⁶ The same binaries that informed the barbaric primitive also inform the noble savage, but the meanings apparently differ and should be read as the opposite. The binary of nature and culture plays an important part here. But, apparently, the hierarchy is reversed in favor of nature, instinct and

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Berkeley, 2001, p. 10.

community ties. The tribe still stands for all that modernity is not - but with the positive quality which is invested in the imagined tribe rather than culture.

In this scheme of things, there is a fallen tribe and an un-fallen one. The un-fallen tribe, when one analyzes the concept, is nostalgically invoked to fill in some void that the invoker her/himself feels in modernity. Thus, the community ties of the savage are invoked to comment on the alienation that the modern man feels in the city. The pure instinctual way in which man and God interact in tribal religion is seen to be the unsullied communion with nature, whereas the rationalists would call it primitive superstition. Sexual promiscuity, by these theorists, is understood to be the nonexistence of oppressive customs that bound sexuality with private property.

The stereotype of the idealized tribe can also be deconstructed to yield an essentialized picture that speaks more about modernity than about tribes. There is thus a connection, which is usually drawn between the present constructions of the tribes as noble savages to the Romantic Movement in Europe.³⁷ The Romantics were searching for unsullied corners of the world, be it the village, the folk, the tribe or nature itself. We can place these constructions in the context of profound changes that happened in eighteenth century Europe. Modernity with its emphasis on the material and its slogans of equality, fraternity and liberty, disturbed various fronts. Industrial revolution had brought about the collapse of the feudal order. Along with material changes, there was the construction of a new kind of self - the individualistic person emerging from the communitarian past. This individual did not experience kinship or regional affinities, nor was she/he bound by them. This situation led to the formation of the alienated self. At this point, it is not quite surprising that the tribe emerged as a site of unsullied human interaction with each other and nature. The philosophy of cultural primitivism was the result of the desire of the modern West for its own unproblematic mythical past. Lovejoy and Boas define it as “the discontent of the civilized with civilization,

³⁷ *Ibid*, p. 11-12.

or with some conspicuous and characteristic feature of it.”³⁸ But, while civilization desires, it also condescends. Here also, the framework of the adult - child works. This stereotype was used by the racist theorists who portrayed the tribes as barbaric. It is the adult West condescendingly gazing upon the child tribe with nostalgic desire that we experience in the noble savage notion.

Moreover, the ideal notion of the tribe will never have any connection with living communities. In fact, these communities are supposed to be frozen in time. Any display of dynamism in these communities, which allow them to survive will be read as a corruption of the ideal state. Thus, the eternally child-like, eternally natural tribe exists only to be idealized theoretically, (but materially exploited) by a nostalgic modernity hunting for ideal others. This is clearly the politics of appropriation of the ‘other’. “Such a theorizing predicated as it is on an image rather than on actually existing situation has allowed both for a romance with, and a rejection of tribes. The modern subject's nostalgia for a ‘lost’ state of freedom, on the one hand, and its censure of the non-modern, on the other, coalesce around this image.”³⁹

Let us examine Rousseau, considered by some historians and social scientists as the originator of the idea of the ‘noble savage’ for a more detailed analysis. The French Philosopher embodies to a certain extent all the contradictions connected to the noble savage idea. It can be proved beyond doubt from *The Social Contract* itself that he never meant a ‘return to nature’ in any practical way. The primitive state invoked is in contrast to modern society. Rousseau develops a contrast between natural existence and civil society in *The Social Contract*. It can be summarized in a binary fashion as follows:

Natural Existence	Civil Society
Instinct	Justice
Amoral	Moral
Appetite	Reason

³⁸ Lovejoy and Boas quoted in R Guha, *Savaging the Civilized: Varrier Elwin, His Tribals in India*, New Delhi, 1999, p. 122.

³⁹ Sangeeta Kamat, “Anthropology and Global Capital: Rediscovering the Noble Savage”, in *Cultural Dynamics*, 13.1, 2001, p. 31.

Natural Liberty

Possession based on personal
power

Individual Strength

Civil liberty, secure
proprietorship based on respect
for the law, general will.

Just to put any of our doubts at rest, one only has to know what Rousseau meant by appetite. To quote from *The Social Contract*, “The mere impulse to appetite is slavery, while obedience to a law, which we prescribe to ourselves, is liberty.”⁴⁰ So, it becomes amply clear that Rousseau never meant any comparison where the modern Western civilization would be seen in any bad light.⁴¹ This is one way to critique the noble savage idea - that the proponents of the idea itself did not live up to it. Thus, Rousseau can be critiqued for never wanting to live up to his own ideals - that the proponents of the noble savage themselves were advocates of civilization.

Another way is to deconstruct the idea by exploring what are the binaries on which the idea is based. They are the binaries of wilderness/civilization, savage/modern, instinctual/rational, etc., and see that one cannot exist without the other, that the division between the two is apparently fostered for the perpetration of power of one of the groups. Thus, it is clear that the ‘primitive’ is a construction of modernity, rather than independently existing. The particular meanings associated with the ‘primitive’ become intelligible only in modernity. The perpetuation of this binary depends upon the essentializing of the primitive and the modern. Regarding the particular binary of the primitive and the civilized - it has now been proved beyond doubt that the ideal primitive does not exist and the primitive was never what she/he has been conceived of.

This has had far reaching effects on the groups called primitive. Idealization sees to it that these groups are seen to be valuable only if they remain in a non-modern state. Yet, in practical life, modernity does come to

⁴⁰ Jean Jaques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, G D H Cole (tras.), New York, 1950, p. 196.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p. 196-197.

them affecting their lives. There are even studies which prove that the examples of ideal primitives which have been unearthed through enthusiastic scholars very often disregard their actual histories. Sumit Guha quotes a study about the San people of Africa who have long been cited as Neolithic survivals till the 1970s. In his words Edwin Wilmsen has convincingly demonstrated that their excision from history was due to the nineteenth century European search for ‘specimens’ of the savage hunting stage. By a brilliant re-reading of both literary and archeological sources, he has shown how the apparent isolation of these peoples began in the beginning of the present century. Far from being in a primeval condition, their marginalization was a consequence of the immediately preceding collapse of trading networks exporting ivory, ostrich feathers, and other commodities to the Western market. So it emerged that “people with a far simpler political organization and more limited political repertoire than that of the bulk of the scheduled tribes of India, were nonetheless the product of prolonged interactions with larger regional and continental social systems, and their primitiveness was externally defined and enforced”⁴² Sumit Guha’s study itself prove that the groups now named ‘tribes’ in India have not only been the idealized noble savages, but historical groups which have been negotiating with powers at various points in history.⁴³ In the article titled “Identities and Aspiration: Not Noble Savage But Savage Noble” he finds that the references about Bhil ruler Umaji Raje is a complex documentation of bargaining for more status, both ritual and material with the higher castes as well as the British. This behavior is anything but that of the noble savage in close communion with nature.⁴⁴

In the twentieth century, proponents of certain schools of ecology, (especially of the deep ecology variety), have resurrected the ‘ecologically noble savage’.⁴⁵ These sentiments are seen in the construction of tribes as living in close harmony with nature and knowing the best ways to preserve

⁴² Edwin Wilmsen, quoted in, Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India, 1200-1991*, Cambridge, 1999, pp. 433 - 434.

⁴³ See, *Ibid*, pp. 150-163.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*.

⁴⁵ Ter Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, California, 2001, p. 22.

nature. The critique of the 'noble savage' has come from two sides. One group that is disappointed that the tribes are not exactly living up to the expectations bestowed on them. The other group which question the very basis on which the noble savage idea is built.

The conservationists who are disappointed with the tribes include environmentalists like Redford.⁴⁶ They critique the idea of the ecologically noble savage; complain that in all these arguments, these groups can never fulfill the responsibility that is vested on the tribes. The tribes are burdened with keeping up an imaginary pre-modern lifestyle. The examination of the history of this category proves beyond doubt that the desires and anxieties of the already 'modern' are pegged on the figure of the 'savage'. Moreover, these groups are not seen as people with histories (and very often histories of resistance).⁴⁷ Thus the vision that sees them as embodying critiques of modernity and nothing else is problematic in itself.

Also the specific history of the term 'noble savage' reveals its connection with the racist views of one branch of Anthropological institution in England in the nineteenth century. Ter Ellingson explains that it was not Rousseau who used the term. It was attributed to Rousseau by Crawford, an Anthropologist of the late nineteenth century England. Conjecturing the motive behind Crawford for attributing the myth to Rousseau, one has to understand the context in which the paper which first used the term, and which attributes this to Rousseau was presented. Ellingson proves that Crawford needed to show the abolitionists and the human rights activists in a bad light. He wanted to prove that they were living in a fool's paradise. The idea that irked him to no end was the concept of universal human equality; that all races can be conceived as equal was a great threat to his racist imagination.⁴⁸ He attacked blindly any scientific or religious idea that was based on this argument. The

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, p. 27.

⁴⁷ Nandini Sundar warns of being nostalgic about resisting Adivasi in her work. See, Nandini Sundar, *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar (1854 - 1996)*, Delhi, 1997, p. xv.

⁴⁸ Ter Ellingson, *op. cit.*, p.29.

attacks from Crawford were of course in the name of science. The new 'science' of Anthropology provided him a neat ground to base his arguments.

The persons, who supported human equality, including supporters of a common ancestor for the human race, were all placed in the category of Rousseauian believers in the myth of the noble savage. When the abolitionists spoke about human rights in scientific and social science seminars, they were made to be advocates of a pre-modern paradise in which the savage was nobler than the civilized White man. This myth of the pre - modern paradise was easy to refute and it was difficult for White do-gooders to counter. They surely did not want to say that White culture was better off than indigenous cultures. That would be racist, and the Ethnological society was based on anti-racist sentiments. Yet, to go to the extent of romanticizing the tribal way of life was also dangerous. This did not strike the reformers at that time. They just entered the debate in Crawford's terms. Then they had to defend a myth - the myth of the noble savage.

Instead of countering Crawford's words as an irresponsible parody of the quest for human equality, the White do-gooders in the late nineteenth century England also started actively perpetuating the myth and attributing the words to Rousseau. This gave Crawford enough room to counter a myth he himself had perpetuated in quite scientific terms. This does not mean that the responsibility of creating the stereotype of the primitive lay only on the shoulders of the academicians or intellectuals. As Pickering points out, it was reflected in such cultural forms as Imperial exhibitions during the second half of the nineteenth century.⁴⁹ The effects of this Academic myth-making on indigenous people have been quite serious. They are as follows:

1. They are exoticized, but that has not prevented the world from exploiting the indigenous peoples. In fact, exploitation thus has been part and parcel of exoticization.

⁴⁹ Michael Pickering, *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*, London, 2001, p.58.

2. The indigenous peoples have been seen as expendable, for the primitive existing in this evolved state should have become extinct. If they are exterminated it is only nature's way and not the responsibility of the society.
3. These attitudes have colored local perceptions of tribes all over the world.
4. The dominant culture comes out as modern, advanced, etc., due to these myths.
5. In the noble savage myth, progress is apparently critiqued. But that would place the discourse on their rights by the indigenous peoples themselves as corrupting modernity. The modern societies, though already 'corrupt' come out as adult in comparison with the tribal societies that look 'childlike' in contrast. Thus, these stereotypes lead to a hollow idealization of the tribal society that makes it easily exploitable.
6. This is the politics of 'appropriation'. In many ways, when there is a hollow kind of idealization, the perpetuator of oppression is freed of guilt of actually looking down upon the groups she/he is exploiting.

When the anthropologists were searching for the elusive primitive society and finding the remains of that in living cultures, they were engaging in a search for their own selves. They were trying to draw some meaning about the serious changes in which they found themselves. It was necessary to classify and place the changes. Either the search was undertaken in a self-congratulatory mode, or it was undertaken in the desperate mode of searching for an alternative for the major changes that were disturbing the settled worldviews.

The questions about the primitive have been always asked as universal questions of all mankind; as to how the man behaves when left alone to himself. Is he selfish? or Is he free? This dichotomous way of seeing is expressed in the barbaric primitivism and the free noble savage - two apparently opposing stereotypes about primitives. But they both agree on the basic question - that there is a state of primitivism. The way in which this question can be tackled is by understanding that the question is wrong. First of all, how do we find out if there is a 'pure' state beyond culture? What is the compulsion that is driving one to imagine that condition? Isn't this imagination

itself cultural? Secondly - another way is to say that the present people who have been dubbed primitive and who have to bear the weight of being so for the moderns, is not exactly the right material to analyze 'man' in his state of nature.

We can sum up by quoting the master of evolution, Darwin responding to the contemporary 'savages' he encountered in Tierra del Fuego, "The astonishment which I felt on first seeing a party of Fuegians on a wild and broken shore will never be forgotten by me, for the reflection at once rushed into my mind - such were our ancestors... For my own part I would as soon be descended from that heroic little monkey... as from a savage."⁵⁰ The construction of the primitive was more a self-examination journey for the White Western civilization - the primitive being the site on which modernity was pretending to question itself. If the other is feared, it is also the other in oneself.

Tribe in India

The constructions of Tribe in Pre - colonial and Colonial India finally led to the post - colonial administrative categorization as Scheduled Tribes. Here in colonial times, the term 'tribe' is used to denote the traditional societies. A difference is to be noted in the usage here, as the term was used to signify the way Western anthropologists used it to evoke the image of a primitive society still existing in contemporary times. The usage of the term, on the other hand, is to denote the groups who have been classified as administrative category. While analyzing how the tribe was constructed in colonial India, it becomes imperative to mention how the nation evolved based on the constructions of certain categories, especially religious in nature and how the identity of the tribe figures in the history of these constructions.

The *Imperial Gazetteer of India* expatiates: "A tribe is a collection of families bearing a common name, speaking a common dialect, occupying or professing to occupy a common territory and is not usually endogamous,

⁵⁰ Charles Darwin, quoted in, Adam Lively, *op.cit.*, p. 120.

though originally it might have been so.”⁵¹ D N Majumdar explains, “A tribe is a social group with territorial affiliation, endogamous, with no specialization of functions, ruled by tribal officers, hereditary or otherwise, united in language or dialect, recognizing social distance with other tribes or castes, without any social obloquy attaching to them, as it does in the caste structure, following tribal traditions, beliefs and customs, illiberal of naturalization of ideas from alien sources, above all conscious of homogeneity of ethnic and territorial integration.”⁵² Majumdar rightly observes that when one looks into the definitions given by various anthropologists, one is bound to be impressed by the dissimilarity of their view as regards what constitute a tribe. Kinship ties, common territory, one language, joint ownership, one political organization, absence of internecine strife have all been referred to as the main characteristics of a tribe. Some anthropologists have not only refused to accept some of the above characteristics of a tribe but also stoutly denied some of them to be characteristics of a tribe. Thus Rivers did not mention habitation in a common territory as a vital feature of a tribal organization, although others like Perry have insisted on it, saying that even nomadic tribes roam about within a definite region. One may, therefore, make a list of universal characteristics some of which would define a tribe anywhere.⁵³ But it is not easy to define a tribe or a tribal society conclusively and any standardization in this regard is very difficult to obtain. L M Lewis’ opines that “Ideally, tribal societies are small in scale, are restricted in the spatial and temporal range of their social, legal and political relations, and possess a morality, a religion, and world - view of corresponding dimensions. Characteristically too, tribal languages are unwritten, and hence the extent of communication both in time and space is inevitably narrow. At the same time, tribal societies exhibit a remarkable economy of design and have a compactness and self- sufficiency lacking in modern society.”⁵⁴

⁵¹ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. I, Oxford, 1909, p. 124.

⁵² D N Majumdar, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Bombay, 1956, p.13.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ L M Lewis, quoted in, M K Sinha, *Indian Tribes through the Ages of Social Stratification*, Calcutta, 2008, p. 14.

When defining the tribe in the Indian context, T B Naik raises the problem in a proper perspective by talking of the criteria and indices of the tribal life in specifically Indian situation. What should be the criteria and indices of tribal life? (a) Living in forest? The Dublas of Surat and a lot of others do not live in forests. They live in fertile plains; nevertheless they are included in the schedule, (b) Primitive in religious belief? But you do not know what the primitive religion in India is; there being a continuance from the most abstruse philosophy to the tribal gods and superstitious beliefs in the religion of most of the advanced communities of India. This index is very fluid and not exact. (c) Geographic isolation? There are hundreds of tribal groups who are not living an isolated life or (d) Primitive economic systems? There are many peasant and caste groups who are living by equally primitive economic system.⁵⁵ Thus Naik presents his own criterion to define the Tribe which are given below.⁵⁶

1. A tribe to be a 'tribe' should have the least functional interdependence within the community (the Hindu caste system is an example of high interdependence)
2. It should be economically backward, which means:
 - (a) The full import of monetary economics should not be understood by its members.
 - (b) Primitive means of exploiting natural resources should be used.
 - (c) The tribe's economy should be in an underdeveloped stage; and
 - (d) It should have multifarious economic pursuits.
3. There should be a comparative geographic isolation of its people from others.
4. Culturally, members of a tribe should have a common dialect which may be subject to regional variations.
5. A tribe should be politically organized and its community *Panchayat* should be an influential institution.

⁵⁵ T B Naik, "What is Tribe? A Conflicting Definition", in L P Vidyarthi (ed.), *Applied Anthropology in India*, New Delhi, 1968, pp. 93-94.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

6. A tribe's members should have the least desire to change. They should have a sort of psychological conservatism making them stick to their old customs.

7. A tribe should have customary laws and its members might have to suffer in a law court because of these laws.

Naik then explains that a community, to be a 'tribe' must bear almost all these attributes. It might be undergoing acculturation, but the degree of acculturation will have to be determined in the context of its customs, Gods, language, etc. A very high degree of acculturation will debar a community from being a tribe.

We can elaborate some of the points discussed by Naik by quoting Ehrenfels:⁵⁷

1. A community, however small it may be, may remain in isolation from the other communities within a geographical region. This applies to a caste as well as to a tribe. The members of a true tribe, however, are generally not included into the traditional Hindu caste hierarchy and frequently speak also a common dialect, entertain common beliefs, follow common occupational practice and (most important) consider themselves as members of a small but semi-national unit.

2. I would not use the words 'economically backward', 'primitive means', 'underdeveloped stage', etc. and substitute them by the word 'Self sufficient' (of *Khasi, Gond, Bhil, Agaria* and others who are in part specialized economically, even than their non-tribal neighbours). Though each individual of a tribe may work for his family group and thus may remain functionally independent of the other members, it is to be seen how far every individual lives in solidarity with the tribes as a whole, rather than as a co-partner in the caste hierarchy of non-tribal Hindus.

3. I agree with the definition of geographical isolation though not every tribe is an isolated unit of people. (eg. *Bhil, Santhals, Irula, Paniya*, etc.) But if a tribe has its own system of isolated economy, its solidarity will no doubt be more stable.

⁵⁷ U R Ehrenfels, *Kadar of Cochin*, Madras, 1952, pp. 3-5.

4. Common dialects or languages are typical for tribes in Assam and the Central areas but not in the Southern and Western states of India. The original religious concepts of most tribes in pre- acculturation days were different from their Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim or Christian neighbors, but are not always so now.

5. A tribe needs not only always be politically organized nor have a community *panchayat*. It may, or may not, have a single chief or a few elders who may wield more or less power within the community.

6. Almost all tribes have customary laws and practices, more or less different from their non - tribal neighbors.

Despite this there exists some problems in defining 'tribe' in a single definition, quite a substantial measure of standardization has been accomplished in designating which people are or are not entitled to particular protection and privilege. This could become possible only through empirical research, ultimately coming out with definite and empirically verifiable ethnographic data to clear the cobwebs of misgivings regarding Indian tribes.

Pre - Colonial Dominant Construction of the 'Tribe'

Many researchers have focused on the colonial times for studying 'tribal' communities. Neeladri Bhattacharya blames them for not paying any serious attention to the pre - colonial experience.⁵⁸ The social lives and practices of forest dwellers and peasants, shifting cultivators and pastoralists, were crucially affected by the way they were seen by state and society, as well as the self-conceptions of their own practice. This makes it imperative to at least take a quick look at the pre-colonial dominant constructions of the tribes. The people who speak Aryan language were the first group who entered into the Indian Peninsula from the North - West and came into struggle with the Dravidians who were called by them as *Dasyus*. The term *Dasyus* was generally used for foes. There took place a protracted struggle between the people of the two races and civilizations. The conquered Dravidians were

⁵⁸ Neeladri Bhattacharya, *Labouring Histories: Agrarian Labour and Colonialism*, New Delhi, 2004, pp.17-18.

reduced to the status of slaves by the Aryan conquerors. A section of the Dravidians, who escaped defeat and did not surrender to the Aryans, continued to maintain their independent existence in the remote hills and forests. They are believed to be the fore - runners of the various tribal/ forest groups in India. Romila Thapar does not find it necessary to see the dominant culture's perception monolithically - *i.e.*, either as positive or negative. In her work, she examines the image of the barbarian in ancient India.⁵⁹ She thinks the image draws its genesis from “the curious situation of the arrival of the Indo - Aryan speaking nomadic pastoralists in northern India who came into contact with the indigenous population (possibly the remnants of the urban civilization of the Indus) and regarded them as barbarians.”⁶⁰ She adds that the distinction that was made with the indigenous population was a linguistic one (between the Sanskrit speakers and the non - Sanskrit speakers) and to a lesser degree, a racial one. The word that was used to denote the ‘other’ in Sanskrit was *mleccha*. This word did not always refer to the tribes. Its usage varied according to the circumstance and times. But we have to follow the trajectory of the word *mleccha* to find out what the attitudes towards the tribes by the Aryans. Once the distinction with the language was made, the territorial distinction was also established with *Arya - varta* where the correct rituals were performed.⁶¹ This definitely placed the areas other than *Arya - varta* at a disadvantage. She also thinks that the establishment of the *varnashrama* society went hand in hand with these developments.

Thapar explains that in the second half of the first millennium B.C. that saw the extensive urbanization of the Ganges valley, the city dwellers were made to look down upon the forest and hill dwellers. The names of tribes mentioned during this period include *Sabara, Pulinda, Mutiba and Kirata*.⁶² By then *mlecchas* included groups ranked as mixed castes, technologically backward tribes and communities along the frontiers as well as people speaking

⁵⁹ Romila Thapar, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, Hyderabad, 1978, pp. 152-153.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ *Ibid*, p.154.

⁶² *Ibid*, p.155.

a different tongue. Later foreign people like *Yavanas* and even Arabs were included among the *mlecchas*. More than what the barbarian did, his exclusion was based on certain notions of ritual purity. The earlier *Brahminical* view was to avoid contact with the forest dwellers (*mleccha atavikas*).⁶³ As mentioned, it was the social organization of those societies that is highlighted to be the reason for their barbaric nature. The social organizations which were not based on *varnashrama dharma* were considered to be outside civilization. Parasher Sen tries to prove that it was the social organization of these societies that were supposed to place them at a barbaric level in the *janapada*.⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that even the Jains and Buddhists had pejorative terms to describe the tribes. Jain monks and nuns were warned to avoid the areas of ‘unlearned’ and ‘barbaric’ people.⁶⁵

Parasher Sen also examines the Mauryan attitude towards ‘the tribes’ in detail. Though the Mauryan Empire was considered to be the first centralized government in the subcontinent, Parasher Sen argues that the unconquered territories in the fringes of the empire determined the structure of the centre too. The approach of the centre towards these fringes varied from fear to attempts of appropriation. Through a quote from Kautilya, Parasher-Sen proves that the jungle tribes were equated to wild animals and were considered unnecessary in an ideal *janapada*, or settlement.⁶⁶ But at the same time Kautilya advises direct contact with them and to use them against the enemies as spies. This was supposed to keep them from engaging in looting and plundering. By the time of the Mauryan Empire, a distinction seems to have emerged about various tribes amongst the dominant culture. Thus, Kautilya mentions *aranyacaras* and *atavikas*. The *atavikas* have connotations of a ‘wild’ and ‘savage’ tribe well entrenched in the jungle fastness who were ostensibly a nuisance to the State.⁶⁷ The *aranyacaras* were, on the other hand, tribes who were entering into some kind of negotiations with the centralized State. They

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Aloka Parasher Sen, *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, Oxford, 2004, p. 177.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 178.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

were seen to be lower than the people inhabiting *janapadas* but tamed unlike the *atavikas*.

Another level of the pre-colonial construction of the tribe also shows some grudging respect to the jungle tribes. Here, the *atavikas* were placed to be “well-organized and brave, practically autonomous and fond of looting and killing.”⁶⁸ Yet, Thapar writes that *mlecchas* were also incorporated in practice into the social, political and religious systems and were the progenitors of many of the essentials of Indian culture.⁶⁹ Parasher-Sen sums up his work as, “...the forest people were feared but also tolerated; political thinkers of the time, in fact, preferred a policy of non-interference.”⁷⁰

As mentioned in the beginning of this section the summary of some of the dominant pre - colonial constructions of tribes is given here so as to counter the argument that colonialism alone stereotyped the tribes. In fact, the connections with the pre - colonial dominant constructions and the colonial constructions can be seen with the introduction of caste as a defining category in understanding tribes. Probably, the definition of the tribe that later on the colonialists arrived at was ‘outside caste’, and which they interpreted as ‘outside culture’, might have direct connections to the pre - colonial way of defining ‘civilization’ by the *Brahminical* and later Buddhist - Jain ways of thinking.

Colonial Construction of Indian Tribe

The colonial period saw large scale remolding of the Indian society. It not only witnessed the introduction of the idea of a centralized State, but also made changes in the native sensibilities. Very often, these changes were taking to and taking from earlier forms of power that existed in India. It was a dialogue between European constructions of categories and native constructions. Surely, they operated with a power difference between groups evolving the categories. All categories were remolded to suit colonial modernity. The category ‘tribe’ was one such. There were many institutions

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Romila Thapar, *op. cit.*, p. 181.

⁷⁰ Aloka Parasher Sen, *op. cit.*, p.189.

that were connected to the colonial production of categories. This broadly includes the colonial State, academic, especially anthropological writings and missionary writings. It is not as if these are watertight compartments. In the works of a scholar like Edgar Thurston who combined the administrator and the anthropologist, so too, the figure of Varrier Elwin combined the philanthropic missionary and the anthropologist (curiously called 'philanthropologist'). Moreover, the State policies were very often determined by the impressions and discourses around the categories dealt with. They were serving as inter-textual material interacting with each other.

Western writers on India, especially Orientalists, followed by some anthropologists and sociologists used the term 'Tribe' for the first time to denote a race of people within a given territory. The Anthropological studies broadly divide the tribes in India into three stocks namely, the Negritos, the Mongoloids and Mediterranean.⁷¹ The Negritos are believed to be the earliest inhabitants of the Indian Peninsula. They have almost disappeared. However, some traces of Negritos are still found among the tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, known as the *Onges*, the *Great Andamanese*, the *Sentinelese* and the *Jarwas* and also in Kerala among the *Kadars* and the *Irulars*.⁷² The mongoloid race is represented by the tribal people of the sub- Himalayan region. They were divided into two categories, namely, the *Paleo Mongoloids* and the *Tibeto Mongoloids*. The *Palaeo Mongoloids* are represented by the tribes living in Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Manipur. The *Tibeto Mongoloids* are represented by the tribes living in Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. They are believed to have migrated from Tibet. They have typical eyes and facial features. The Mediterranean people form a bulk of the tribal population and are generally known as the Dravidians. Dravidian is however, the name of the language spoken by these people. The tribes believed to be belonging to the Dravidian race are found in the Chotanagpur Plateau, the Aravalli ranges, the Deccan Plateau region, Nilgiri hills, Western Ghats, etc.⁷³ Dravidian language still survive not only in South India, but also in Central

⁷¹ Kalyankumar Das Gupta, *Tribal Society of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1974, p. 34.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

India where its traces are found in the dialects spoken by the *Oraons*, the *Gonds*, the *Mundas*, the *Malers*, the *Khonds* and the other tribes. The Dravidians are presumed to be of two stocks, the *Kolarians* who speak a dialect called *Mundari* and the Dravidians proper whose languages are represented by Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada.⁷⁴ The *Mundas*, the *Santhals*, the *Oraons*, and the other tribes inhabiting Chotanagpur Plateau region are considered to be of the *Kolarian* stock. The *Gonds* and the *Khonds* and the other tribes belong to the Dravidian stock and are found in Central Vindhya-chal and the Deccan Plateau region.

The British following the policy of mercantile colonialism made serious efforts to penetrate into the tribal areas with a view to consolidate their position in the Indian sub-continent. The tribes could not tolerate any encroachment on their traditional habitats and at times it resulted even into armed resistances. The British had to use force very frequently to deal with the problems in the 19th century. But they soon realized their folly and made reconciliation efforts by declaring the tribal areas as the non-regulatory areas and conferring recognition to their traditional system of administration. However, they cleverly encouraged the missionaries, who had already succeeded in entering the tribal areas, apparently with a helping hand and a message of love and humanity but with the ultimate aim of conversion.

As mentioned above, the pre-colonial times also had notions of the forest dweller, the city-dweller, etc. However, what is argued here is that the 'tribe' with its anthropological and evolutionary meanings of 'not advanced' and lagging behind in the evolutionary scheme developed along with colonization and modernity. The notion of the tribe developed as communities outside caste and had definite notions of primitivism along with it. Also, the notion of hitherto unconnected communities coming together was a contribution of the colonialists' homogenizing tendencies. This has also led to the post-colonial *Adivasi* identity creation.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 41.

The post-colonial Indian State's perception of the tribes was directly connected to the colonial construction of the tribe. Kamat proves this point in the following way: 'Scheduled Tribes list' and 'Scheduled Tribe areas' refer to the Government taxonomy of tribes introduced in 1950, though it is substantially based on the 1931 Census by the British Government.⁷⁵ Therefore, it is quite clear that it is important to look at the colonial administrative category that emerged through their Census to get an idea of what the roots were of the post-colonial administrative category. The Census documents should be taken as one among many sites of the construction of the category though it does not claim to be exhaustive in any way.

The Census as Discourse

Colonial Census as a discourse is primarily responsible for constructing the category 'Tribe'. It does not mean that the communities now designated with the tribal identity did not exist before the Census operations and that it was a 'fictitious' creation. What is meant is that the idea that *Bodos* in Assam and *Muthuvans* in Idukki could be brought under the same column was something new. It was a new idea and image that they both have essentially something in common. It is this idea of commonness, which had newly emerged in Colonial India. Census provided a very important arena to analyze this commonness. Census is the enumeration of people. According to one definition, "in the literal sense the term 'Population Census' is primarily an official enumeration through a direct visit of all the people either physically present or regularly residing in a country on any of its subdivisions."⁷⁶ Taking the number of people was a modern concept connected to the management of resources and people by the State. It has certain pre-suppositions; 1. Governance is the management of resources and people; 2. That it is important to have the data of people and resources for effective management. Census assumes importance in that sense as it provides the necessary demographic data of people and resources in a governable region. Philosophically, it can be

⁷⁵ Sangeeta Kamat, "Anthropology and Global Capital: Rediscovering the Noble Savage", in *Cultural Dynamics*, 13.1, 2001, California, 2001, p. 31.

⁷⁶ S C Srivastava, *Indian Census in Perspective*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 22.

traced to the Enlightenment tradition of the State as the expression of a fully developed individual who consents to be enumerated as a population.

The concept of people becoming a population is very much visible there in the act of taking Census. The governable subject who willingly submits to the mechanisms of the State power is the imagined subject of European Census. But, the Indian Census, though drawing from these roots, does not imagine a fully formed individual. Instead, what is enumerated is the wealth of communities. There are resistances to these classificatory processes which are recorded, very often from perspectives, which are both pre-modern and therefore non-rational, from local powers which were contested and therefore disturbed by the act of Census taking. The classificatory methods used by the British, angered many a native subject. Thus, the 1881 Census shows that the resistance of the Bhils against the Census operations had to be quelled by the deployment of the army because they were ‘superstitiously’ against it. Risley’s List of Indian Castes, which was published in their supposedly hierarchical order, was contested vehemently by the Hindus. He clearly states that, “Census is not just the data of the number of human beings. It is the data of classification. And this classification gives us an idea about how the people are imagined to be divided”. This means that while the British were recording the various social groups that existed in this country, what was happening was that they were defining and constructing caste-tribe identities through these classifications.⁷⁷ They remolded the communities into castes and tribes. That is why we claim the tribe is a modern colonial category. The Imperial Census made visible an interaction of both the classificatory mechanisms of locally existing classifications of people and regions and the classifications as the British were used to at home. It takes it for granted that a particular self that sees itself as part of a nation (India) and a self, that sees itself as belonging to a particular religion, had already emerged. Yet it is the process of evolution that

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, p. 112.

one finds rather than the taken for granted way in which these categories are used today.

History of Census in India

Before we proceed to the examination of the construction of identities and where the tribe positioned, a short pre-history of the Census in India is given below. A systematic and modern population census in its present form was conducted non-synchronously between 1865 and 1872 in different parts of India. This effort culminating in 1872 has been popularly labeled as the first Population Census of India. However the first synchronous census in India was held in 1881.⁷⁸ Before this, there were attempts by smaller administrative units to conduct Census. Bernard Cohn traces the early attempts at population estimation and the taking of Censuses from 1820-1870. But he traces a prehistory to the Census-taking in India 40 years before this.⁷⁹ In a sense, the British had tried to collect information about the local regions from the time they started systematic collection of revenue. A *Gazetteer* was published in 1820 by Walter Hamilton which can be taken as the pre-Census document. The first Census of the northwestern province was taken in 1847. In 1853, it was repeated due to the inaccuracies of the first. But the time, which we focus, is the moment of enumeration of tribes in India-the time of the first Imperial Census. The formation of the modern Census in India can be understood to have happened between 1872 and 1901. Since then, censuses have been undertaken un-interruptedly. The analysis is from 1872 onwards, which is the time of first All India Imperial Census. The Terms used for Tribes in Various Census Reports⁸⁰

<u>Year</u>	-	<u>Term</u>
1881	-	'Aboriginal'
1891	-	'Forest Tribes' mentioned under Agricultural and Pastoral Castes
1901	-	'Animists'

⁷⁸ Government of India, *Census Data - 2001*.

⁷⁹ Bernard Cohn, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, Princeton, 1996, p. 7

⁸⁰ *Census Reports* of the years: 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921, 1931 & 1941.

1911	-	'Tribal Animists' or 'People Following Tribal Religion'
1921	-	'Hill and Forest Tribes'
1931	-	'Primitive Tribes'
1941	-	'Tribes'

The traditional people found a place as 'Forest Tribes' in the 1891 Census. Their population is estimated to be about 16 million. In the Census report of 1901, they were classified as 'Animists' and in 1911 as 'tribal animists or people following tribal religion.' In 1931, they were categorized as Primitive Tribes.

'Tribe' and 'Hindu' in Census Reports

The history of the relation between the categories tribe and the Hindu religious identity goes back to the construction of both these identities. The beginning of the consolidation of these identities shares the common platform. In short, the question, who is a tribe in India? Necessarily prompt us to ask who is a Hindu? This is because the Hindu had been defined in particular ways in the British documents and the tribe had been defined in this category's shadow. It is evident that the British considered 'religion' as a major identity, which had to be enumerated and categorized. This was probably the follow-up of how society was perceived back home in Europe. Apart from Christianity, the other religions, which they were familiar with, were of course Islam and Judaism. A prophet, a holy book and sacred places where the religion is supposed to have originated defined these religions. They were of course familiar with the subdivisions within Christianity itself, the division of churches in Catholic and Protestant lines. But, it should be noted that though they understood the importance of religion they refused to enumerate it back at home. However, they thought it was necessary to do so in India. R B Bhagat thinks it is because of different reasons; the colonialists had been taking Census in both places; in Britain, the Census was introduced as a result of the debates on population and poverty in the second half of the 18th century. While Census operations in Britain had economic and welfare motivations; in India, it was the desire of the Colonial government to learn all it could about the people and the land under

its control.⁸¹ In India from the beginning of Census taking itself, that is, from the first Imperial Census of 1872, the data about religion had been collected. The Colonial Census of India had questions on religion, caste and race from 1872 onwards. Moreover, religion was used as a fundamental category in Census tabulating and data and this was published without any restraint.

Defining Hindu

In their innumerable efforts to define the category 'Hindu', we can see British Census officials and reporters losing their ground and slipping. They very readily accepted that they were not on sure grounds. It is true that there was not a common language to understand the religious system that the British saw in this country. As Bourdillon writes in the 1881 Census, "...concerning some of the faiths exhibited in Bengal, there could be no doubt, they stand distinctly apart. Their creeds are capable of definite formulation, and their followers are an acknowledged people, and an appreciable body in commonwealth. The Sikhs and Mahommedans, the Jews and the Parsees have an individuality which is impossible to mistake. The Christians profess a faith which separate them from all other classes of the community, and the Buddhists and the Jains; though they have been said to possess much in common, differ from each other by such imperceptible relation, and are separated from each other by such impalpable partitions, that is impossible to say where one ends and the other commences, so that the border land between each one and the next is a misty valley, now narrowing, but always thick with the exhalations of ignorance and the fogs of doubt."⁸² Due to this confusion, Hindu was defined against Islam primarily. As the 1891 Census report unabashedly claims about Hinduism, "Primarily and historically, it is the antithesis of Islam, and thus includes all Indian forms of faith in which the uncompromising Unitarianism of the adherents of the prophet detected signs of the worship of idols."⁸³

⁸¹ R B Bhagath, "Role of Census in Racial and Ethnic Construction", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXVIII - 8, 2003, p. 687.

⁸² *Census of India Report*, 1881, p. 20.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 1891, p. 158.

The fuzziness of the category 'Hindu' made many a Census official eloquent. The default religion and beliefs of this place was named Hindu. But, this does not mean that the Census officials themselves knew what it meant. It was in the process of being formed precisely in these pages of the Census among other sites. Thus, the perplexity of Beverly who wrote the Census report of 1872 is evident in his exasperated questioning: 'What is a Hindoo?' Baines who wrote the Bombay report for the 1881 Census repeated it when he says: "Beginning with Hindooism as the religion of the majority, we are met at the outset by a not uncommon difficulty, that of definition."⁸⁴ Beverly, who asked the perplexing question, also admits defeat with the definition, "No answer in fact exists, for the term in its modern acceptation denotes neither a creed nor a race, neither a church nor a people, but is a general expression devoid of precision, and embracing alike the agnostic youth who is the product of Western education, and the semi barbarous hill man, who eats, without scruple what he can procure, and is as ignorant of the Hindoo theology as the stone which he worships in time of danger or sickness." In this perplexity, he is clubbing completely different groups as one - the tribes and the 'Hindoos', among many others, thus theoretically share a brief stint of being one. Yet, with all these confusions of whether they were Hindu or not, the tribes seem to have been finally declared out of the Hindu fold. In fact, there is resentment from the colonial authorities if they are included as Hindu in the categorization. In fact, to avoid confusions, the 1881 Census even considered 'tribal' as a separate religious category. The Imperial Census report of the year complains against Madras that refused to show a single aboriginal in the separate religious category; "Madras...does not show a single aboriginal in its religious classification, but it is unquestionable that in the Neilgherries (Nilgiris) there are races who, if they profess any religions at all, are nature worshippers and not Hindoos, Mahammedans, or any one of the religions shown in the Madras tables. In Madras these aboriginals have been entered as Hindoo".⁸⁵

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 1881, p. 18.

⁸⁵ *Ibid*.

These attempts to mark tribal identity as a religious category are also visible in the methodology of organization of the reports. For instance, the 1871 Census does have data on 'Hindus', 'Sikhs', 'Mahomedans', 'Budhists and Jains', 'Christians', and 'Others'. There is also division which says, 'Religion not Known'. It is true that the tribes might have been conceived of as belonging to the 'Others', or 'Religion not Known' category, apart from being included in 'Hindus'. Yet, the 1881 Census is very different. Here we find that 'Aboriginal Religion' is a religious category that occupies the third position as far as population is concerned, with 64,26,511 people as members (Hindu and Mohamedan religion come in the first and the second position). Here the argument is that the attempts in the 1881 Census to include tribal identity as a religious category was to mark its difference with the Hindu religion.

Here is how the 'aboriginal' is defined in the 1881 Census: "A very large number of persons are shown in the Imperial tables under the somewhat dubious term, dubious so far as religious designation is concerned, 'aboriginal'. Those who have grouped together under this term in the religious classification consist of the aboriginal tribes, who, not having been converted to Christianity, or to Islam, or to the Hindoo belief, retain, if they have any religion at all, the primitive cult of their forefathers, adoring nature under the various forms or images they have chosen to select as representative of Deity."⁸⁶

We can observe the confusions in the birth pangs of the category 'tribe' in the index of this 1881 Census itself. At the time of the first Census, the religious identity itself was being formed and people returned the columns for marking religions with a caste name or a sect name. A humorous quotation from the Census report proves the confusion which itself finally crystallized as various social groups that we know of today. Interestingly, the quote is about who are today known as tribes; The Deputy commissioner of Ellichpur, writes as follows; "When the hill people were pressed for a reply as to what their religion was, sometimes after much parleying, they said either that they were Hindoos or that they knew nothing about religion, that they were *Arani log*,

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 19.

ignorant people. All they knew was they were *Korkus* by caste... In one instance, two *Korkus*, brothers, one gave the one answer, and the other, the second... Now yesterday at Chikkalda there were representatives of eight villages present. Of these I called six *Korkus*, one *Golan* and two *Nihals*. All of the *Korkus*, when asked what their religion was, commenced by naming all the gods they worshipped as above. When further pressed as to what name the religion had in which these Gods were worshipped, five answered without hesitation, Hindoo, and one said he really could not tell. What could he, a *Golan*, know about his religious name? The *Golan* replied that he worshipped exactly the same gods the *Korku* did. Whatever their religion was called, that was his. He did not know its name. Of the two *Nihals*, both said they worshipped exactly as the *Korkus* did; the same God but they could not give the name the religion was entered by. How should they know it? Asked if they knew anything of the religions; Mahommadans and Hindoos professed, one replied that the "duos" being the same, he supposed their religion was a branch of Hinduism. The other thought they were more like Mussalmans, except that the latter abhorred pig's flesh, which the *Nihals* liked. There was a general sentiment among tribes to be enumerated as Hindus, perhaps because of the vagueness of the identity 'Hindu', or because of local associations with the upper castes."⁸⁷ There is resentment when the tribes themselves ask to be enumerated as Hindus. Thus Drysdale, referring to this topic, writes in the Central Provinces report, "The instructions to enumerators required they should as Gonds and all alike what religion they professed, and accept their reply as conclusive, but the Hindoo agency were so influenced by individual views and prejudices, that a great variety of practice prevailed in the record of the religion of the hill tribes. The result however shows very clearly, there is, among the aboriginal races, a very general desire to be regarded as of the Hindoo religion."⁸⁸ Yet, the authorities were very clear of including the Dalit castes as Hindu even if they did not ask to be enlisted as such.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 55.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p.125.

Thus, it is reported in 1881 Census; “Another general doubt was what should be entered as the religion of debased castes like the *Dher* and *Mang*, who are generally ignorant of any religion except the superstitions of their caste and are not admitted to the Hindoo temples. Many of the more bigoted High caste Hindoos employed as Census enumerators or supervisors objected to record such low persons as of the Hindoo religion. This was illustrated by numerous instances brought to our notice of such persons having been recorded as that of *Dher*, *Mang* or *Chandal* religion. Possibly some in their humility or ignorance may not even have claimed to be of the Hindoo religion. More probably they were not even asked. In my office they have all been tabulated as of the Hindoo religion, unless recorded as of some other recognized religions. The ignorance of the people was the ignorance of the category that was in the process of emerging - Hindu.” Along with Hindu was also emerging the category under discussion - Tribe. It was the complexity of the forging of the categories in a particular way that one finds reflected in the Census pages. Just to recount whatever has been discussed so far - Hindu has been defined against Muslim and other religions with Semitic properties. It has been seen as the default religion of the country. The tribes have not been included in Hindu religion though there are constant references to their closeness. In fact, even when the tribes themselves have specifically asked to be included in the category, they have been excluded from the category. Moreover, the brief trial at including the tribe within the religion in the 1881 Census also showed that the British Census officials maintained the distinction between the Hindu and the tribes. At the same time, the Dalits have been without any doubt included in the category, Hindu.

The Census officials, like many other British, felt the essential characteristic of the Hindu religion as Caste. The ease with which the British excluded the tribes from Hindu was because they were conceived of as *outside* caste, and therefore as *outside* ‘Hindu’. But, the Dalits were not given this opportunity of being seen as outside caste. In the eyes of the British, they were

both united in a system that recognized communities placed in a particular hierarchy. The quotes from the Census do prove that they viewed caste as the distinguishing feature of Hinduism. For instance: "It is true that very high authorities have described caste as the express badge of Hinduism."⁸⁹ Barthes is quoted in the 1891 Census to prove that "...this institution [caste] is not merely the symbol of Hinduism, but its stronghold and a religious factor of the very highest order." Moreover, caste is defined as "the perpetuation of status or function by inheritance and endogamy."⁹⁰ In the definition of tribe the distinction that the British made with the castes is crucial. Why did they not include tribes as part of the default order they found in this country, Hinduism? Why were they perceived as outside Caste? To seek answers for this, perhaps one should go back to the Enlightenment idea of the tribes that was being constructed in the West.

As already discussed earlier, the Western society, according to their worldview, was the only fully developed and cultured Society. Progress was marked in terms of how close you were to being the fully realized individual who enters into social contract with other individuals. State was this individual's social expression. In direct contrast was the society imagined to be practicing primitive communism - the tribal society. In this hierarchy, caste was seen both as an expression of progress into a more complex power structure and falling short of being the fully individuated Western society. In this scheme of things, it was necessary to see the tribe as outside caste - therefore more egalitarian but also more primitive. This is not quite a new argument. Many theorists have proved that by the mid-nineteenth century, this distinction between the caste and tribe was in place in India. As Ajay Skaria states: "By mid-nineteenth century, as is well known, colonial officials

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 1891, p. 182

⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

routinely distinguished between the castes and tribes of India, seeing the two as fundamentally different.”⁹¹

Post - Independent Tribal Situation

In the post - independent period the term tribe has undergone further change from its traditional definition. Under the Constitution of India, tribes have been specified as Scheduled Tribes. Only those ethnic groups who have been included in the list of Scheduled Tribes are eligible for special treatment and facilities envisaged under the Constitution. Certain tribes, for instance, nomadic tribes were excluded from the list of Scheduled Tribes. The Constitution neither defines nor lays down any criteria for specifying the Scheduled Tribes. As per article 366 (25) of the Indian Constitution, Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 to be Scheduled for purposes of this constitution. The Scheduled Tribes may be specified by the President under Article 342 by a public notification. The Parliament may, by law, include or exclude from the list of Scheduled Tribes any tribal community or part thereof in any State or Union Territory.

There is no religious bar or criterion for specifying a person as member of a Scheduled Tribe. The main criteria adopted for specifying communities as Scheduled Tribes include (i) traditional occupation of a definite geographical area, (ii) distinctive culture which includes whole spectrum of tribal way of life, i.e., language, custom, traditions, religious beliefs arts, and crafts etc. (iii) Primitive traits depicting occupational pattern, economy etc. and (iv) lack of educational and techno- economic development.

When we try to trace out the historical background of coining the term Scheduled Tribe in the Constitution, it may be stated that during the debates at the time of constitution making, Jaipal Singh had favored the use of the term *Adivasi* instead of ‘Scheduled Tribe’.⁹² It was however, not accepted by others.

⁹¹ Ajay Skaria, “Shades of Wilderness: Tribe, Caste, and Gender in Western India”, in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 56.3, 1997, p.729.

⁹² Nadeem Hasnain, *Tribal India Today*, New Delhi, 1983, pp. 14-18.

The reason, as explained by B R Ambedkar who was the Chairman of Drafting committee of the Constitution is, “the word *Adivasi* is really a general term which has no specific legal *de jure* connotation. Whereas, the word “Schedule Tribe” has a fixed meaning, because it enumerates the tribes.”⁹³ In case of the issue being taken to a court of law, there should be a precise definition as to who these *Adivasis* are? The committee therefore, decided to enumerate the *Adivasis* under the term ‘Scheduled Tribe’.⁹⁴

Though the criteria of definitions of the tribes are never clearly pointed out, even a brief survey of some of these definitions will prove that there is a hidden yardstick used to compare societies working in them. The hidden yardstick is the ‘mainstream society’ or rather, what the definer thinks of as mainstream society. Vidyarthi and Rai⁹⁵ in their famous classification of the tribes that has become a standard in Anthropology classrooms classified the tribe thus:

A - The lowest (as defined) stage of economic development (hunters and gatherers, shifting cultivators, etc.) today usually connected with the dying tribes

B - Tribes largely assimilated with general society

C - Assimilated tribes.

In this classification what is clear is a never fore-grounded but always present notion of mainstream society where the tribal society is imagined in contrast to this. This mainstream society is homogenized and the tribe exists only in connection to this. Virginius Xaxa has pointed out the problem with such a conceptualization: “...tribes have come to be primarily studied in relation to features and characteristics of the larger society. The focus is on how tribes are getting absorbed into the larger society, the so called mainstream, by becoming caste, peasant, and class and so on. With such conceptualization, the identity of the tribal group or community is indeed put at

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ L P Vidyarthi and E K Rai, *Tribal Culture in India*, New Delhi, 1976, p. 28.

risk. This is because of the way tribes have been conceptualized in anthropological literature and the reference with which tribal society in India is studied. Tribes are primarily seen as a stage and type of society".⁹⁶ They represent a society that lack positive traits of the modern society and thus constitutes a simple, illiterate and backward society. With change in these features on account of education, modern occupation, new technology, etc., tribal society is no longer considered to be tribal. If transformation is in the direction of caste society then it is described as having become caste society. If the reference is peasant then it is posited as peasant society and if the general direction of transformation is social differentiation, then it is described as differentiated or stratified, and thus ceases to be tribal society.⁹⁷ In the process it is forgotten that tribe besides being a stage and type of society is also a society alike and similar to any other kind of society, say Oriya or the Bengali.⁹⁸ Apart from this major theoretical problem, as Wiercinski mentions, the statistical details about the tribal population in India is severely limited due to the fact that the numbers enumerated sometimes club whole communities that have distinct identities under one banner. Moreover, whole communities are left out of enumeration altogether.⁹⁹

As Wiercinski opines, there is no official definition of a tribe according to which the list of Scheduled Tribes is compiled in each Census. He elaborates, "The famous Article 342 of the Indian Constitution states that the President may specify the tribes or tribal communities, or parts of, or groups within, any tribe, which shall for purposes of this constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes and the Parliament has the right to include or exclude names from the list of Scheduled Tribes."¹⁰⁰ In this way the problem of the definition of a tribe was avoided and left for theoretical dispute by academics."¹⁰¹ There are

⁹⁶ Virginus Xaxa, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXIV.51, 1999(b), pp. 3289-3292.

⁹⁷ Sumit Guha, *Environment and Ethnicity in India: 1200-1991*, Cambridge, 1999, p. 122.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ Mateusz Wiercinski, "Some Problems in the Demography of the Tribal Populations in India", in *Mankind Quarterly*, 36.3-4, 1996, pp.261-265

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

numerous controversies, both academic as well as political, of communities that are included as well as excluded from the Scheduled Tribes list. Many anthropologists feel that the government has not done justice to many communities by excluding them from the list while there are communities that do not exactly deserve to be treated as tribes included in the list due to their political clout.

This means that the problem of definition is not just an academic problem but one which has large political implications. In spite of this, there has been no effort to standardize the definition of the tribe. Examining the history of the category the reasons for the predetermined failure of such a venture become clear. This does not mean that efforts at defining have not happened. In fact, the history of the category gives us numerous attempts at definitions. Virginius Xaxa who tried to theorize tribal identity in the Indian context thinks that, "however informal it was, some criteria did seem to work for drawing up the list."¹⁰² According to him "These ranged from such features as geographical isolation, simple technology and condition of living, general backwardness to the practice of animism, tribal language, physical features, etc. The problem was not that any criterion did not exist but that diverse criteria were used interchangeably and according to the convenience of the moment."¹⁰³

The Commissioner of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in India in his report of 1952 noted eight common features in explaining how to identify the Scheduled Tribes. These ranged from places of residence to habits of communities. For instance he gives these characteristics to define the Scheduled Tribe, "Dwelling in forests and hills; ethnic origins like Austroloid, Mongoloid or Negroid; Animists worshipping nature, ghosts, spirits: primitive hunters and gatherers; carnivorous food habits; naked and semi-naked; fond of food and dance."¹⁰⁴ It should be noted that not even one fifth of the notified Scheduled Tribes possessed these characteristics. Again going back to Xaxa;

¹⁰² Virginius Xaxa, *op.cit.*, p. 3290.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Quoted in, Sumit Guha, *op. cit.*, p.3.

The result is that the list includes groups and communities strikingly different from each other in respect of not only size of the population but also the level of technology and other characteristics.¹⁰⁵

‘Tribe’: Primitive or Modern?

As mentioned earlier, the category ‘Tribe’ in this thesis is taken to be a modern category. Thus, rather than taking it as a category that has existed from time-immemorial and as a surviving relic of the past (which is the essentialist way of constructing tribes), the dissertation sees it as having evolved in modernity. Also, it understands that the modern articulation of tribal identities has been varied in different parts of the world. India had its own peculiar history of constructing the tribe. When it is said that tribe is a modern category, it is not meant that the communities that are right now referred in that way did not exist before modernity. In fact, what is meant is that these communities have been re-forged and put under one banner ‘tribe’ during colonial rule and this bracketing affected not just the identities of the members of the community, but also their destinies in modernity. Sumit Guha thinks that rather than taking these communities as actually being primitive, we have to see them as having been "primitivized" in modernity.¹⁰⁶ He observes: “The role that the modern regime of the forests played in isolating one segment of the population within the newly drawn boundaries of the forest is highlighted in order to make the point that the resulting primitivization of these peoples is a recent consequence of the breakdown of their political system...”¹⁰⁷ It is argued that by concentrating solely on the truncated remnant of the old hierarchy, observers overlooked the living apex of the new one, succumbed to the notion of the simple, primitive and egalitarian forest tribe, and hence failed to see the simplified, primitivized, sylvan cultural proletariat that it was being hammered into becoming.

Another point that should be mentioned is the way in which colonial categories are treated. ‘Tribe’ as we know it today as the category that was

¹⁰⁵ Virginus Xaxa, *op. cit.*, p. 3291.

¹⁰⁶ Sumit Guha, *op.cit.*, p.4-5.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

officially consolidated in the post - colonial India as the Scheduled Tribes was first categorized by the British. But this does not mean that the native categories were all made from thin air by the colonialists. The British constructions were importantly influenced by the already existing elite constructions in Indian society. Also, the native constructions underwent major changes after the colonial categories were consolidated. Thus, it should be seen as a dialogue that was happening between the colonial constructions of modernity and the native constructions that were available.

The concept of a tribe has now undergone a change from that of a political unit of old days to a group of people identified with poverty and backwardness. This is the general notion that the mainstream society bears. Centuries old exploitation and oppression has resulted in the loss of their culture and economy. It is difficult to reconcile their 'glorious past' with the present state of misery. However they are gradually waking up from centuries old slumber, they have now come to realize the changes that happened to the world around and are anxious to face the new challenges.

Demographic Profile of Indian Tribes

The population of the tribes in India varies from state to state. K S Singh has identified 461 tribal groups in his work *People of India* and presented a profile of these tribal communities in the states and union territories of the country.¹⁰⁸ The Scheduled Tribes in the country constitutes 8.08 per cent of the total population.¹⁰⁹ The tribes spread all over the states except Punjab and Haryana and all over the union territories except Chandigarh and Pondicherry. Out of the total tribal population in the country, 93.8 percent are in rural areas, whereas only 6.2 per cent are urbanized.¹¹⁰ It should be mentioned here that the demography of tribal population is so unevenly distributed that Scheduled Tribes in the population of the state/ union territories is highest in Lakshadweep (93.82%), followed by Mizoram (93.55%), Nagaland (83.99%), Meghalaya (80.58), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (78.82%), Arunachal Pradesh

¹⁰⁸ K S Singh, *People of India: An Introduction*, Vol.1, New Delhi, 1992, p.11.

¹⁰⁹ Government of India, *Census of India - Report*, 2001.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

(69.82%), Tripura (28.44), etc. The lowest proportions are in Uttar Pradesh (0.21%), Tamilnadu (1.07%), and Kerala (1.14%).¹¹¹

Tribal Life in Kerala

Kerala is a coastal southern state of India lying between the imposing Western Ghats and the Arabian Sea and shares its borders with two states, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. The majority of the prominent tribal communities of Kerala live mainly on the summits of the Western Ghats of Kerala-Tamil Nadu Border. These tribal areas constitute a very significant part of the backward areas of the state presenting a complex situation for the administrators and planners. These tribal communities predominantly live in hilly and forest regions, which are comparatively inaccessible and isolated from the outside world. The concentration of tribes varies from district to district which are distributed from Kasargode down to Trivandrum.¹¹² The State has a total of thirty five Scheduled Tribes as per 2011 Census. The Scheduled Tribe (ST) population of the State is 484,839 as per 2011 Census constituting 1.45 percent of the total population.¹¹³ The decadal growth of ST population has been 33.1 per cent which is higher than the growth of the total population in 2001-2011. The Scheduled Tribes in Kerala are overwhelmingly rural as 96.1 per cent of them reside in villages. District wise distribution of ST population shows that Wayanad district has the highest percentage proportion of STs (17.4 per cent) followed by Idukki (14 per cent). Alappuzha district has the lowest proportion of STs (0.1 per cent) proceeded by Thrissur, Kollam and Kozhikode (0.2 per cent each).¹¹⁴

Population, Size & Distribution

Out of thirty five Scheduled Tribes notified from the State, *Paniyan* is the most populous tribe with a population of 81,940 forming 22.5 percent of the total tribal population of the State. *Kurichchan* is the second largest tribe

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² Government of Kerala, *Pattika Varga Samudayangalude Adisthana Vivara Sekharanam - 2008, Idukki Jilla Report* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2011, pp. 9-12.

¹¹³ Government of India, *Census of India - Report*, 2001.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

having a number of 32,746 constituting 9 per cent of the total ST population. Six other STs, namely, *Muthuvan/ Muduga*, *Kanikaran*, *Irular*, *Kurumans*, *Marati* and *Malai Arayan* having a population ranging from 21,000 to 32,000 along with *Paniyan* and *Kurichchan* constitute 73.6 per cent of the total tribal population. Seven tribes, namely, *Malayan*, *Malai Vedan*, *Mannan*, etc., having 5,000 - 16,000 population account for another 20 per cent and the remaining 20 tribes along with the generic tribes constitute the residual 6.4 per cent of the State's tribal population. Tribes having a population of below 500 are eleven in number. Out of them, *Kota*, *Kammara*, *Kochu Velan* and *Konda Kapus* are the smallest groups each having less than a population of 50.

Sex Ratio

The overall sex ratio of the total ST population in Kerala at 1000:1035 shows preponderance of females and is significantly higher than that of the national average (978) for the total ST population as per the census 2011. At the individual level, all the major tribes of the state have sex ratio higher than the national average except *Muthuvan* who possess only 1000:976. Among *Kanikaran*, *Paniyan*, *Malai Arayan* and *Marati*, females outnumber the males in their total population. The sex ratio among the tribal children in Kerala between the age group 0-6 years (974) is approximately same as that of all STs at the national level and it is only 943 in the case of *Muthuvans*. *Marati* tribe has registered the highest child sex ratio of 1054 followed by *Kanikaran* (987). The other major tribes have the child sex ratio below the national average.

Idukki district holds the second place in Kerala in the existence of most number of scheduled tribes and tribal rituals next to Wayanad. There are 245 tribal settlements of which 74 are in Thodupuzha, 11 in Peerumedu, 126 in Devikulam and 34 in Udumbanchola Taluk.¹¹⁵ Almost all the scheduled tribes are living in extremely remote and inaccessible hilly banks and in the deep interiors of thick forests. About 10,539 scheduled tribal families are estimated to be living here in Idukki.¹¹⁶ *Muthuvan*, *Mannan*, *Mala Arayan*, *Mala Vedan*,

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Mala Pandaram, Urali, Palliyan, Hill Pulaya Ulladan, Irular, Kanikkar, Kattunaikan, Malayan, etc., are the major tribal communities in the district.¹¹⁷

Table 1.1 - Percentage Distribution of Tribal Groups in Idukki¹¹⁸

Sl. No:	Tribe	No. of Families	Percentage	Population	Percentage
1	Hill Pulaya	960	9.11	3415	8.66
2	Irular	1	0.01	5	0.01
3	Kanikkar	1	0.01	6	0.02
4	Kattu Naikan	1	0.01	4	0.01
5	Mala Arayan	1619	15.36	6135	15.56
6	Malai Pandaram	12	0.11	45	0.11
7	Mala Vedan	46	0.44	177	0.45
8	Malayan	2	0.02	7	0.02
9	Mannan	2388	22.66	8948	22.69
10	Muthuvan	3309	31.40	12305	31.20
11	Palliyan	422	4.0	1481	3.75
12	Ulladan	680	6.45	2569	6.51
13	Urali	1098	10.42	3994	10.13
14	Others	--	--	347	0.88
	Total	10,539	100	39,438	100

Topology and Climate of the Study Area

Located in the middle part of the State, Idukki is bounded on the East by Madurai district of Tamil Nadu, on the west by Ernakulam and Kottayam districts of Kerala, on the south by Pathanamthitta, on the north by Trissur district of Kerala and Coimbatore district of Tamilnadu. Idukki lies between 9⁰15' and 10⁰21' of North latitude and 76⁰ 37' and 77⁰25' East longitude and has an area of 4476 sq. kms., it extends by 115 kms. from South to North and 67 kms. from east to west.¹¹⁹

The climate of the region varies considerably from west to east. The western parts of the district comprising of the midland area experience moderate climate with temperature varying between 21⁰c to 32⁰C with

¹¹⁷ Government of Kerala, *District Handbook of Kerala: Idukki*, Trivandrum, 2004, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ *Pattika Varga Samudayangalude Adisthana Vivara Sekharanam - 2008, op.cit.*, p.14.

¹¹⁹ *District Handbook of Kerala; Idukki, op. cit.*, p.15.

minimum seasonal variations. The eastern parts located in the highland have a comparatively cold climate with temperature varying between minus 1⁰C and 15⁰C in November - January and 5⁰C and 15⁰C during March/ April. On account of the high altitude and forest growth, rainfall of the region is high. The average rainfall is 280cms per annum while the western region of Devikulam Taluk gets more rainfall.

The name of the district 'Idukki' is derived from the Malayalam word *Idukku* which means a narrow gorge.¹²⁰ The gorge formed between two high massive rocks called Kuravan and Kurathi, through which Periyar one of the largest rivers of Kerala flows, is now the site of Idukki arch dam, biggest in Asia in its category. The district is rich in forest spices. It has an area of about 260,907 hectares of thick forest. Almost all types of wild animals seen in India with the exception of lion abound in the forest of Idukki.

The *Muthuvan* tribe selected for the study mainly inhabits the mountainous regions of the Idukki district of Kerala. The district has a tribal population of 3.98 percent of the total population. An anomaly prevails in the Census of India records regarding the exact number of *Muduvan* (as seen in the early Census Report) population right from the beginning of 1901 onwards due to the presence of another tribal community with the name *Mudugar* which is listed together with *Muduvans* as a single Tribe. The term *Muduvan* and *Muduvar* are interchangeable, however Francis recorded the number of *Muduvans* as 1,754 in Volume XV of the Census of India, 1901, Madras, and they were named as *Muduga* and *Muduvar*.¹²¹ Aiyar recorded the number of *Muduvans* as 808 in Volume XXVI of the Census of India, 1901, Travancore. He noted that they were immigrants from the kingdom of Madurai and were named as *Muduvan*.¹²² According to 2001 Census of India, in Kerala, *Muthuvan* and *Mudugar* were clubbed together with a number of 21,266. Many anthropologists have pointed out that *Muduvan* and *Mudugar* are two entirely different tribal communities with different geographical locations and cultural

¹²⁰ *Ibid*, p. 17.

¹²¹ *Census of India, 1901*, p.168

¹²² *Ibid*, Vol. XXVI, Travancore, p. 350.

differences. Thomas states that: *Muduvan* - meaning *Muthuvans* - are found mainly in Travancore with only insignificant dispersion into the neighboring districts of Coimbatore and Madurai, and Cochin State. The *Mudugar*, on the other hand, are found only in Malabar, and they are a different tribe altogether.¹²³ Later, Sathyanarayanan clarifies further that the confusion existing with regard of the nomenclature of the community put together in the lists of Census of India: It should be noted here that the *Muduvan* or *Muthuvan* represent one and the same communities while the *Mudugar* constitute altogether a different tribe. The Attappadi area in the Palghat district of Kerala is the habitat of the *Mudugar*, which is very much away from the *Muduvan* habitat. The *Muduvan* and *Mudugar* do not have any links with each other. The Census of India list, which has clubbed the *Muduvan* with *Mudugar*, therefore does not give the correct population of both these tribes.¹²⁴ According to the data collected by the joint venture of Department for Local Self Governance and Department for Tribal Welfare of the Government of Kerala the total number of the *Muthuvan* population in Idukki is 12,305.¹²⁵

The areas where investigation and field works carried out for the study mainly consists of *Muthuvan* settlements in Idukki, which lies in the Adimali, Konnathadi, Chinnakkanal, Mankulam, Munnar, Edamalakudi, Santhanpara, Kanthalloor, Marayoor and Vattavada Grama Panchayats. The *Muthuvan* settlements of Idukki mostly consist of hilly regions with an altitude between 3000 to 6000 feet and are dotted by several peaks exceeding 5000 feet. Perched on the Western Ghats, majority of the *Muthuvan* settlements are situated in thick evergreen forests with precious wild products like rosewood, ebony, teak, sandalwood, bamboo, cardamom, wild honey, lemon grass, etc. The western side of the mountainous region gets abundant rainfall from both south west and north - east monsoon which amounts an average of 300 cms. per annum.¹²⁶ The

¹²³ P T Thomas, *A Study of a Travancore Tribe and its Problems: The Muthuvans of Travancore*, Baroda, 1958, p. 51.

¹²⁴ Sathyanarayanan, "Dances of the Muduvan Tribe", in Robin D Tribhuwan and Preethi R Tribhuwan (eds.), *Tribal Dances of India*, Delhi, 1999, p. 176.

¹²⁵ *Pattikavarga Samudayangalude Adisthana Vivara Sekharanam - 2008, op.cit.*, p. 22.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

travel through the dense forests in Idukki is a difficult task that involves risk to life. Large trees and thick undergrowth of shrubs and bush are on both side of the jungle track. Large slippery rocky cliffs and incessant rain add to the worries of the researcher. Life is at the stake as the same mountain path is used by elephants, wild gaurs, etc. While trekking through this dense forest, no one can escape from the bite of leeches. The challenging trumpet calls of wild elephants punctuate the trek to the tribal settlements. The highest peak of south India, named Anamudi which is 2695 meters in height is proximate to Edamalakudi, the first and only tribal panchayat in Kerala. From Rajamalai check post, a journey of 13 kms. by motorable road takes us to the fringes of dense forests. Around 30 kms. of trekking through deep forests leads us to the tribal hamlets of Edamalakudi. There are thirty eight *Muthuvan kudis* settled over a hilly terrain of 62 sq. miles in the region. Edamalakudi is a place of enchanting beauty. It is a region of small mountains, hills and small streams. Here men and animals live in harmony, very close to nature, away from the polluted life of the outside world. They are free from the risks and tensions faced by modern persons in the economic, political and social spheres of life.¹²⁷

The study mainly confines to an analysis of the socio- culture life prevalent among the *Muthuvans* of Idukki district. It attempts to ascertain the pattern, extent and areas of change and ‘progress’ that took place due to the interventions and influence of modernity. The study also attempt to underscore – neglected areas like education, healthcare, economic organization, poverty, etc., and illuminate dark corners of tribal life for remedial measures and the policy and approach of the government and civil society. Many of the contemporary processes such as, the relationship of the tribal and the non-tribal communities, emergence of stratification, interaction of the tradition and modernity, all this has contributed much towards the formation of complex changes in the *Muthuvan* social systems in the exposed areas of their settlements. The study endeavors to explain the social phenomena in detail. The work also aims to put in perspective the development of these processes among the *Muthuvans* and map the extend of areas where the traces of

¹²⁷ Field Notes.

modernity are visible, the consequences of the former at the centre of the *Muthuvan* socio - culture.

Muthuvans are the inhabitants of the land of Idukki for centuries. They have their own culture, tradition, customs, etc., which they preserved in its original form without any external influences. They survived by engaging in shifting cultivation, agriculture, hunting and gathering. In the later period other groups of people from elsewhere migrated into their territories which posed a lot of challenges to the social, cultural, religious and ethnic identity of these people. They lost their land and had to flee away into the remote hills and forests. In some places, they became landless. Today one of the major struggles among *Muthuvans* like many other tribes in Kerala is their fight for retaining and regaining their homeland. They are under the threat of losing their tradition and cultural identity which they consider more valuable than life. The younger generations are found adopting the culture of the outside society and have yielded to many social changes. Urban people and their cultures encroachment into their territories had resulted in losing much of their own traditional values and culture.

Large scale deforestation and encroachments in the high ranges not only caused social and environmental problems but also became a threat to the existence of *Muthuvans* and other tribal groups. They were pushed more into the remote forests, where they lack proper transportation facilities, water for irrigation and other basic amenities for their livelihood which resulted in many problems. *Muthuvans* possess their own traditional beliefs and modes of worship based on their culture. In their traditional religion, ancestral spirits and rituals have a great importance. Influence of outside religious practices is superficially visible among the younger generations. But even a slight deviation from tradition is phenomenal in such an endogamous tribal system.

The problem that we have taken up in the study is about the positioning of *Muthuvans* in the world of Modernity. One would ask the question, "Have the *Muthuvans* attained any traces of modernity or do they still continue to live in their own world of tradition and culture?" Have the *Muthuvans* undergone

changes in their superstitions? These questions are addressed in the study. The attempt is to position the *Muthuvans* of the contemporary period in the sphere of modernization. Modernization has to be analyzed with reference to stratification and therefore we look at the tribes from this particular perspective. If the *Muthuvans* becoming modern, what would happen to their ethnic identity? What would happen to their rituals and festivals? What would happen to their festive dance? What would happen to their co-operative and collective way of thinking and living? The *Muthuvans* are at a crucial cross road. Let us examine their problems and challenges *vis a vis* modernity.

CHAPTER-II

EPISTEMOLOGICAL REVIEW

India is a fascinating country where people of many different communities and religion live together in unity. Indian population is polygenetic and is an amazing amalgamation of various races and cultures. Tribal study is nothing new to this present research world. There are many studies already done on this for the last two centuries. Many scholars have paid their attention on it and contributed very much to the field of tribal studies.

In this study on *Muthuvans* of Idukki, the contributions of well known, historians, sociologists and anthropologists of the world have been analyzed and used. The last few decades were the period of scientific and technological revolution that helped the researchers to discover many unexplored areas and human settlements around the world. Tribal studies got an impetus and many researchers took interest in utilizing modern facilities for studying new tribal groups and their way of life. Information regarding most tribes around the world is available due to the efforts of scholars who had spent their resources and time on tribal studies. This has and brought a lot of insights into various aspects of tribal life, issues and challenges. Some of these works are reviewed in this chapter in order to support the present study.

The very purpose of this review is to gain a comprehensive and deep knowledge of the tribe in India and that of Kerala that will help to pave a solid foundation for the construction of the study on the *Muthuvan* Tribe of Idukki in a prescribed theme. This review attempts to provide an extensive idea on the works of scholars who studied Indian tribes in general and the tribes in Kerala in particular.

Literatures on Indian Tribes

It would be no exaggeration to say that tribal studies comprise the backbone of social anthropology. Even before the subject began as an academic discipline in the Indian universities, studies on tribes were strongly encouraged by the Colonial rulers and Christian missionaries to aid them in their respective tasks of administration and conversion of the people. This policy led to the production of a large body of monographs, glossaries, gazetteers and reports, which not only brought valuable insights into tribal cultures and traditions and the working of small scale pre-literate societies, but also provided the context within which anthropological theories were developed and tested.

Many scholars have tried to define various aspects of tribe and tribal life in the past centuries. It is highly important to have a look at these tribal studies by various anthropologists, researchers, etc. A new trend in tribal studies and in the approach on tribal issues came up during the British period with the coming of Varrier Elwin with his basic interest in people. Elwin spent his entire adult life studying and working among tribes in India. His people oriented analysis brought out a number of startling facts about the problems of tribes who lived at the margins of survival. In his book *The Baiga*, Elwin exposed how restrictions imposed by the British on shifting cultivation (*bewar*) not only reduced *Baiga* tribes to near destitution but also seriously eroded their culture and tradition and sense of self worth.¹ Similarly, in his book *The Agaria* Elwin revealed how colonial forest policy and taxation had led to the drastic decline of the age old craft of iron smelting, threatening to push the people from a life of comparative independence and self sufficiency into the highly insecure world of wage labour.²

In a series of studies focused on tribes of Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, present day Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland, Elwin not only illustrated the rich tapestry of tribal life and culture, but also tempers his analysis with caution pointing out that Indian tribes are standing on the verge of extinction. Taking

¹ Varrier Elwin, *The Baiga*, London, 1942.

² Varrier Elwin, *The Agaria*, London, 1944.

recognition of vulnerabilities with respect to the dominant population and the forces of modernization and change, he advocated a policy of protection where by tribes could live in their own terms with little interference from the outside world. Interestingly, Elwin was averse to both the Christian missionaries and the reformist Hindus alike for the contempt they exhibited towards tribal cultures and tradition. He was particularly incensed at the reformist movement carried out by upper caste Hindus to 'civilize' the Chattisgarh tribes in the 1930s, fearing that this would not only obliterate their unique way of life but also push them to the bottom of the social structure. Championing their rights, in his book on the *Baiga*, Elwin called for the creation of a 'National Park' where the people could carry on with their own religious and economic (shifting cultivation) practices to prevent their submergence into the Hindu fold.

This prescription, innocuous as it may seem, was to have a dramatic effect on tribal studies in India. Coming, as it were, when the spirit of nationalism and struggle for independence were gaining momentum, Elwin's suggestion was met with a sharp reaction from Indian scholars who saw it in a surreptitious strategy of the imperialists to divide the country. Leading the attack was G S Ghurye who branded Elwin as an isolationist and 'no changer' who wished to see the aborigines reinstated in their own original ways irrespective of any other consideration. To counter Elwin's ideas Ghurye not only declared that tribes are Hindus, or more specifically 'backward Hindus', but also proposed a policy of assimilation to reclaim them into civilization. His ideas were expressed in a book titled, *The Aborigines - So Called - and Their Future*. Ghurye cited a number of examples in the book to demonstrate the close parallel between tribal and Hindu beliefs.³

Needless to say, the conflict between Elwin and Ghurye represent the conflict between two different perspectives. Though in his later works, Elwin took pains to show that he had no intention to undermine the integrity of the country or keep tribe as 'museum pieces'. Even after several years of Elwin's

³ G S Ghurye, *The Aborigines - so called - and their Future*, Bombay, 1959.

death Ghurye's tirade against his adversary did not stop. In his book, *The Burning Caldron of North East India*, published in 1980, he lays the blame for the current turmoil in the region of Elwin's isolationist policy. The conflict between the two continues to haunt the anthropological discourse on tribes to the present day.⁴

The Elwin - Ghurye controversy set in motion a series of studies devoted to examine the tribe's position in the Indian civilizational complex and their relations with caste. Further the attainment of independence and the imperatives of nation - building not only imposed a new responsibility on the disciplines of anthropology and sociology, more specifically it demanded the reconstruction of tribe - caste unity that would provide a firm foundation to the nation - state. Thus in sharp contrast to the colonial view, which perceived tribes and castes as dichotomous categories, studies made by scholars such as L P Vidyarthi, D N Majumdar, N R Bose, Surajith Sinha, D D Kosambi, Niharanjan Ray, Andre Beteille, etc., point to the contrary. Taking note of the active process of acculturation that characterizes tribe - caste relations in the contemporary period, many of these scholars turned to the Hindu sacred texts to trace the position of tribes in the Indian civilization process. Although there is no equivalent term for tribe in the sacred texts, serious attempts were made to establish that tribes and castes belonged to the same socio - cultural order. The historian Niharanjan Ray, in his work, *Idea and Image in Indian Art* pointed to the word *Jana* in the epics to support the claim of a past social unity.⁵ In his opinion, in Indian historical tradition there were two sects of *Janas*, one who are still recognised by anthropologists and sociologists as tribes and another sect who are at a higher level of socio-economic and political organization and of aesthetic and religious culture. The latter is represented by the concept *Jati*. The boundary between *Jana* and *Jati* was more or less fluid making it possible for the former to be regularly absorbed into the *Jati* fold.

Although the exact identification of these concepts with the present day categories of tribes and castes remains a moot point, this has given rise to a

⁴ G S Ghurye, *The Burning Caldron of North - East India*, New Delhi, 1980.

⁵ Niharanjan Ray, *Idea and Image in Indian Art*, Calcutta, 1973.

number of theoretical frameworks to explain the various ways in which tribes are transformed into castes. Notable among these are D D Kosambi and N K Bose's Brahminic-cum-technological model, Surajit Sinha's Rajput or Kshatriya model, with Srinivas' Sanskritisation model interspersed between the two. Kosambi in his book *The Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, pointed out that the transfer of agricultural technology from caste to tribe to be a major factor that led to the latter's integration into the caste society.⁶ Central to this process was the role of *Brahmins* who combined in themselves the function of an economic and cultural agent. According to Kosambi, *Brahmins* acted as pioneers in underdeveloped localities where they not only introduced the use of plough, knowledge of seeds, crops, agricultural calendar, markets and trade, but also transmitted the cultural traits and values of the caste society to tribes.

In a similar way, N K Bose in his work *Anthropology and Some Indian Problems* viewed the system of production based on caste as the decisive factor that brought about the integration of tribes to the dominant society.⁷ According to him, tribes were attracted to the Hindu mode of production because of the specialization of occupation integral to the caste system, which in his opinion not only fostered reciprocal relations but also put a check on competition between groups. Further, commenting on the acculturation process witnessed among some of the tribes in Eastern India, he wrote, "Such a slow movement of economic change, spread over at least a hundred years or more, has led to the gradual absorption of some sections of tribal people into the Hindu fold." There is however, a catch in the process. The hierarchical basis of caste with its rigid normative structure meant that tribes who accrete to caste were relegated to the bottom of the system.

In contrast to the above Surajith Sinha's work *Tribes and Indian Civilization* is credited with the absorption of tribes into the Hindu caste system to the process of state formation that accompanied the establishment of tribal

⁶ D D Kosambi, *Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, London, 1965.

⁷ N K Bose, *Anthropology and Some Indian Problems*, Calcutta, 1972.

dynasties in many parts of peninsular India during the ancient and medieval periods.⁸ The work describes that though their early history is shrouded in ambiguity, tribal dynasties shot into fame in the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. While most of these dynasties such as the *Gonds* and the *Bhumij* rose into prominence from the ranks of the tribal aristocracy, some like the *Ahom* kingdom in Assam were established by foreign invaders. Many of these dynasties also functioned as centers of *Brahminic* Hinduism a legacy they acquired from the practice of conferring land grants on *Brahmins*. To accelerate the growth of the economy and meet the heavy cost of administration it is said that many chiefs encouraged *Brahmins* to settle in their kingdoms by extending generous land grants to them so that the state benefit from their thrifty ways and vast knowledge of agriculture. To reward their benefactors for their generosity the learned *Brahmins* not only undertook to educate the masses, and in the process transmitted the norms and values of Hinduism to the people, but also came up with elaborate genealogies that linked the chief's ancestry to mythological Hindu figures. While this practice earned the tribal rulers the prestigious status of *Kshatriya* it also served to reproduce the hierarchical structure of caste in the relatively egalitarian tribal society. Aiding the process were the vast contingent of traders, money lenders and military mercenaries who came in search of land and fortune and also Hindu peasants and artisan castes that accompanied the *Brahmins* as part of the labour force.

The above works throw interesting light on the nature of tribe - caste interaction and the particular role of *Brahmins*, artisans, peasants and the tribal elite in the spread of Hinduism. Nonetheless, given the dearth of historical material on the subject and the heterogeneity of the tribal population, these studies could not provide the basis for generalization for the tribal society as a whole. While the works broadly bring out the social contours within which tribes and castes existed, the picture is more reflective of populations in the central tribal belt and / or areas of physical contiguity where tribes and castes have had long tradition of interaction. On the other hand, tribes located in India's vast hinterland have traditionally lived in comparative isolation but for

⁸ Surajith Sinha, *Tribes and Indian Civilization*, Calcutta, 1982.

fleeting contacts with traders in the suburban markets they visited to exchange their goods.

It is also important to note that even in areas where tribes and castes lived in physical contiguity, interaction does not imply assimilation or full integration into the caste system. Although economic and political interests may have made some tribes or sections of them to adopt social and cultural practices of the dominant society, they never fully shed off their traditional tribal identity. This is true even of the highly Hinduized tribes such as the *Gonds, Hos, Mundas, Oraons, Santhals* and *Todas*. Notwithstanding their engagement with Hinduism, these tribes not only retain many elements of their traditional religious practices even in the sphere of family and kinship, they continue to be governed by their own tribal laws. Thus despite the fact that tribes share several common elements with castes, they remain conceptually, culturally and politically distinct.

In India, an attempt to produce a consensual definition of the concept of tribe is a complex process and the historians and sociologists failed to materialize the same. The complexity of tribal cultures in India brought into sharp focus the heterogeneity of tribes. Giving expression to the difficulties faced in arriving at the definition of tribes, Andre Beteille in his work *Caste, Class and Power* observed that the problem in India was its identity rather than to define tribe, and scientific or theoretical orientations were never allowed to displace administrative or political ones.⁹ We can see such a shift of attention among the scholars from a search for definition of tribe to the classification of tribes based on variables as geography, economy, social organization and level of integration with or orientation towards the caste system in the works like D N Majumdar's *Races and Cultures of India*,¹⁰ L P Vidyarthi's *Tribal Development and Its Administration*,¹¹ S C Dube's, *Tribal Heritage of India*,¹² etc.

⁹ Andre Beteille, *Caste, Class and Power*, London, 1965.

¹⁰ D N Majumdar, *Races and Cultures of India*, Delhi, 1944.

¹¹ L P Vidyarthi, *Tribal Development and its Administration*, New Delhi, 1986.

¹² S C Dube, *Tribal Heritage of India*, New Delhi, 1977.

In fact, shortly after India attained its independence, the term 'tribe' was overtaken by the term 'Scheduled Tribe'; an administrative category constituted primarily for political expediency rather than on the basis of their cultural or primordial characteristics. Today, the term 'Scheduled Tribe' covers a wide range of groups that are neither socially and culturally homogeneous nor share a common self-identity. The Rajputs and the Jats as well as some Muslim and Buddhists along with the aboriginals, are classified as Scheduled Tribes. Added to this cultural heterogeneity of the entity is the absence of any criterion for the identification of tribe either in official usage or scholarship. Despite the lack of any definition of the concept, the process of identifying tribes goes on unabated with groups not only previously identified as such continuously seeking tribal status of ten with the help of the intellectual elite and social activities. The point is that scheduling of Indian tribes are not only highly complex in character but also vary widely from the category 'tribe' described in colonial ethnography. This has not only rendered the task of defining them a near impossibility but also invested the term with strong political overtone. The above issues are discussed in detail in R C Verma's *Indian Tribes through the Ages*¹³ and S C Rajora's *Social Structure and Tribal Elites*.¹⁴

After Independence, the government of India and various state governments felt, if sociology was to become an important agent of social transformation, its practitioners had to engage more actively in programmes and policies directed at bringing about the desired transformation. With this end in view, special institutions were created to carry out this gigantic task. This led to the birth of a number of state run research institutes and bureaus where the services of sociologists and social anthropologists were solicited to undertake problem oriented research geared to help officials in the formulation and implementation of development policies especially those meant for the development of tribal areas. While this process has helped to churn out a large body of primary data on community development and related issues, it has also invited strong criticism from some section of sociologists at the short shrift

¹³ R C Verma, *Indian Tribes through the Ages*, New Delhi, 1990.

¹⁴ S C Rajora, *Social Structure and Tribal Elites*, New Delhi, 1987.

given to academic freedom and standard in state sponsored research. M N Srinivas in his article “Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India” published in the journal *Sociological Bulletin* in 1973 remarked; the kind of research that appealed to the administrator was where he determined the problems to be studied and the scientist was only asked to find clear answers to them in an absurdly short period of time. Social scientists unable to adjust themselves to their newly discovered importance compete with each other for projects. The result was a mass of survey research quickly carried out under threat of deadlines. It is flattering to think that it answered the administrator’s questions assuming of course that they had the time and the inclination to read it.

Notwithstanding the strong reservations expressed by the sociologists like M N Srinivas, to state sponsored research the number of such studies on issues related to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes increased at a phenomenal pace. An important supporter of the latter was S C Dube. A strong nationalist and promoter of tribal integration and community development programmes, Dube did not mince his words in defending the instrument and use of sociology. In an apparent reference to Srinivas’ indictment, in the work *Tribal Heritage of India*, he states, “It is time we stop chasing the mirage of high prestige models and avoid quick sands of pseudo intellection. It is evident that we have cultivated only a few styles of sociology and invested for too much effort in pursuing the trite and the trivial. In planning instructional programmes and in determining priorities of research it is essential that we hear our own voice and be guided by our national needs.”

Interestingly, despite this sharp verbal duel between the two sides, the rising influence of American sociology and the national imperative to integrate tribes into the larger society forced the sociologists, who opposed state sponsored tribal research to tone down their stand. In the work *Social Change in Modern India* published in 1994, Srinivas not only loudly lauded the intellectual contributions of American scholars particularly the inputs provided by the Ford and Rock Feller Foundations to community development in India but also expressed strong support to India’s policies towards the Scheduled

Castes and Scheduled Tribes.¹⁵ In a passionate call to Indian sociologists to make sociological research more relevant to the new socio-political scenario in the country he categorically states, “with the constitution of India declaring the practice of untouchability in any form an offence, and with the introduction of reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the legislatures and jobs in the government and the public sector, a new field was opened up for study by sociologists, though few were aware of this fact. Incidentally it is not sufficiently appreciated that affirmative action is being practiced for 400 million people or more in India and this is perhaps the biggest experiment of its kind in human history for rapidly improving the living conditions and quality of life of the weaker sections of the population. Indian intellectuals who specialize in being critical of the country and its performances in every area should awaken to this phenomenon.” The statement not only vindicated Dube’s stand and put to rest the controversy over applied anthropology, it also revealed that in the eyes of Indian sociologists tribes do not have an independent existence of their own. Hence, they need to be integrated into the larger society.

Tribal studies under the heads; Tribal Movements, Ethnicity, Development, etc., began to look at the issues of conflict and deprivation that afflict tribal society through different historical periods. These studies emerged partly as a response to the tribes increasing assertion of self identity and demand for self-rule and autonomy. The colonial system not only bore harshly on the tribal communities but also systematically dispossessed them of their political, cultural and economic rights, thus provoking a spate of tribal resistance in many parts of the country against the imperial power. Though repressive laws drawn up by the state stifled the wave of popular discontent, the onset of the freedom struggle and subsequent attainment of independence provided new grounds for and new modes of protest. But, while tribal movements have their roots in the Colonial policies, both Western and Indian scholars tend to dismiss it as a matter of little consequence and looked at it primarily as an act of defiance against established authority. Reflective of this line of thinking, in 1945, the anthropological journal *Man in India* brought out

¹⁵ M N Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, Berkeley, 1997.

a special volume under the glib sub-title “Rebellion” in which anthropologists and administrators jointly contributed papers.¹⁶

The first serious attempt to objectively address the issue came at a seminar on the theme Tribal Situation in India organized by the Institute of Advanced study, Simla in 1969 where a few papers on tribal movements were presented. But, the major contribution on the subject was K S Singh’s collection of essays, based on surveys carried out under the auspices of the Anthropological Survey of India. Although the study of movement is a relatively new field in social Anthropology, Singh’s work, *Tribal Movements in India* in two volumes brought together a wide array of ‘ongoing’ and contemporary social movements in different parts of the country.¹⁷ The work not only bring to light the wide variety of factors that gave impetus to tribal movements, it also contributes substantially to the clarification of concepts, methodology, theoretical frameworks and perspectives, besides adding to the rich repertoire of tribal ethnography.

One of the concerns of the work is to classify the movements on the basis of key variables such as origin, locale, objective, structure, ideology, leadership or material base. This exercise has resulted in a typology of tribal movements, which brings together diverse kinds of movements like autonomy movements, language movement, and others under a single analytical category. Although over the years different scholars have come up with different typologies, what is common to all these different types of movements is their concern with the question of identity and survival. In other words, what the studies show is that at the root of tribal movement, whether organized around language, religion, land, forest, political autonomy or ideology is the issue of tribal identity, a subjective element that is integrally linked to their collective consciousness and habitat territory.

This concern with identity has not only made tribal movements distinct from other forms of social movement such as the peasant movement or the

¹⁶ *Man in India: The Rebellion* (Special Edition), New Delhi, 1945.

¹⁷ K S Singh, *Tribal Movements in India*, New Delhi, 1982.

national struggle for independence though some tribes may have participated in these it has also led some scholars to characterize tribal movements as ethnic movements. In Singh's words, it is easier to characterize tribal movements as ethnic movements because of the long tradition of recognizing tribes as ethnic groups, the simplicity and cohesiveness of the tribal's social structure, and their notion of territoriality and so on.

Tribes have not only been severely threatened by the shrinking resource base caused by dwindling forest cover, soil erosion, lowering water table, siltation and pollution of rivers and streams, in many states they have also been subjected to the inhuman act of displacement from their age - old habitat to give way to industry. The last three decades have witnessed a number of struggles organized around forest, water, land and the social and cultural meanings these represent. Albeit, recent global trends in the area of environment and human rights and the moral and strategic support lent by social activists helped in no small way to sustain these struggles. It, however, needs to be noted that the driving force came from within, propelled as they were by the unscrupulous and relentless destruction of the natural environment by state sponsored and market oriented pattern of development.

This tripartite connection between development, environmental degradation and ethnic-cum-environmental conflict has raised pertinent questions about the relevance of our development policies and the neglect of ecological issues in social research. There was hardly any study prior to 1990, specifically directed to assess the effect of development on the tribal social and environmental landscape. Several factors contributed to this lacuna. Firstly, the heterogeneity of tribes both in ethno-cultural and geographical terms demanded intensive and well co-ordinated studies of different communities. Secondly with increasing exposure to the forces of development and change, the tribal societies themselves have become more complex with 'deepening differentiation emerging along class, ethnicity and gender lines, growing politicization, and sharp erosion of their social institutions and knowledge systems. One of the few works on the above theme is *The Perspective Study of the Bhilalas* written by Amita Baviskar that deals with *Bhilala* tribe in the

Narmada valley, whose territory faces the threat of submergence by the multimillion dollar dam project.¹⁸ The book not only succinctly brings out the vulnerability of the *adivasis* who live at the margins of survival but also raises pertinent questions on a number of issues such as the viability of our development strategies, the ideal type portrayal of tribes as ecologically sensitive and undifferentiated entities in the literature, the role of intellectuals and environmentalists who speak out on their behalf, the politics of designation and tribe-caste relations. While not discounting that tribes and castes are culturally and structurally distinct, the author draws attention to the need to be wary of an uncritical acceptance of conceptual stereotypes but to sharpen our understanding, by looking at the problem against the mediatory role of the state, the market and geography. In other words, we need to locate the issue within its specific historical and material context.

Another book of Bhaviskar published in 2004 entitled *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflict over Development in the Narmada Valley* provides an account of the *Bhilala* tribes fight against displacement by the Sardar Sarovar dam in Narmada River.¹⁹ On the basis of intensive field work and historical research, this book places the tribal community in the context of its experience of state domination. The author challenges current theories of social movement which claim that a cultural critique of the “development paradigm is writ large in the political actions of those marginalized by “development” – tribes who lived in harmony with nature, combining reverence for nature with the sustainable management of resources. The book focuses to re-examine the politics of representation within the ideology of progressive movements. It will be of equal interest to scholars and social activists concerned about development, environment and indigenous people.

Earlier in 1989, in an apparent attempt to update the information on tribes, the Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) started a multi volume study as parts of its Tribal study series and under the guidance of S C

¹⁸ Amita Baviskar, *The Perspective Study of the Bhilalas*, New Delhi, 1995.

¹⁹ Amita Baviskar, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflict over Development in the Narmada Valley*, New Delhi, 2004.

Dube published four volumes each under a separate editor and on different themes namely, (i) *Continuity and Change among Indian Tribes* edited by S C Dube. (ii) *Tribal Self Management in North East India* edited by Bhupinder Singh (iii) *Ownership and Control of Resources among Tribes* edited by S N Mistra and (iv) *Tribal Movements in India* by K.S. Singh. In total, thirty nine papers are included in the four volumes. While four of the papers are written by tribal scholars, the rest are authored by members of the other communities, most of who had decades of experience in the field either as administrators, social activists or academicians. Though the books give valuable insight into the state of contemporary tribal societies, the small number of papers by tribal scholars not only point to the poor representation of tribes in these positions, they are also strongly indicative of the failure of our educational system and development policies in general to reach the traditionally disadvantaged and marginalized groups. As stated before, development has not only evaded tribes, it has also magnified their problems manifold. The contents of many of the papers in the volumes confirm this fact. What is a matter of serious concern is that while most of the authors have successfully diagnosed the ills, few have come out with remedies.

It needs to be recognized that since the early 1980s the issue of the indigenous people had received sharp attention in academic and public fora worldwide. In India, the issue had generated a storm of controversy and added a new dimension to the protracted debate on the concept of tribe. The problem came to the peak when responding to the ILO's attempt to safeguard the interests of the indigenous and tribal people. The UNO came up with a "Draft Declaration on the Rights of the Indigenous People" in which 'tribes' and 'indigenous' are treated as analogous categories. Although the Declaration remains a debated draft, the move has been viewed with serious misgivings by many countries, which perceived that this act could considerably undermine their national sovereignty. Responding with unusual swiftness on the issue, in India, both the central government and the academic community rejected the claim that tribes are indigenous on the ground that there are other unspecified categories as well who could seek claim to the status. Interestingly, this

response is at sharp variance with the meaning of *Adivasis* - a popular nomenclature for tribes in India - which literally means original inhabitants and a close equivalent of the word 'indigenous'. On the academic plane, Professor Andre Beteille played an important role in shaping the Indian opinion. In his work *Antinomies of Society: Essays on Ideologies and Institutions* published by Oxford University Press, he brings out the methodological and political dangers of the measure.²⁰

Commenting on the politics of designation, Virginius Xaxa in his article "Tribes as Indigenous people of India", suggest the need to make a distinction between settlement in the context of a country as a whole and settlement within its parts or regions.²¹ In a large country like India this distinction is vital to establish the historical antiquity of populations within a specific territory. For example, a Santhal may have settled much earlier than a Bengali in the area they inhabit or *vice versa*. But this fact can be established only if the region is the unit of analysis and not the macro unit of a country.

Jaganath Pathy in his book, *Towards an Alternative Paradigm of Development of Tribes* took a slightly different line to express the same point.²² While endorsing that on a substantive plane tribes and indigenous is analogous categories, he uses the concept of 'internal colonization' to demonstrate that the colonization of tribal areas by dominant populations from contiguous areas has the same effect on the subjugated population as colonization by foreign powers. He is, however, highly critical of the use of conceptual arguments in rejecting the claim that tribes and indigenous cannot be equated. Calling for an end to the conceptual debate, he argues that concepts are nothing but constructs shaped largely by the contemporary power structure and current dialogues of academics. Such a debate only leads to acrimony and provides little room for resolution of the problem. Accepting the Draft Declaration as an instrument for

²⁰ Andre Beteille, *Antinomies of Society: Essays on Ideologies and Institutions*, New Delhi, 1999.

²¹ Virginius Xaxa. "Tribes as Indigenous People of India", in, *EPW*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 51, December, 1999.

²² Jaganath Pathy, *Towards an Alternative Paradigm of Development of Tribes*, New Delhi, 1992

social justice, he emphatically makes the point that this is not an academic but a political question.

All these works mentioned above put forward the new and emerging challenges and changing dimensions of discourse on tribes and indigenous people at the national as well as international sphere, it is clear that sociologists and historians in India gives a positive sign of change far beyond the stereo type tribe - caste dichotomy or tribe caste continuum paradigm and started revisit tribes from a multifaceted frame of reference.

Literatures on Tribes of Kerala

Literature on tribals of Kerala is rather scanty. Very brief notes on tribals were given along with the early census reports of 1881, 1891 and 1901. These notes were mere description of certain tribal communities of Kerala. The general literature of Kerala Tribes itself is rare, not to speak of the research work on the *Muthuvans*. There have been, attempts, however, by anthropologists' economists and philanthropists to understand the living conditions, social organizations customs, religion and rituals of the tribal communities in Kerala. The earliest author to throw light on the tribes of Kerala was Edgar Thurston.²³ He found that the plainmen who settled in Wayanad during 1850s purchased the land along with attached Paniyans who were the slaves of the landowners. It was Thurston who first cited the incidence of slavery among the tribal's in Kerala. However, his study was basically an ethnographical one.

The first detailed information about the South Indian tribes was brought to light by Thurston.²⁴ His monumental work *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* is an ethnographic note on South Indian tribes. In the work, he gives a detailed account of the hill tribes of Kerala. It was Thurston, who first revealed the European planting community's view about original home of *Muthuvans*. He made an attempt to connect Madurai as the original home of *Muthuvans*. He

²³ Edgar Thurston, "The Paniyans of Malabar", in *Madras Government Museum – Bulletin*, Vol. II., No. 1, Madras, 1907.

²⁴ Edgar Thurston assisted by K Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V., Madras, 1909.

also provides a brief account of the hill tribes like *Mannans*, *Hill Pulayas*, *Mala Arayans*, *Adiyans*, *Kurumans*, *Kattunaikan*, etc., in Travancore and Malabar. The focus of attention in Thurston's work was on the original way of life, customs and manners, religious beliefs, etc., of the tribal communities of South India, arranged and presented in alphabetical order. As we noted earlier, his work was an ethnographical study of the major tribes of south India. Consequently, the focus of his study was on unraveling certain sociological and anthropological issues of their life. Hence, he did not probe into the problems of their land and economic issues. Nevertheless, this can be considered as the pioneering work on the hill tribes of colonial period.

William Logan's *Malabar Manual* throws light on the hill tribes of Wayanad.²⁵ He has given a detailed account of the role of *Kurichiyans* in Pazhassi revolt. He has given an account of the archery of *Kurichiyans*, provided information about the customs and habits, rituals and beliefs of *Kurichiyans*. Logan also gives a detailed description about the *Kurichiya* revolt of 1822 by stating that the immediate cause of the revolt was the new land revenue system of the British government. But his descriptions were shaded by historical bias.

Another author who carried out systematic research about tribes after Thurston was Ananthakrishna Iyer who brought out in three volumes the results of his ethnographic survey on Cochin tribes.²⁶ Subsequently he undertook similar enquires on the tribals of Trvancore²⁷ as well. In addition, Iyer's comprehensive social history of the tribals, in five volumes,²⁸ throws light upon the various facets of tribal society. He termed the tribes of Kerala as pre-Dravidians. However, his works were of very general nature and only discussed the socio-cultural dimensions of tribal societies. Hence, whenever he examines the tribal societies, the sociological and anthropological views come up on the surface so as to cover the basic economic and political issues.

²⁵ William Logan, *Malabar Manual*, Vol.1, Madras, 1887.

²⁶ L Anantha Krishnan Iyer, *The Tribes and Castes of Cochin*, 3 Vols., Madras, 1912.

²⁷ L Anantha Krishnan Iyer, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, 3 Vols., Madras, 1937.

²⁸ L Anantha Krishnan Iyer, *Kerala and her People*, Palaghat, 1961.

Consequently, he failed to observe the gradual transformation of tribal economies of Kerala.

A A D Luiz has published a book on the title *Tribes of Kerala* in 1962.²⁹ His book covers the details of 48 tribal communities of Kerala. He describes their origin, material culture, social structure, food habits, dress and costumes and in short, a detailed account of the everyday life of these communities. His study is different from that of Edgar Thurston and Anantha Krishna Iyer in the sense that his study is exclusively on the various hill tribes of Kerala, giving a good account of the changing pattern of their social life in the context of the socio-economic evolution of the state as a whole. His emphasis was on the sociological aspects of the tribal life. Luiz also made a different observation about the tribal welfare programmes of Kerala. He has made a good attempt to trace the economic aspects of certain tribal communities like *Kurichiyans*, *Paniyans*, *Kurumans*, *Adiyans*, etc. In this respect, the work of Luiz was a clear departure from both Thurston and Iyer. He made an attempt to unravel certain unique economic problems of tribal communities. But he failed to examine the socio-cultural transformation of the tribal's of Kerala.

From anthropological perspective, Ayyappan studied various tribal communities. His investigation concerning the *Nayadies* of Malabar³⁰ and the aboriginal tribes of erstwhile Malabar³¹ touched upon the social and economic life of the tribal communities. His studies on the aboriginals of Malabar provide useful clues about certain crucial problems of the tribal communities especially that of *Kurichiyans* and *Paniyans* and their educational backwardness. According to him, certain social taboos prevented the *Kurichiyans* girls, especially the *Kannavam Kurichiyans* from getting education. On the other hand, he asserts, that *Paniyans* kept a traditional aversion towards education. He insisted that educational development of the tribal community is the panacea for the socio-economic illness of the tribal communities. He

²⁹ A A D Luiz, *Tribes of Kerala*, New Delhi, 1962.

³⁰ A Ayyappan, "Social and Physical Anthropology of Nayadis of Malabar", in *Bulletin of Madras government Museum*, General section No.2 No.4, Madras, 1937.

³¹ A Ayyappan, *Report on Socio-economic Conditions of Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras*, Madras, 1948.

considers education as a long-term investment for the social and economic changes of the tribes. In this respect his findings are relevant even today in the tribal scenario of Kerala.

Another study by Ayyappan and Mahadevan³² comprise the ecology, economy, matrilineity and fertility of Kurichiyans. The authors have made attempts to trace the favourable factors contributing to the longevity and successful living of the elderly population among the Kurichiyans. According to them, apart from certain anthropological and sociological factors, the sound economic base helped the Kurichiyans to attain a better position among the tribal communities. The authors also give the detailed examples of Kurichiyans in socio-economic transition. As the study took more than forty years to observe the Kurichiyans in transition, this study is unique in nature that throws light on the economy and society of Kurichiyans, which is in the process of transformation.

P R G Mathur's³³ work *Tribal Situation in Kerala* traces the socio-linguistic evolution of Kerala tribals, provides useful information about some crucial problems like land alienation, bonded labour system, indebtedness, status of women in various tribal societies, tribal movements in Wayanad, etc. The treatment of the work, however, was not analytical but descriptive. However, Mathur made a good attempt to trace the peculiar society and economy of the *Cholanaikens* of Nilambur forest range, who is the most primitive and pre agricultural community among the tribals of Kerala. In his study, Mathur has given a detailed account of the incidence of land alienation, bonded labour system among different tribal communities with documentary evidence. He was the first author who made an attempt to trace the cause and effect of tribal movements in Wayanad. U R Ehrenfels³⁴ study focuses on the *Kadars* of Cochin. This study stressed the necessity for rehabilitations of tribals especially the primitive tribals of Kerala.

³² A Ayyappan & SV Mahadevan, *Ecology, Economy, Matrilineity and Fertility of Kurichians*, New Delhi, 1990.

³³ P R G Mathur, *Tribal Situation in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1975.

³⁴ U R Ehrenfels, *Kadars of Cochin*, Madras, 1952.

In an article "Tribal Economy in Southern Zone", in *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation* edited by K S Singh, P K Mishra³⁵ has given a profound description of the tribal economy of Southern regions. He classified the tribes of South Zone (Karnataka, Kerala, Tamilnadu and Andhrapradesh) into agriculturists, agrestic serfs, artisans, service tribes and pastoralists with their independent economic and social pursuits. However, he has not given a realistic view about the socio-economic transformation of these tribal communities and their economics. Mishra and Rajalakshmi³⁶ have investigated the differential response to change, taking five different tribal communities of Wayanad, and came to the conclusion that the response of change varied among these communities. They inferred that there exist, not one homogenous tribal economy, but various economies of tribals in Wayanad.

Ananthabhanu³⁷ has made a good attempt to analyze the economic organizations of the *Cholanaickans* of Nilambur forest range, one of the primitive tribes of Kerala. However, he has made an attempt to exhibit the true nature of the stagnant economic organization of this most primitive tribe and stress the point that lack of proper interaction with other tribals and non-tribals resulted in the stagnant economic organization of this tribe.

The reviews show that all these studies are sociological and anthropological sketches. Consequently, they either failed to probe or trace the unique economies of tribal communities in Kerala, their interaction with the outside world, the transformation and change that took place due to this interaction, etc. The treatments of the most of the studies are descriptive rather than analytical. However, these studies are helpful to get a bird's eye view of the tribes of Kerala.

³⁵ P K Mishra, "Tribal Economy in Southern Zone", in K S Singh (ed.) *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation*, New Delhi, 1992.

³⁶ Misra & Rajalakshmi Misra "Differential Response to Change - A Case Study of Economy, Society and Change among Five Tribal Groups in Southern Zone" in, *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation*, New Delhi, 1992.

³⁷ Ananthabhanu "Economic Organization of Cholanaikans", in *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation*, New Delhi, 1992.

In this context, it is necessary to mention the studies and enquiries conducted by the renowned philanthropist K Panoor.³⁸ *Keralathile Africa*, focus upon certain serious problems of the tribals of Kerala, especially that of Wayanad. His main concern was the problems of certain tribal communities of Wayanad namely *Adiyans, Kurichians, Paniyans, Kattunaickans* and *Kurumans*. He has also focused on the deplorable conditions of the *Koragas* of Kasarakod district, one of the most primitive communities of Kerala. However, as a travel note, the work is more descriptive than analytical. Nevertheless, he has made a prolific attempt to trace the social and economic issue and also suggested certain concrete measures for uplifting these tribal communities. In another travel note, *Malakal, Thazhvarakal, Manushyar*³⁹ Panoor made a good attempt to probe the various tribal problems by unraveling the unknown incidents that he faced during his long years as a tribal welfare officer in Wayanad. He also traces the main causes of the economic and educational backwardness of the hill tribes of Wayanad. In another book, *Keralathile America*⁴⁰ (Malayalam) he compares the problems of the tribals of Wayanad with the problems of Red Indians of America. He states that both of them lost their fertile land due to the encroachment of the outsiders and finally they lost their identity. He had also focused his studies on the causes of tribal unrest in Wayanad and also made certain specific suggestions to improve their conditions. Panoor gives a detailed account of the various stages of land alienation, the role of Hindu temples and Christian churches in this large-scale land alienation. He also reveals the defects of various tribal development programmes. Even though his treatment is descriptive in nature, he poses certain pertinent questions regarding tribal development programmes.

In another study *Sahyante Makkal*⁴¹ (Malayalam), Panoor gives an objective observation of certain reasons for the pathetic realities of Tribes in Kerala. He stressed mainly upon the defective strategy and poor implementation of the tribal development programmes. According to Panoor,

³⁸ K Panoor, *Keralathile Africa* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1963.

³⁹ K Panoor, *Malakal, Tazvarakal, Manushyar* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1971.

⁴⁰ K Panoor, *Keralathile America* (Mal.) Kottayam, 1989.

⁴¹ K Panoor, *Sahyante Makkal* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1990.

the population explosion, urbanization, unequal influence of technology upon modern life, lack of enough resources, etc., made the intruders to exploit the tribals and expropriate tribal land in Wayanad as in the case elsewhere. Panoor emphasized that large-scale deforestation and expansion of plantations and above all large-scale immigration of the plainsmen caused the existing deplorable conditions of the tribals in Wayanad.

As Luiz has asserted earlier, Panoor also emphasized the inevitableness of education among the tribes for enriching their inherent potentialities. However, he is against imposing the culture and way of life of non - tribals upon tribals. He asserts that the pathetic conditions of the tribes itself is the product of the so called mainstream life. To him transformation is not the modern concept of socio - economic transformation. But to him transformation is abstract than concrete i.e., change from serfdom to freedom, exploitation to security, from poverty to self reliance and in short to live as a human being without fear. Undoubtedly, the above - mentioned studies and enquiries of Panoor have shed light upon various aspects of tribal life. As he focused on social issues, he overlooked certain specific economic issues.

*Paniyar*⁴² by Somasekharan Nair gives a detailed account of the social issues of the *Paniyans*, who constitute the major tribal population in Wayanad. His study is divided into two parts and the first part is an overview of the tribals of Kerala, consisting of their culture, language, habitat, food habits, religious practices and the second part touches every aspects of the life of *Paniyans*. He has made an attempt to trace the socio - linguistic issues of the *Paniyans* of Wayanad.

The work of Chacko, *Kuricharude Lokam*⁴³ traces certain social and cultural issues related to the *Kurichiyans* of Wayanad. He has also depicted the origin, traditions and family systems, social structure, marriage system, customs and beliefs, religious observations and rituals and even social festivals. However it can be observed that though he examines the fast changing trends

⁴² Somasekharan Nair, *Paniyar* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1976.

⁴³ A D Chacko, *Kuricharude Lokam* (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1994.

of social issues, consequent upon the interactions with non - tribals, he neither raises any economic issues nor probed the economic consequences of the interaction with non - tribals. Further, his treatment is descriptive rather than analytical.

K J Baby⁴⁴ has given a detailed account of slavery in Wayanad by collecting the tribal songs in his article, “Adiya Tribes and their Cultural Ethos”. According to him, four or five decades ago, like *Paniyans*, *Adiyans*, etc., were sold, purchased and exchanged by their landlords who assembled with their tribal slaves in front of Valliyoorkavu Bhagavathi temple during its annual festival held in March every year. Accordingly, *Paniyans* and *Adiyans* were employed as slave labourers, denying all their rights to toil for their owners. Some of their tales provide us some mythological bits on the commencement of social inequality.

Sukumaran Nair⁴⁵ has depicted the details of the tribal communities in an anthropological view. However, he left the economic issues untouched. He has focused his attention on the changing pattern of the role of headman in different tribal communities. Further, he insists that the different tribal communities have to be approached with different strategies and schemes so as to suit their way of life and cultural background.

P K Devan⁴⁶ in the article, “*Uralikuruman Tribes*” has made an attempt to project the contributions of *Uralikurumans* as an artisan tribe in Wayanad. He has made an attempt to depict the role of the artisan tribal community in the traditional economies of Wayanad. Consequent upon the immigration of non-tribals the exchange economy expanded gradually. In the changed circumstances the *Uralikurumans* failed to withstand the competition from non-tribal producers. Further, the author has made an attempt to trace the trends of socio-economic transformations of their tribal economy.

⁴⁴ K J Baby, “Adiya Tribes and their Cultural Ethos”, in District Tourism Promotion Council of Wayanad, *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise*, Kalpetta, 2000.

⁴⁵ Sukumaran Nair, “Wayanad and her Tribal Sons”, in District Tourism Promotion Council of Wayanad, *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise*, Kalpetta, 2000.

⁴⁶ P K Devan, “Uralikuruman Tribals”, in District Tourism Promotion Council of Wayanad, *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise*, Kalpetta, 2000.

In a recent study in Malayalam, *Kurichiante Jeevithavum Samskaravum* Kumaran Vayaleri⁴⁷ made a detailed account of the origin, social structure, traditions, rites, social customs, religious beliefs, linguistic peculiarities and various social institutions of the Kurichiyans. Though he made intermittent observations about cultivation and other occupations, his focus is on folklore study. He has also traced the relationship between certain observances and rituals with cultivation and hunting. However, he left untouched the unique economic problems. Apart from the studies and enquiries reviewed in the foregoing analysis, various reports and evaluations of the programmes done by government and other agencies also provide ample information related to certain socio-economic problems.

“Kumarapilla Commission Report”⁴⁸ was mainly concerned with reservations of job for backward sections and tribes. The report stressed the importance of education for implementing the reservations policy properly. Further, in its introduction the Report gives a detailed account of the tribal scenario of Kerala depicting the socio - economic inequalities that prevailed among the tribal communities in Kerala. The report also revealed the regional dichotomy in literacy and education among backward communities and tribals of Kerala.

“Nettur Commission Report”⁴⁹ also concerned with the reservation of job to backward and tribal communities and stressed the importance of educational programmes for tribal communities. The report also revealed the educational backwardness of the tribals of Kerala and also examined the failure of tribal educational scheme implemented since independence.

“The Evaluation Committee Report on The Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward Communities”⁵⁰ reviewed the different stages of tribal education and the socio-economic conditions of the tribals of

⁴⁷ Kumaran Vayaleri, *Kunchiante Jeevithavum Samskaravum* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1996.

⁴⁸ Government of Kerala, *Kumara Pillai Commission Report*, Trivandrum, 1968.

⁴⁹ Government of Kerala, *Nettur Commission Report*, Trivandrum, 1970.

⁵⁰ Government of Kerala, *Report of the Evaluation Committee on the Welfare of the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Communities of Kerala State*, Trivandrum, 1963.

Kerala. This report also emphasized the importance of tribal development programmes for social equality and economic welfare of the tribes of Kerala. Apart from reviewing the various programmes such as land alienation, illiteracy, poverty etc., the report also give a detailed account of the various programmes of tribal welfare and development undertaken during the first two Five Year Plans.

“The Report on Socio-economic Survey of Tribals in Kerala, 1976 - 1978” was an important source of information for policy makers and researchers.⁵¹ This was the most comprehensive survey of scheduled tribes in Kerala conducted by the State Bureau of Economic and Statistics. The main objective of the survey was to study the educational and socio-economic conditions of all the tribes of Kerala and also to study their agrarian relations and problems. This report revealed the details of all the spheres of tribal life and worked as the basis for further expansion of existing programmes and the introduction of new tribal development programmes in Kerala.

“Report of A Bench Mark Survey of Integrated Tribal Development Project on Kerala”⁵² throws a flood of light upon the social, economic and cultural life of the tribes under ITDP areas in Kerala. The report contains the details regarding the volume of poverty, occupation and source of income, literacy, educational level, etc. The report suggested need based programmes for each community and emphasized that the tribes in Kerala is not a homogeneous group as elsewhere-in India. Accordingly, stated that the prescriptive policies appropriate in the context of one community need not to be so on the context of another with a different stage of socio-economic transformation. In addition to the reports reviewed above, annual sub- plans also provide us details about the evaluation of the programmes and schemes implemented by the government annually. These annual plans reveal the details

⁵¹ Government of Kerala, *Report of Socio - economic Survey of Tribals in Kerala – 1976 - 1978*, Trivandrum, 1979.

⁵² Government of Kerala, *Report of a Benchmark Survey of Integrated Tribal Development Project in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1982.

of socio - economic conditions of tribals in quantified form so as to analyze and study.

On the review of the above books, reports and notes about the tribals of Kerala, we feel it is necessary to examine their social evolution in a dialectical perspective in order to get to the root of the socio - economic problems of the tribal communities. Failure to do so is a major lacuna of the aforesaid studies, reports, notes and enquiries.

A serious attempt to study the tribal economy of Kerala in a dialectical angle has been made by Kunhaman in his book *Development of Tribal Economy*.⁵³ The author was principally concerned with identifying the factors responsible for intra - regional variation in the level of socio-economic standards in the tribal economy of Kerala. He attributes the difference to the varying degrees of protection extended by the rulers of princely states of Cochin and Travancore and British rulers of Malabar. He observed that the rulers of princely states of Cochin and Travancore adopted better protective measures than the British government towards the tribals of Kerala. Consequently, the tribals of Cochin and Travancore attained a better socio-economic standard than their counterparts in British Malabar. In other words he observed the North- South dichotomy in the differential levels of socio - economic development.

As different from Kunhaman, who studied the intra-regional variations in the tribal economy, the major concern of C T Paul was to examine the intra-communal variations in the tribal economies.⁵⁴ According to Paul, the geographical differences largely account for the observed intra - communal differences. Another attempt to study the tribal economy of Kerala in a dialectical angle has been done by Balakrishnan.⁵⁵ The author emphasized that the tribal society is not a homogeneous entity. The tribal communities of

⁵³ M Kunhaman, *Development of Tribal Economy*, New Delhi, 1989.

⁵⁴ C T Paul, *Tribal Economy of the Hill Tribes in Kerala with Special Reference to Wayanad*, Unpublished Ph. D Dissertation submitted to University of Calicut, Tenhipalam, 1989.

⁵⁵ R P Balakrishnan, *The Tribal Economy of Kerala: An Inter - community Analysis*, Unpublished M. Phil. Dissertation submitted to University of Pondicherry, Pondicherry, 1992.

Wayanad differ among themselves in different aspects. The inference of the study is that the existing disparities among the various tribal communities have a concrete economic base with the historical evolution of tribal economies of Wayanad.

R V Mohandas traced the impact of new settlers in the western ghat region on the socio - economic conditions of the tribal population in Wayanad.⁵⁶ According to him the economic deprivation of the tribals is closely linked with the ecological degradations of the Western Ghats. Consequent upon these ecological degradations, the traditional self - reliant and self - sustaining tribal economies transformed into dependent economies like that of non - tribals. His findings revealed that addiction to liquor and other intoxicants as the primary cause for the economic backwardness of the tribal communities. The author has made a good attempt to expose the real socio - economic condition of the tribals. However, he has left the study of the socio - economic transformation of the tribal economies untouched.

It is imperative to mention K T Baby's novel *Mavelimantram*.⁵⁷ Though a literary piece, the novel throws wonderful light on the origin of slavery among *Adiyan* community and their plight. He introduces the novel with the documentary evidence of a verdict signed by British judicial head of Malabar district in 1816. Hence, the work can be utilized as a good historical source. The novel utilizes the legends among the *Adiyans* and their traditional songs to examine the origin of slavery. The novel also provides ample information about the British-landlord conspiracy and collaboration to exploit the poor tribals. However, utmost care has to be taken to use it as a source to trace the history of slavery among the tribals.

The public relations department, government of Kerala Published a monograph, *Maarunna Adivasikal* (Malayalam) for using it as a hand book for

⁵⁶ R V Mohandas, "Impact of New Settlers in the Western Ghat Region on the Socio-economic Conditions of the Tribal Population: A Case Study of Wayanad district in Kerala", Report of the Research Project Sponsored by Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, New Delhi, 1992.

⁵⁷ K T Baby, *Mavelimantram* (Malayalam Novel) Kottayam, 1991.

local level planners in connection with the people's plan campaign.⁵⁸ This monograph is an important work published by government revealing the socio - economic transformation of the tribes of Kerala. However, it is descriptive in nature and detailed to give due importance to certain major socio - economic issues and neglected the traditional socio - economic means of the most primitive tribal communities in Kerala.

Like his earlier study that we have examined, Devan's recent study focused on the *Uralikurumans* of Wayanad. Devan examines their importance in the traditional tribal economies of Kerala.⁵⁹ Eventhough it is an anthropological study, Devan observes the changes set in the life of the *Uralikurumans*. The widespread use of plastic goods and machine made household articles prevented the sale of their products in the market. In a market economy governed by market forces their products became outdated. Consequent upon these changed circumstances they are leaving their traditional occupation and seeking new employment opportunities. Here also the treatment of the study is descriptive and Devan failed to trace the process of socio - economic transformation.

K J Baby in his study gives a descriptive account of their customs, rituals and beliefs and provides ample light on the origin, their social structure and occupation of *Adiyans*.⁶⁰ He traces the reasons and intensity of bonded labour system in Wayanad. Baby studied the problems and prospects of the *Adiyan* community in cultural perspective and neglected the importance of other aspects in the process of transformation. In this respect his study is comparatively less useful to us to trace the process of socio-economic transformation.

K R Johny's work *Wayanadinte Samskarika Bhoomika* (Malayalam) gives a detailed account of the cultural history of Wayanad.⁶¹ He makes use of

⁵⁸ Government of Kerala, *Maarunna Adivasikal* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1994.

⁵⁹ P K Devan, 'Wayanatile Uralikurumar', in *Maadhyamam Weekly* (Mal.) Kozhikode, September 2000.

⁶⁰ K J Baby, "Adiya Tribals and their Cultural Ethos", in *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise, op.cit.*

⁶¹ K R Johny, *Wayanadinte Samskarika Bhoomika* (Mal.), Calicut, 1983.

various kinds of source materials to present the cultural history of Wayanad. Tribal legends, especially in the form of their traditional songs, and their traditional tales are utilized for this purpose. He examines the traditional tribal kingship, the supremacy of Kottayam Rajas in Wayanad, the changes in the tribal societies consequent upon the large-scale penetration of plainsmen and the reasons for the existing deplorable conditions of the tribal communities

In his book titled, *Social Structure and Change among the Tribals: A Study among the Uralis of Idukki District in Kerala*, Jacob John Kattakkayam aims at analyzing the social structure of the *Urali* tribe with a view to identifying the social processes that have contributed to their transformation.⁶² He has made an attempt to delineate their history, progress, present conditions of life and the impact of various welfare measures on them.

From the foregoing reviews it can be understood that most of the historians have ignored for long the tribal people and their history leaving the area to sociologists, anthropologists and economists. The results was that planners and policy makers in formulating tribal welfare programmes were guided by the findings and recommendations of sociologists, anthropologists and economists who did not have a correct perception of the changes in the historic transformation of tribe and their relations with the land and the outside world. They looked upon the tribe only from the angle of development and progress. The reviews show that they failed to contribute anything in tracing the role of the tribes in molding the cultural history of Kerala. They also failed to trace the historical processes that led to the transitions that transformed their culture and tradition. Though there are many studies on various aspects of Tribes in Kerala and especially the Tribes in Wayanad, there is a lack of comprehensive studies on tribal life in Idukki. The *Muthuvan* Tribe in Idukki is selected for this study with the fervent desire that the Researcher will be able to usefully contribute to the knowledge on tribes in Idukki for the benefit of society and the germane discipline.

⁶² Jacob John Kattakkayam, *Social Structure and Change among the Tribals: A Study among the Uralis of Idukki District in Kerala*, New Delhi, 1983.

CHAPTER-III

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND MATERIAL LIFE OF *MUTHUVANS*

People in all parts of the world and in all societies, irrespective of their technological level, are glued together in groups by various kinds of bonds. The most universal and the most basic of these bonds is that based on reproduction, an inherent human drive, and is called kinship.¹ The *Muthuvan* tribe recognize themselves only through consanguineous kinship, which means all the kins related through blood.² Thus they adhere to community endogamy. The *Muthuvan* family patterns are of nuclear type but live together in clusters of closely related individuals. In other words the constituent unit of *Muthuvan* tribe on the ground make up a progressively inclusive series of groups, from the closely-knit household to the encompassing tribal whole. Smaller groups are combined to form larger ones through several levels of incorporation. The families are entwined in local lineages known as *kudis* (settlements).³ The *kudis* constitute the houses of *Muthuvans* situated in a cluster of any number from three to hundred. The *kudis* constitute to form clans and the clans together making the entire tribe known as *Muthuvan*.

The tribe which is the larger social unit in *Muthuvan* society appears as the social compacts of the smaller units, integrated perhaps by personal kinship, clanship or intermarriage.⁴ Ordinarily, the tribe as a whole is identified and distinguished from other societies by certain commonalities of custom and speech.

¹ Ralph N Robert, *Origin of Family, Private Property and Social Bond*, New York, 1978, p. 14.

² Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V, Madras, 1909, p.86.

³ Field Notes, *Muthuvan Kudis* in Idukki District.

⁴ Field Notes.

We can present the *Muthuvan* Tribe in a pyramid of social hierarchy, technically speaking, as a segmentary hierarchy as shown below;

Muthuvan Tribe

↑

Koottams

↑

Kudis

↑

Ooru

As shown above the smallest units, named as *ooru* (household) are segments of more inclusive units; known as *kudis* (settlement), the *kudis* in turn are segments of larger groups included in the *Koottam* (clan) which become the segments of the higher group, *i.e.*, the *Muthuvan* Tribe.

Legends and Oral Traditions

Too easily have tribal societies been considered as societies without a history because of lack of literary writings on their tradition and culture. When the colonialists first discovered oral cultures, they rather assumed that if language distinguished men from beasts, it was writing that distinguished the civilized from the savages.⁵ The underlying ethnocentrism and chauvinism of such a presumption served the political purposes of the dominant colonizers to the point where their treatment of such pre-literate peoples, mostly tribes, would make one wonder, who really are the more barbarous, the colonized or the colonizers.⁶ But what is more significant is why writing gave such an overwhelming advantage in this clash of cultures? Why could not an oral tradition cope with this encounter as effectively as the literate one did?

⁵ Frenz Johannes, *Ethnography and Modernity*, New York, 2006, p. 45.

⁶ *Ibid.*

The recollections of a society or civilization as they do have of their past are recorded in their oral traditions, grouped together under the overriding rubric of myths and legends. Recording the oral history of such people, where they will speak for themselves is but a small attempt to redress this huge disadvantage. Tribal societies do have a rich oral tradition in which their collective memories are recorded. It is a living tradition and a changing one precisely because it is still alive today. If we contextualize oral traditions within the tribal societies that have given rise to them, we can use them to make an authentic reconstruction of their past.

Levi Strauss considers the relation of many tales and oral tradition and to bridge the link between them.⁷ He follows a pragmatic structural analysis in studying the tales. As like any other traditional tribal groups, the *Muthuvans* also have evolved a complex cultural heritage of their own. There are many oral sources of tradition in *Muthuvan* societies that has been recorded mostly in religious myth while there are other oral sources of tradition in these societies that are not strictly religious or even mythic. These are legends, songs and sagas that are part of collective memory of the tribals. The *Muthuvans* who gathered in the *Chavadi* or bachelor huts narrate tales. The senior members who preserve the knowledge about the community, its tradition, history and process of migration transfer them to younger ones. Depending on the narrator, listener and the mood, each narration is varied. The elder members present in the bachelor hall also share their experience. Thus the process of narrating the tradition became a communal activity. No oral tales narrated by a community is non-purposive. It functions as documentation of their history or their memories of their tribal culture or their clan endogamy. The fact is that oral traditions keep changing in the course of time due to the influence of many external and internal factors.

The *Muthuvans* consider themselves as migrants from Madurai in present day Tamil Nadu State. Many tales are related to Kannaki, a chaste and divine

⁷ Claude Levi Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, USA, 1963, p. 43.

woman whose wrath and curse at the unjust punishment meted out to her husband Kovalan led to catastrophic events that caused the migration of these people from Madurai to the Western Ghats. One of the tales narrated by Kolliyappan is given below.

“*Muthuvans* living in various settlements of Idukki came from Madurai region of Tamil Nadu. Long ago, when Madurai was ruled over by Pandya kings, there lived a very beautiful girl called Kannaki. Many men in that place desired her and proposed marriage. However, she married Kovalan. One day her husband left home with her anklet. Only a few days ago the queen of the Pandya King had lost her anklet of the same kind. The queen spotted the anklet in Kovalan’s possession. The queen ordered the soldiers to kill him and took the anklet with her to Madurai. Kannaki on hearing the news went to the palace. She fought with the king’s soldiers and Kannaki’s wrath burnt the palace and the city of Madurai into ashes. She then wanted to leave the region and migrate elsewhere. She sought the help of the forebears of the people called *Muthuvans* today. They suggested that she could go the hills and forests beyond Madurai. They also decided to follow her. They took all their belongings and children on their back and left with her. On the way they reached a river bank. The river was overflowing so their ancestors put Kannaki on their back (*muthuku*) and crossed the river. Since they carried her on their back, they came to be known as *Muthuvans* (In another version of the story, there is a variant that Kannaki who possessed supernatural powers put the helpless *Muthuvans* on her back and crossed the river). Then they reached the woods and hills in *Malayaladesam*.⁸ Kannaki climbed over a nearby hill which is called Tirtamala and resided there. *Muthuvans* occupied the hills surrounding it. *Muthuvans* started worshipping her as their goddess. Every year, during the spring season, the *Muthuvans* go to Tirtamala to worship Kannaki.”⁹

The Particular tale unfolds various facets of the tradition and beliefs that exist among the *Muthuvans* as part of their culture. The tale explains and justifies

⁸ Kerala is mentioned by the *Muthuvans* as *Malayaladesam*.

⁹ Interview, Kolliyappan, a *Muthuvan* at Kammalakkudi in May 2011.

the meaning of their tribal name “Muthuvan”. It explains the background of acceptance of ‘Kannaki’ as their goddess and also the religious practice and worship. The tale also narrates the migration process that took place. “The *Muthuvans* connect the cause of their flight from Madurai with the story of Kovalan and Kannaki in the great Tamil epic of *Silappadikaram* which date from about the second century A. D.”¹⁰ “It is impossible to say whether the story is wholly a work of imagination, or there is some element of contemporary or past history in it.”

There is another mythological tale that exists among the Muthuvans: “Long ago, when *Muthuvans* came here from Madurai with Kannaki, they settled in the hills. Kannaki chose to reside in Tirtamala and the *Muthuvans* settled down in the surrounding hills. They ate fruits, roots, tubers and honey collected from the forests. Gradually *Muthuvans* started cutting trees for agriculture. They cultivated paddy and millet. Then again there came a problem. Wild animals came and ruined the grain. They did not know what to do. So the *Muthuvans* climbed the Tirtamala and told their problems to Kannaki. Kannaki asked the gods to drive away the wild boars. The gods battled with the wild boars. Meanwhile the five Pandavas along with Krishna came there and stayed in the woods. To watch the battle, Krishna climbed atop a hill. He sat on a rock with an umbrella in hand. After this incident, the hill on which Krishna sat came to be called as Kudamala (*kuda* means umbrella and *mala* means hill).”¹¹

In this tale also the incidents begin with the *Muthuvans* exodus from Madurai and the subsequent settlements in and around the Tirtamala hill. The *Muthuvans* started collecting fruits, roots and honey from forest for daily consumption, but gradually began to practice slash and burn method of agriculture in the mountains to cultivate short - term crops. The tale gives adequate explanation to their mode of production based on shifting cultivation. The tale further narrates about the problems they faced during their agriculture from wild

¹⁰ P T Thomas, *A Study of a Travancore Tribe and its Problem*, Baroda, 1958, p.11.

¹¹ Interview with Andy Appan, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi in June 2011.

animals, especially wild boars. When they sought help from Kannaki, the Gods on her request came there and vanquished the wild boars. Here in the tales, the real life situations are connected with some supernatural beliefs.

The above two tales show the *Muthuvans* affinity to their tradition and beliefs; both past and present and with their locale. These folk tales help the younger generation to assimilate and inherit their own culture and tradition and to understand the historical tradition behind their religious practices. For example, the first story explains about the reason behind the practice in which they climb the hill, Tirtamala, every year to offer special prayers where Kannaki resides. The second story is quite different from the first one because of the association it has with the Hindu Mythology and the narration of their existing mode of cultivation. In this particular story the reference is made to Lord Krishna sitting on the top of a hill with an umbrella. It is interesting to note that local places and areas were named with regard to the beliefs associated with the people as it is evident in the tale which explain how a particular hill got the name Kutamala. It is also a fact that such tales and stories manifest local beliefs and practices but no one can prove the originality and validity of such beliefs and stories.

Some Historical Traces on *Muthuvans* Migration to Western Ghats

According to Conner, the *Muthuvans* who were basically cultivators from Madurai probably came to the hilly forests of Travancore accompanying some of the Madurai princes at the time of exodus when the Pandyan Rajas entered the South or when the Telugu Naickers took possession of Bodinayakannur in the fourteenth century.¹² Aiyer has a different view in this regard. It is held that *Muthuvans* migrated from Madurai to the hills as they were forced to do so because of the Muhammadan invaders like Hyder Ali, probably in the later part of the eighteenth century.¹³ Edgar Thurston expatiates that “The approximate time of the *Muthuvan* exodus from Madurai cannot even be guessed by any of the tribe,

¹² P E Conner, *Description of Hill Tribes in Travancore*, Madras, 1917, p. 8.

¹³ L Anantha Krishnan Iyer, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, Vol. 2, Madras, 1937. p. 350

but it was probably when the Pandyan Rajas entered the South or more probably when the Telugu Naickers took possession of Bodinaickennur in the fourteenth century. It has also been suggested that more *Muthuvans* were driven to the hills by the Muhammadan invaders in the latter parts of the eighteenth century. Judging from the two distinct types countenance, their language and their curious mixture of custom, I hazard the conjecture that when they arrived in the hills they found a small tribe in possession with whom they subsequently intermarried, this tribe having affinities with the west coast, while the new arrivals were connected with the east.”¹⁴

Some *Muthuvans* hold a belief, transmitted from their predecessors that they belong to the Pandyan dynasty. According to Indran, a twenty eight year old *Muthuvan* of Sethkudi, they belong to the royal family of Pandyas of Madurai and the royal family of Poonjar in Kerala.¹⁵ He says that since they had close kinship with Poonjar family for years, it was a custom for them to go through Poonjar when they go to Sabarimala, the famous temple in Pathanamthitta district of Kerala.¹⁶ The relation between Pandyan dynasty and Poonjar royal family and the possible relationship of *Muthuvans* with them are written about by some scholars. A Sreedhara Menon had dwelt on the interaction of Pandyans with Kerala and that the descendants of Pandyas of Madurai ruled the principalities of Pandalam and Poonjar in Kerala.¹⁷ Madhava Menon in the *Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes* points out that Poonjar chieftains claim to be the descendents of the Pandyan dynasty and due consideration was given to the *Muthuvans* by them.¹⁸ Thomas examines the brief historical references by Emily Hatch and Shangoonny Menon regarding Poonjar principality and state, “Poonjar chieftains originally belonged to Madurai and they are either direct or collateral descendents of the Pandyan Kings

¹⁴ Edgar Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V, Madras, 1909, p. 87.

¹⁵ Interview with Indran, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi in May 2011.

¹⁶ Interview with Anguthan, a *Muthuvan* at Edaliparakudi in May 2011.

¹⁷ A Sreedhara Menon, *Keralacharithram* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1967, pp. 248 - 251.

¹⁸ Madhava Menon, *The Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes*, Vol. I, Trivandrum, 1996, p. 342.

and the family was displaced from native Madurai and sought refuge in the Travancore hills, due to internal dissensions or foreign aggression.”¹⁹

Rajendran on analyzing and relating the oral history of *Muthuvans* with historical data, states that it is possible to say that, “the descendents of the Pandyan Kings of Madurai ruled Pandalam and Poonjar till the nineteenth century. Those Pandyan princes who left Madurai after twelfth century and came to Poonjar and Pandalam, became the Kings of the principalities. In between fourteenth and nineteenth century owing to the political and economic problems, internal feuds and foreign invasions, the disgruntled people of Madurai left the place and sought refuge in the sheltering forests of Kerala. Those who came from Madurai after the fourteenth century got tribalised in the forests near Poonjar.”²⁰ The narrations made by the *Muthuvans* in the form of tales and the explanations given in the works of some historians mentioned above points to the chances of *Muthuvans* as the people who accompanied the members of the Pandyan royal family who migrated to the Western Ghat regions of Kerala and settled down in Poonjar and Pandalam regions. The rationality of the popular tales that thrive among the *Muthuvans* juxtaposed with the historical evidences of the period of migration and the antecedents mentioned by different scholars are not strong enough to reach a valid conclusion.

Social Organization of the *Muthuvans*

Koottams

The *Muthuvan* tribe is divided into six matrilineal clans known as *Koottams*. *Mela Koottam*, *Kayanu Koottam*, *Puthani Koottam*, *Kanna Koottam*, *Thushani Koottam* and *Elli Koottam* are the six clans. Among these the *Mela Koottam* is claimed to be the superior clan. The *Kayanu Koottam* is said to be the progeny of one who carried fresh fruits, *Puthani Koottam* derived its name from a

¹⁹ P T Thomas, *op.cit*, p. 12.

²⁰ S Rajendran, “Oral History; *Muthuvan* and their Migration”, in Chenna P Reddy and Sarath Babu (eds.), *Folklore in the New Millennium*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 218.

vendor of flowers. *Kanna Koottam* got the name from one who carried a *Kanna* (reed). *Thushani Koottam* is the descendants of one at *Thushanam*, a place said to be in proximity to Marayoor village (Devicolam Taluk). *Mela Koottam* and *Kanna Koottam* consider themselves as superior to others. The *Koottam* was an endogamous unit in the earlier period. The purpose of these divisions is mainly for marriage alliance, to keep up the social status and to indicate descent and ancestry. The superior clans like *Mela* and *Kanna Koottam* do not seek marital alliance with rest of the clans. The other four clans marry each other. Now the customs and rules are more or less relaxed and there are many cases of inter marriages between the members of all clans.²¹ When it comes to the Tribe as a whole, the *Muthuvans* claim superiority over the other tribes of the area. Their self perception is high; they consider themselves as elite class. They will not allow other tribes like *Mannas*, *Malapulayas*, etc., to enter into their *Kudis*.²²

Political Organization

Political organization is concerned with the control and regulation of the use of physical force and regulation of relations between groups or members of different groups within a society at large. In India, tribes are not a solid monolithic mass but a collection of socially, economically and culturally diverse tribal groups living under different socio-cultural and ecological conditions. The tribes in India had developed a wide range of political organizations due to their bewildering diversity in the ecological, cultural and technological conditions. The political organization of the *Muthuvans* is a unique and closed system. The headman of the whole *Muthuvan* Tribe is called *Mel Vakka*, which is considered as a position for social control.²³ He is considered as the supreme authority of the entire *Muthuvan* community. The term *Vakka* refers to the institution of chieftain. He is assisted by

²¹ Interview with elderly *Muthuvans* at Edamalakudy, in May, 2011.

²² Interview with Murugan, a *Malapulaya* tribe, who was our guide during the field works in *Muthuvan* settlements in the Reserve Forests of Marayoor, Kanthalloor and Chinnar (April-May 2011).

²³ Interview with Malliappan a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in May 2011.

*Mutha Vakka, Palithara Vakka and Valathara Vakka.*²⁴ Among the *Muthuvans* the dignity of the chief, *i.e.* *Melvakka* is inherited by the eldest son of the eldest sister. Besides the office of *Vakka*, each hamlet or settlement known as *kudis* has a headman known by the term *Mooppan*. The dignity and position of the *Mooppan* is sometimes inherited through the female line, *viz.*, from uncle to the eldest nephew.²⁵ *Mooppan* is assisted by *talayari, kularan* and *sundarapandi* in the official matters. For selection of a *Mooppan* in a *kudi*, the principle of heredity and election go side by side on some occasions.²⁶ The headman or *Mooppan* had no powers over land or forests. He could not impose any taxes or promulgate new laws or any policy independently. The decisions and policies in a *kudi* are discussed and formulated in the council known as *Orumura*, which collectively look after the entire hamlet affairs.²⁷ An oligarchic form of power structure is visible in the political organization of the *Muthuvans*.

Practice of Customs and Laws

Like most other primitive tribal population, the *Muthuvans* also lack codified laws, and thus their attitudes to social values can be deduced only from observing the functioning of justice system and from casual remarks of individual *Muthuvan* men and women. The obvious starting point for such an exercise is understood through a closer look at the functioning of the traditional hamlet council known as *Orumura*.²⁸ *Orumura* functions as the court of first instance in the *Muthuvan* judicial system. A special meeting of the *Orumura* may be called for two reasons (a) if there may be the suspicion that one of the villagers has committed an act causing pollution and thus endangering the well being of the community. Such an action is considered as a cognizable offence, and the elders of

²⁴ Interview with a cross section of *Muthuvans*, Edamalakudi, in May - June 2011.

²⁵ Interview with Appannan a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in May 2011.

²⁶ Interview with Appannan, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in May 2011

²⁷ Interview with Chinnaswami, Nadukudi, in May, 2011. See also, T Madhava Menon, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

the council must act in order to prevent the pollution from spreading to the whole members of the *kudi*. (b) Another instance is when a dispute between two members of the hamlet may have reached a stage where one of the parties seeks the intervention of the headman and other leading elders of the hamlet and then the Council is convened to take a decision on the issue.

The summoning of the council is conducted in an informal way, and if a dispute erupts at a time when all members of the hamlet are busy with their agricultural works or engaged in conducting ritual activities, there may be considerable delay in summoning the *Orumura*. Once the members gathered either on an open space or on the courtyard in front of the *Chavadi*, the procedure follows a more or less standardized pattern.

The first aim of the council is to elucidate the facts of the case. If both litigants are present, as normally they will be, the meeting opens with a detailed statement of the complaint, and this is usually followed by an equally lengthy reply of the accused. As the two versions of the causes and course of the dispute are usually contradictory, one of the elders then put questions to discover the truth; the members of the council may join in this interrogation. Though the *Mooppan* formally presides over the proceedings and he must not be necessarily the most vocal of the elders. When the two litigants have been given full opportunity to state their case, witness may be called and the views of these persons will be ascertained. Thus every meeting of a hamlet council (*Orumura*) tends to elucidate, reiterate and interpret the unwritten laws and social norms of the tribe, and there are many instances when the assembled men spend far more time on discussing these principles than on investigating the rights and wrongs of the specific dispute to be settled.²⁹ Yet, every council called upon to adjudicate a dispute tries to arrive at a settlement which is acceptable to both parties.

The *Muthuvans* consider it necessary to elucidate what tribal custom prescribes, at the time of judgment. When all the aspects of the case have been

²⁹ Interview with Nallathampi, Ambalaparakudi, July 2011.

debated, the *Mooppan* proposes a settlement specifying, for instance, that the defendant if proved guilty should pay the plaintiff a certain sum in compensation and should also pay a fine to the hamlet council. Social boycott, excommunication, caning, cash fines, etc., were the commonly imposed punishments on the culprits based on the character and nature of the crime committed.³⁰ A sort of sending a delinquent to Coventry exists, but falls through when the matter has blown over. When disputes between parties are settled against anyone, he may be fined generally in kind; a calf, a cow, a bull or grain. Oaths by the accuser, accused and partisans of both are freely taken. The form of oath is to call upon God and it is believed that the person swearing or his child, may die within some days if, the oath is untrue.

Excommunication as a Means to Social Control

Excommunication imposed by an *Orumura* must not be regarded simply as a form of punishment for an offence; it is rather a means and an act of self defense on the part of the society. If an individual has incurred pollution on account of a breach of tribal laws or customs, such as inter dining, illicit sexual relations or marriage alliance with any person of a lower tribe or according to the strict view, an illegitimate relation with any non - *Muthuvan*, the verdict of excommunication confirms and publicizes the culprits lowered ritual status, and prevents the pollution from spreading to other members of the community and to the entire tribe. If a person continues any relation or extends any help to the person who had been excommunicated, it involves the danger of pollution and consequent loss of status and excommunication of the former too from the community.

The members of the hamlet council act as representatives of the entire tribe at large, and their decision is binding on the *Muthuvan* wherever they live (even outside the said settlement). In this respect its functioning is entirely different from that of the village councils of many other Indian tribes like the *Nagas*.³¹ The

³⁰ Interview with Ponnusaami, a *Muthuvan* at Puthukudi, June 2011.

³¹ Alok Kumar, *The Naga Life: A Cultural Saga*, Calcutta, 1988, p. 22.

verdict of the elders of a *Naga* village affect only the position of the culprit within his own settlement or village, and leaves him free to seek acceptance by another village community of the *Nagas* itself.³² Such an acceptance could not be possible in the case of an excommunicated *Muthuvan* as he would not be able to seek asylum in any of the other *Muthuvan Kudis*. Here we are witnessing two entirely different concepts of society. While Naga justice is concerned only with relations within the comparatively small group of a single village, the *Muthuvans* see themselves as part of a much wider social organization extending ideally to the far flung regions where other group or settlement of their community dwell.

Design and Pattern of *Muthuvan* Houses

The typical residential house of *Muthuvans* is one roomed without a verandah annexed in front. Each house of a settlement is a roughly rectangular structure, built on a mud platform, raised half feet or more above from the ground level. The building material widely used by the *Muthuvans* for the construction of buildings is bamboo. They have mastered the bamboo craft and can shape the material into a multitude of structural adaptations, from their huts with walls formed of plaited bamboo slits plastered over with mud to assembly halls (dormitories) with vast floor area uninterrupted by uprights. The roof is usually double sided or single sided and is covered with grass or leaves which keep the house amazingly cool in daytime. They repair these roofs before every monsoon to protect the house against rain. Partition walls are not set up between sleeping room and kitchen. The fire place is built on a raised platform. It is an oval - shaped hole, cut out from the platform, around which three or four stones will be placed to support the cooking vessel. These fire places are usually situated in the back corner of the room, the sleeping place is on the opposite side.

The rooms are windowless but not too dark since light permeates the split bamboo walls, as well as the open space between the protruding roof and the upper end of the walls. Commonly, we could not see any furniture in an ordinary

³² *Ibid.*



Picture 1. Muthuvans building a house with mud and bamboo sticks



Picture 2. Girls wearing *sari* in Melpudava style

Muthuvan house unless we can call some wooden boards used to sit, as furniture. Even these boards are not common. Bamboos are usually suspended horizontally between the rafters of the roof, so as to allow clothes, vessels filled with water or honey, etc., to be hanged up. The houses and the surroundings are kept clean and neat by the *Muthuvans*.

The houses in a *kudi* are frequently built in parallel rows facing each other as seen in Kammalakkudi in Marayoor, if the site is fairly even but the houses tier back to back if the slope is steep as seen in Vellakkalkudi in Chinnar region. Thurston reported that in the western slopes, the huts do not have a back wall because the roof will be sloped into the hillside.³³ Such types of house construction are visible commonly in the *Muthuvan* settlements in the steep hilly settlements of Kanthalloor - Chinnar region like Vellakkalkudi, Iruttalakudi, Thayannam kudi, Olikudi, Thirthamalakudi, etc.³⁴

Dress and Ornaments

In the early period, the *Muthuvans* did not have any relationship or contact with the outer world. During that time they used leaves and barks of trees as clothes.³⁵ The *Muthuvans* are conservative in their tradition and social outlook and retain their traditional ways of dressing even today. Tattooing is not practiced widely among them. They wore a stout thread on the right arm.³⁶ The men wear a turban; when a boy comes of age and is ready to stand on his own feet, he is ceremoniously invested with a turban by his maternal uncle. It is practiced among the boys between the age of 16 to 20 years and the turban is known as *Urumalkettu* which is an indication of adulthood and his readiness for marriage.³⁷ When going out of the house, a man wears a coat and a *mundu*. The loose end of the *mundu* is taken between the legs and tucked behind during ceremonious

³³ Edgar Thurston, *op.cit.*, p. 93.

³⁴ Extensive field visits in the Marayoor - Chinnar Region during 2011-2012.

³⁵ Interview, Kolliappan, *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi during June - July 2011.

³⁶ Observed in the extensive Field Studies conducted by the Researcher.

³⁷ Interview with Natarajan, Thalaivar of *Muthuvans* at Sethkudi, during May - June 2011.

occasions. Most of the men wear ear rings, supposed to be and sometimes in reality of gold with bits of glass or stones of different colors in them and also wear silver and brass finger rings.

The women continue to wear a long piece of cloth (*celai*) wound round their waist and tied again across their shoulders. The way of draping the sari with a knot in the right side of the shoulder is called *Marady*. Unmarried girls and married women till they give birth to a child drape their sari in this way. The women, who drape the *celai* in *marady* style, shift to *melpudava* style *i.e.*, the way of draping *celai* in ordinary Indian style after child birth. The fold is so arranged that she can carry her baby safely and comfortably on her back.³⁸ Unmarried girls wear less jewelry than the married and widows wear no jewelry till they get remarried.

Different Phases of *Muthuvan* Life

From birth to death, the *Muthuvans* pass through life together with the rituals and practices that mark the major events in their life cycle. It is clear that most of the rites of life involve the interference of the entire hamlet as a single social unit. Most of life's major events are highly ritualized among them but the differences in its degree of importance to various events in life suggest that rituals has been used, consciously or unconsciously, as a means to contain the threats posed to the purity and co-existence of the hamlet.

Pregnancy and Childbirth

There are a lot of superstitions and beliefs that exists among *Muthuvans* regarding conception, pregnancy and childbirth. Certain days are believed to be particularly favorable for conception. The fifth day after the new moon is such a propitious day. The idea underlying this belief is that during the waxing of the moon all vital forces are strengthened, as the moon grows in size the forces expand, and that with the waning of the moon, there is a corresponding falling off of the powers of vitality. There is also the belief that the time and place of conception have a certain influence on the future development of the child. If the

³⁸ Interview with Remani, Anganvadi Worker at Puthukudi, in May, 2012.

couple had intercourse in the evening after dinner, the child will be good and strong if conception occurred after the intercourse at midnight, the child will be stupid and unsuccessful in life and if intercourse took place in the morning, the child would grow as a wise and respected person.

When a woman realizes that she has conceived, from then onwards she has to observe a number of taboos. Most of them are based on the idea and belief that every action of the mother will have a deep impact on the unborn child and on the course of her confinement. As a rule, pregnant women do not have sexual intercourse after the fifth month but there is no definite taboo on intercourse during the early months of pregnancy. After the fifth month of a woman's pregnancy, the husband spends the nights in the *chavadi* (dormitory) of the settlement. The *Muthuvans* would make elaborate preparations for the delivery of a child. When the pain starts, the woman is lodged in an isolated house (*thinnaveedu*) which is about 30 to 50 meters away from the ordinary houses in the settlement. All married women in the settlement assemble there and extend their assistance. In every settlement there are two or three elderly women with the reputation of having expertise in helping women in delivery. They are not like the professional midwives of the modern period and usually possess traditional medical skill. Such a woman experienced in assisting at childbirth attends on mother and child until the final purification takes place after the end of the pollution period which lasts for 30 days. Only after the pollution period of thirty days, the mother and child would come out of the *Thinnaveedu*. Men are strictly prohibited from approaching the *Thinnaveedu*. There seems to be a lot of reports regarding the information that deformed children are neglected and abandoned to die and then buried. The reason is that *Muthuvans* believed that only the fit should survive.³⁹

³⁹ See, L A Krishna Aiyar, *op. cit.*, Vol.II, p. 17. See Also, A A D Luiz, *Tribes of Kerala*, New Delhi, 1962, p. 206. The *Muthuvans* never admit about the existence of such practices in their settlements. But one tribal extension officer who works among the *Muthuvans* revealed that if the *Muthuvans* see a newly born child as diseased or with disabilities, they will not give much



Picture 3. *Valamapura* in Nadukudi



Picture 4. Inside of a *Thinnaveedu* in Andavankudy

The naming ceremony of the child is conducted on the 31st day along with the purification ceremony of the mother. A boy is normally named after his maternal grandfather or maternal uncle and a girl after her maternal grandmother. Some couples take their children to the worship place and name after the god or goddess. Some of the traditional names commonly seen among the *Muthuvans* are Kolliyappan, Vellachetty, Sangappu, Kumarappan, Pavanan, Sirangan, Manikyan, Nariyan, etc. for men and Karuppayi, Kuppi, Chembi, etc., for women.

Childhood

A *Muthuvan* child at birth automatically enters into a number of social groupings and bonds which determines to a large extent, the future course of his/her life. Association with these social groupings is inescapable and unavoidable. Once born into *Muthuvan* family, a child remains as a member of the tribe until his / her death. The factors such as the ties and bonds between the members of the hamlet too influence a child's attitude and behavior in many important respects. It is interesting as well as informative to find out various social groups and institutions to which a young *Muthuvan* child found himself / herself as a member.

The social unit which the child first learns to recognize as his natural sphere is the family and household consisting of his parents, brothers, sisters and perhaps some other close relatives who share the same house. The mother pays all attention to the child; even when she is working in the field, she keeps the small child on her *muthuku* (back) tied to her *saree*. Within the household a *Muthuvan* child finds satisfaction for all his primary needs, the food is given to him by the women of the household and adult members come to his assistance when in distress. The *Muthuvan* boys and girls remain in their own home till 5 to 6 years, after that they have to go to the common dormitories situated at the middle of a

attention or care to such children. Normally due to lack of attention, there is a high chance of the death of such a child.

settlement known as *Chavadi* or *Satram* in the evening and have to spend the whole night there.

Dormitory System: a Social Institution

A notable feature of the communal life of *Muthuvans* is their dormitory system. Youth dormitories as social institutions are found among various primitive communities around the world. One of the most exquisite descriptions of such 'dormitory system' existing in the world is that of the Trobriand Islander's *Bukumatuk* described by Malinowski, the great Polish born British anthropologist.⁴⁰ Majumdar while giving description about the dormitory system in Tribal India tells us that those dormitories, bi-sexual as well as mono-sexual are found in practically different parts of the country where tribal people have their habitation. Dormitory system is found in Assam; where the Angami Nagas call it as *Kichuki*. The Ao Nagas call it *Arichu*.⁴¹ The Munda and Ho tribes of Chotanagpur have designated it as *Gitiora*.⁴² In Kerala, the existence of dormitories has been reported from amongst the *Muthuvans*, the *Mannans* and the *Paliyans*. Two types of youth dormitories are found among the tribes of India. Some may be common, *i.e.*, shared by both boys and girls as the case with the Muria tribe's *Gotul* or they may be confined to one sex only like that of the Mutnuvan's *Chavadi* and *Thinnaveedu* for boys and girls respectively.

The dormitory in a *Muthuvan* settlement is a rectangular hall constructed by the men at the entrance portion of a settlement. Most probably the dormitories for boys will be the biggest building in a settlement.⁴³ These dormitories are built a little away from the houses for families so that the members can maintain privacy and carry on their work without any disturbance. The dormitories for men came to

⁴⁰ Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, London, 1922, p. 32.

⁴¹ D N Majumdar, *The Fortunes of Primitive Culture* (reprint), Delhi, 1987, p. 27.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Field Notes.

be known as *Chavadi* or *Satram*.⁴⁴ A fire pith (*tippodi*) is in the centre and is lit throughout the night. Young members collect the fire wood from forests. The day to day management of the dormitory is under the supervision of the *Veli ilandari*, the senior most unmarried boy of the settlement.⁴⁵ He make purchases and collection of things from the households to prepare the feast, cook and serve it, arrange shelter for guests, assist the priest on festivals, plan the entertainments for the gatherings throughout the celebration with dance and music, etc. Unmarried boys above the age of five, widowers, old men, lone males, husbands of pregnant ladies, male visitors to the settlements, etc., spent the night in the male dormitories. During day time they involve in their work for their respective families and spend time with their close family members in home. The girls' dormitory has two compartments; the first is for widows, female guests and unmarried girls free from pollution, and the other for the pregnant women. The pregnant women after seven months stay inside the dormitory all the time while the other members attend to their regular activities in their respective families. Unmarried girls are termed as *makkalu* or *kumari makkalu*.⁴⁶

All male members of a settlement assemble in the male dormitory on every evening, share their experiences of the day, discuss the daily affairs and plan the activities of the settlement informally. The courtyard in front of the dormitory is commonly preferred as the meeting place of the settlement council known as *Orumura*. The festival dances of young men and women during the *Tai nombi* and *Tai ponkal* festivals also took place in front of the dormitory. Boys and girls dance in separate groups and avoid physical contact. The dance of young women is called *Keninjiattu*. They dance around in a circle with white *dhotis* in hand. The young men's dance, termed *Tatain* is frenzied and fancifully dressed for the occasion, and performed in another circle. The festival dances start in the evening

⁴⁴ Interview with Rangaraj, a *Muthuvan* at Puthukudi in May-June 2011.

⁴⁵ Interview with Subbav, a *Muthuvan* at Kandathikudi in April 2011

⁴⁶ Interview with Thevamma, a *Muthuvan* lady of Puthukudi, in May 2011.

and continue throughout night and only on this occasion are the women allowed to come near the men's dormitories, otherwise doing so is a taboo.

It is obligatory on the part of the boys and girls to become members of the dormitory when they attain the age of five and the membership continues till the member gets married. Though the lives lived inside the dormitories appear to be of a light-hearted type on the surface, underlying these semblances are deep socio-cultural and educative motives. Youths gather in the dormitories by the evening to dance, sing, play; tell each other folktales and folklores and later to sleep for the night. The members of the *Chavadi* may be divided into two sections; the seniors and the juniors. It is the seniors who being well-versed in tribal lore and traditions, pass on what they have experienced to the juniors, who in their turn, one day assume the role of the seniors. In the morning and evening, bachelors of the same sex and age combine in small arbitrary groups and visit individual households in the *Kudi*, eating a little from each house, sharing the food from a single plate and this practice is known as *Kudi tinuttu*.⁴⁷ If a married man is staying at the dormitory (in a situation where the husband of a pregnant woman is not allowed to stay in the house after six months of pregnancy) he also joins in the *kudi tinunttu*.

In the beginning of their agricultural operations, there took place three significant events pertaining to the boy's dormitory. The first is the *Veli ilandari pattam vilikkaradu* (bestowing title to the senior most unmarried youth in the dormitory) took place one or two days before *kadu vettu* (the slash and burn) for shifting cultivation.⁴⁸ The selected *Veli ilandarri* wears a *patta modiram* (title ring) usually made of gold, donated by the settlement which he can wear as long as he remains as a bachelor. All the members of the settlement assemble in front of the dormitory for attending the function. After his marriage, the headman gets back the ring from the *Veli ilandari* and the title and the ring are passed on to the next eldest unmarried man. The second one, *tandal terraturadu* (collection of firewood for the dormitories) is a privilege enjoyed by the boys. When a boy's

⁴⁷ Interview with Muthuswami, a *Muthuvan* at Puthukudi, in April 2011.

⁴⁸ Interview with Vellachami, a *Muthuvan* at Kandathikudi, in May 2011.

family starts slashing operations, he collects a fixed quantity of firewood pieces (tandal) from it and brings it to the *chavadi* for the day to day uses.⁴⁹

The third practice related to the dormitory is *koivelli potaradu* (feasting the members in return for labour contributed by them). The help of the members of the dormitory will extend to any family which is unable to finish their agricultural works due to sickness and other reasons. When an individual family (or families) is unable to complete slashing and burning of the area allotted to them before the first rainfall, the members provide help to complete the field preparation for the concerned families. In return, usually after harvest, the beneficiaries give about 20 *padi* (a local measure) of rice, a fowl, some tea dust and jaggery to the dormitory and the boys prepare a feast using these things. The *koivelli potaradu* is a thanks giving ceremony for a great service of the members of the dormitory in helping all families in a settlement to maintain the seasonal rhythms despite the disabilities of any individual family.

The education and social learning which *Muthuvan* children normally receive at the hands of their elders is almost entirely an unconscious process both on the part of the educators and the educated.⁵⁰ All knowledge is passed on to the younger generation by word of mouth and the depth of such knowledge is obviously limited to the subjects and matters which are familiar to the older generation. It is an important reason for the less impacted and unchanged social outlook and tradition of *Muthuvan* society even after generations. The Dormitory thus functions as a molding furnace of a *Muthuvan* according to the customs and tradition of the tribe.

S C Royburman, the famous ethnographer who has done pioneering work among several major tribes provides a threefold purpose for the dormitory system among the tribes. Firstly it is said to serve as an effective economic organization for purposes of the food quest; secondly, as a useful seminary for training young

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Interview with Vellachami, a *Muthuvan* at Kandathikudi in April- May 2011.

men and women in social and familial duties and thirdly, as a place for the performance of magico - religious ceremonies designed to bring about success in hunting and to augment the procreative powers of young men. In this respect, the dormitory system stands as a great social institution of the *Muthuvan* tribal folk.

It is clear that the social and cultural training imparted in dormitories proves very crucial in the adult life of the young members and cannot be dismissed as unimportant or unhealthy. Interestingly even the most advanced societies of the world lack such a social training in an institutionalized manner. The system helps to form a crowd behavior and social commitment in the *Muthuvan* societies. In a crowd-situation a considerable number of persons gather around a common stimulus or a centre of common attention. Due to the common mental condition of its members, the crowd situation becomes a co - acting group. The structure of the dormitory system is so simple that every person here is conscious of others attitude and behavior. A close intimacy is created among the members of the dormitory. The members of the men's dormitory constitute a readily available labor force to take up any kind of task for the well - being of their *kudi* and are generally considered as belonging to the settlement as a whole rather than to individual families. The members of the dormitory led by the elder member assist in several collective endeavors like rendering assistance at marriage functions, house building or harvesting. A collective social behavior is formed and the values of co- operation and togetherness are learned through the dormitory system.

Celebrating Adolescence and Puberty

Puberty rituals and ceremonies were common among the *Muthuvans*. When a boy enters adolescence, a turban tying ceremony called *Kokkira Caumural* (otherwise known as *Urupal Kettu*) is celebrated.⁵¹ It is conducted between the ages of 16 - 18, when the boy attains adolescence. The time and date of a boy's *Kokkira Caumural* is fixed according to the decision of the family members and from the permission of the *Mooppan*. The maternal uncle and his son (*ali*) has the

⁵¹ Interview with Palanisami, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in April 2011.



Picture 5. **The celebration of *Kondakettu***



Picture 6. ***Pukari* worn as a symbol of marriage by Muthuvan women**

right to administer the affairs of the day. They fix a day according to the convenience of the family. On the particular day, they give a ceremonial bath to the boy. The *ali* then ties a turban on the head of the boy. A cloth, three to four meters long, purchased by the parents or elders is used to tie the turban. The boy is then taken to all the houses of the *kudi* where he is mocked by the elders by throwing cow dung and mud water. A feast is served on the day as part of the celebration.

When a girl attains her first menstruation, she is isolated in separate shed for 5-7 days. This is to protect her from the eyes of men. On the 6th or 7th day, she is taken to a nearby stream by girls of her age and is given a ceremonial bath.⁵² It is interesting that neither the maternal aunt nor brother's wife (*nathun*) should accompany her. After bath, her hair is tied in a special manner (*kondakettu*) and adorned with flowers. Then she visits all maternal uncles' huts where she is fed and presented with new clothes. The entire ritual is known as *thalai sadanku* (literally 'the first ritual').⁵³ Priests (*Poosari*) are also invited to this ceremony to perform the calling of the dead ancestors (*Karanavarae vilickal*) to whom also the message is transmitted and their blessings requested on behalf of the girl concerned.

The Institution of Marriage

Marriage, considered as preferred and normal life practice for every adult *Muthuvan*, is a social institution which in many cases overlaps with childhood. The majority of boys and girls marry immediately after reaching adolescence and puberty. In *Muthuvan* society boys usually get married at the age of 15 to 17 while girls get married at the age around 12 to 14 years.⁵⁴ The social life of *Muthuvans* involves a certain segregation of sexes before marriage. Even at the feasts and weddings girls and women keep largely to themselves, and an unmarried girl will seldom be seen talking to a young man. In such a situation, there is less probability

⁵² Interview with Kanni Ammal, a *Muthuvan* woman at Nadukudi, in April 2011.

⁵³ Interview with Kanni Ammal, a *Muthuvan* woman at Nadukudi, in April 2011.

⁵⁴ See, Thurston, *op. cit.*, p. 91; *Vide* also, A A D Luiz, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

of natural gender attraction between young people to channelize into love. Sanctified by custom, contact between the youths of both sexes is outwardly only superficial. Thus there is little glorification of romantic love and overt custom does not provide opportunities for sentimental or intimate relations between unmarried boys and girls. Yet, there is no serious attempt to prevent young people from meeting secretly and the complications arising from prenuptial love affairs are resolved without any great show of indignation.

The first negotiation to a girl's parents are almost invariably conducted by the friends and more often by the cousins on the mother's side of the young man, who approaches the bride's parents and request the hand of a girl from her parents. They may begin with informal consultations, possibly through a third party, or the bride's parents may at once be approached with a definite proposal presented in *the ceremonial form prescribed by custom*. A day is fixed with the consent of both parties. If they agree for the marriage, then the consent of even the most distant relatives have to be obtained (the refusal of the marriage request is considered as an indecent act) and if everyone is satisfied, a day is fixed. It is noted in the *Travancore Census Report, 1901*, that after a marriage is settled, the bridegroom forcibly takes away the maiden from her mother's house when she goes out for water or firewood, lives with her for a few days or weeks in some secluded part of the forest. The friends and relatives have the duty to search out and brought back the missed couple. They will return, unless in the meantime they are searched for and brought back by their relatives.

Marriage by elopement is an interesting method practiced by some *Muthuvan* youths. When a man and woman fall in love but do not obtain the consent of the concerned elders, they run away into the jungle and stay there in a cave, visiting the village rarely for collecting grain and other things from sympathizers. When the anger aroused by their disgraceful conduct had subsided, they quietly return to the village, and live there as husband and wife. Not every *Muthuvan* lover succeeds in winning the affection of the girl he admires and if all

other attempts to kindle her imagination fail, he may ultimately resort to love charms. There are magical formulae as well as concoctions which are credited with the power of awakening a woman's love, but those who know such practices, keep them secret, and the information regarding charms obtained through field works are very limited.

The whole expenses of the marriage function are borne by the bridegroom's side. A bamboo comb made by the bridegroom called *Pukari* is presented to the bride at the time of marriage, which is worn by her at the top of the tuft of her hair. These combs are made from thin pieces of bamboo, the *Muthuvans* most favored raw material, beautifully ornamented in geometric patterns. The combs are usually nine pronged and elaborately ornamented on the projecting top part. The girl has to wear it throughout her life as a marriage symbol. Along with *pukari*, the bridegroom also presents bangles, nose - ring, bead necklaces, etc. Tying of *tali* (nuptial knot) is not practiced in the traditional *Muthuvan* marriages.

The standard of conjugal fidelity and mutual respect is high. The wife never addresses her husband by name instead she addresses him as the father of her child by mentioning the name of the child. Polygamy is permitted in the *Muthuvan* social structure. Edgar Thurston reports in this regard, "A *Muthuvan* may not marry the daughter of his brother or sister; he ought to marry his uncle's daughter, and he may have two or three wives."⁵⁵ Luiz in his work observes, "Among *Muthuvans* Polygamy is common, and some elders who were interviewed during the recent investigations had as many as four wives and children by all of them. Polyandry is forbidden and is not practiced."⁵⁶ Gender discrimination is quite conspicuous though not fanatical.

Unlike the other caste groups and communities in India, marriage is not a religious sacrament among the *Muthuvans*. Hence, divorce or dissolution of marriages on the demand of both sexes is possible and widely practiced. There

⁵⁵ Edgar Thurston, *op. cit.*, p.92.

⁵⁶ A A D Luiz, *op. cit.*, p.206.



Picture 7. A newly married couple in Puthukudy



Picture 8. Researcher with a Muthuvan Family in Societykudy

exists a liberty to divorce with the approval of the *Orumura* in cases of adultery, impotency, maladjustment, etc. When a request for divorce is received, the *Mooppan* presents the matter to the *Orumura* where the matter is discussed and a final decision is taken. Thus divorce, like marriage, has to be a public or social ceremony and in some cases the party desiring the dissolution may have to pay compensation to the other party. After divorce, the children are considered as the liability of the mother. Widowed and divorced of either sexes are permitted to remarry anyone they like but a re-marriage between the divorced couples was not allowed.

Avoidance between Kin

It has been found among many tribes that many sects of kin avoid each other in close relations and contacts. Among the *Muthuvans*, a man observes avoidance relationship with his mother in law while a woman observes avoidance relationship with her father in law. A man keeps a distance from his wife's elder sister, and does not talk directly with them. He can talk or move freely with his wife's younger sister. A *Muthuvan* man is debarred from all types of personal contacts with his younger brother's wife and with his daughter-in-law. Similarly, a woman avoids her husband's elder brothers and her son in law.⁵⁷ Radcliff Brown gave one of the most possible of contemporary explanations. He pointed out that avoidance is a social fact and must, therefore, have a social explanation.⁵⁸ He says that, "whenever people come in contact with each other the possibilities of co-operation as well as conflicts are always equally present. But there are certain kinds of kinship where hostility is regarded as against social norms. The best way to prevent such hostility from becoming manifest is to put restrictions on the growth of intimacy; and hence the kinship's usages of avoidance."⁵⁹ Freud's psycho-analytical explanation is based on sexual attraction and the need to prevent

⁵⁷ Interview with Ponnamma, a *Muthuvan* woman at Kandathikudi, in April - May 2011.

⁵⁸ Radcliff Brown, *Taboo*, London, 1959, p.128.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.129.

sexual intimacy between various kinds of relatives this may also be considered as a possible reason for such customs of avoidance among *Muthuvans* and other tribal groups.⁶⁰

Old Age

The passage of a *Muthuvan* man or woman through the middle ages and old ages are not marked by any rituals and are not demarcated by a particular number or years. There is no abrupt change in status of a young man on reaching the middle-ages and from middle-ages to old age. But age certainly enhances the individual's influence in the community. For men, age is one criterion for influence in the society, as we had seen earlier; the elder members of the settlement constitute the members of *Orumurai*, the *Muthuvan* council of law in a settlement. Women too may grow more influential with age in the household and in the girl's dormitories, but beyond the household, a woman's power generally must be channeled through her husband, for females have no right to become the members of the settlement council.

An old man who has son's old enough to take over the responsibilities of a family may retrieve from active herding, agriculture or other gainful employment, but his status or power is not thereby diminished. A single old man (unmarried or widower) spend the evenings and nights in the gents' dormitory and such an old woman, in the girls' dormitory. A woman continues in charge of the domestic matters of her family until their husbands are alive and their sons still young and unmarried thereafter handover the responsibilities to her daughters - in - law. Due to the existence and practice of dormitory life, old people are not segregated or excluded from the general round of hamlet life and the degree to which they participate in the social activities depend mostly on their own personalities. Some remain active, particularly by looking after the matters of dormitory life and giving advice and directions to the younger generation.

⁶⁰ James Strachey (trans.), Sigmund Freud, *Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, London, 1972, p.54.

Death and the Cult of the Dead

The thoughts and deeds of the *Muthuvan* people do not consist of only those who live on this earth. The ancestors who passed away in the course of time are also considered as part of the community even though they were not physically present. For the *Muthuvan* world, this dividing line is not insurmountable; the living can reach across it and influence by ritual acts, the fate of their departed kins, and the dead are believed capable of bringing weal and woe to their surviving relatives.

When a death occurs in a settlement, the news is conveyed to all the relatives and members of the nearby settlements and to the *Mooppans* of all *Muthuvan Kudis*.⁶¹ The funeral rites starts with the mourners join in digging the grave which is far away from their habitation. The grave has a little thatched roof, about six feet by two, put over it. The body is then covered with a new cloth and taken to the grave. The dead are buried lying down, face upwards, and placed in north - south direction. The chief mourner is usually the nephew, in whose absence; the eldest son performs the rite. He puts a handful of rice into the grave which is followed by the other members. All the mourners remove their turban till the burial is over.

A stone is put at the head portion and a similar stone at the feet. These stones serve to mark the spot when the roof perishes or is burnt during the next forest fire. The depth of the grave is, for a man, judged sufficient if the grave digger, standing on the bottom, finds the level of the ground up to his waist, but for a woman it must be up to his armpits. The reason is that the surviving women do not like to think that they will be very near the surface, but the men are brave and know that, if they lie north and south, nothing can harm them, and no evil would approach their grave. The *Muthuvans* believe that the ghosts of those killed by accident or dying a violent death, haunt the death spot till the memory of the occurrence fades from the minds of the survivors and of succeeding generations.

⁶¹ Interview with Guruswami, a *Muthuvan* Priest at Kavakkattukudi, in April 2012.

These ghosts of such persons were not propitiated, but the haunted spots were avoided as much as possible.⁶²

The *Muthuvans* recognize that even the most skillful *Vathy* or *Manthrakaran* is of no role, if the God has decreed that a man's life should end. Then no offering or medicine is great enough to stray the hand of the giver of life and death from that man.⁶³ Until a *Muthuvan* breathes his last breath, his illness is the concern only of the members of his household and of the particular settlement where he inhabits. But as soon as life has flown, the disposal of the dead body and the performance of the death rites become the duty and concern of the entire tribe.

The funerary rites which sometimes exceed in their complexity and costliness even the marriage ceremonies are the visible expression of their belief in the community of the living and the dead. The chief mourners especially the nephews, sons and brothers of the deceased, remove their ornaments and turbans for 30 days. However, the widow has to practice the mourning rites throughout the year. On the second day of the burial, the *Muthuvans* perform a mortuary rite called *Sathu* which comprise of an oblation of cooking a small quantity of rice by a bachelor and followed by a feast. During the thirty days of pollution, the relatives of the deceased neither take a bath nor use oil for cooking. On the 31st day, the final mortuary rite named as *Karmadi* takes place.⁶⁴ It is similar to that of the *Sathu*. After the purification bath, there will be a grand feast. For a *Muthuvan* man or woman who died unmarried, the full rite may not be performed and he/she would remain forever outside the list of the clan gods and the ancestral spirits who are worshiped during the festivals and rituals.

Role of Religion and Mystical Orders in *Muthuvan* Life

In the perception of the *Muthuvans*, the world consists not only of human beings, animals and the tangible and visible objects of nature but also of a

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ In an Interview with Veeraswami, *Vathy* of Sethkudi in May 2011.

⁶⁴ In an Interview with Veeraswami and other *Muthuvans* at Sethkudi, in April 2011.

multitude of beings that are not normally visible. Though on occasions, seers and priests can see and hear them in trance and in dreams and their impact on human life is felt in a number of different ways. It is debatable whether these beings should be described as ‘supernatural’? as the *Muthuvans* who considers them as part and indeed a vital part of nature. They believe that these supernatural elements move freely in the same sphere which is the orbit of man and that the invisible world is an extension of the visible world. For an outside observer it is not easy to appreciate how very real and actual the gods and host of minor deities and spirits are to the average *Muthuvan*. *Muthuvans* will describe in detail not only the goings and comings of Gods but also their physical appearance. The frequency of states of trance and possession when the Gods speak through the mouths of seers (*vathy/manthrakaran*) are the irrefutable proof to the *Muthuvans* about the presence of supernatural elements and Gods and their concern for human affairs.

Muthuvans have a traditional pantheon of Gods and Goddesses who are sometimes mentioned in formal prayers and their attributes and activities recalled in legends. These *Muthuvan* divinities are called by the general name *Mala Daivangal* meaning Gods of the mountain because most of them are believed to reside on particular mountain peaks of Idukki. They worship the Sun every morning by raising their hands to their foreheads with the prayer; “O God, we live in the jungle, we are ignorant of everything, protect us”. In the evening also, they pray to their Gods before going to bed.⁶⁵ Of all the traditional anthropomorphic deities, the God ‘Palaniandavar’ (another name for god Subramanian) is clearly the most important to the *Muthuvan*. He is represented in the worship place by a bundle of peacock feathers and one or two iron spikes planted in the ground. The *Poosari* (priest) offers worship to this every morning after taking a bath. Another deity of great importance is ‘Mathurai Meenakshi’, a manifestation of goddess Parvathi. The ancestors of *Muthuvans* are believed to have carried a statue of ‘Meenakshi’ with them during their migration to Kerala. *Thai Pongal* is the most important festival of *Muthuvans* which shows their close relationship with the

⁶⁵ In an Interview with Laxmanan, a *Muthuvan* at Meenkuthikudi in April - May 2011.

Tamil culture. The worship of sylvan deities like 'Kottamala Swami' and 'Vadaganatha Swami' supposed to reside on the peaks (the peaks are considered as divine) is also practiced among the *Muthuvans*. The other Gods worshipped by them include, Chanthiyattu Bhagavathi, Neriamangalam Sastha, Muthi, Muniandi, etc. They also worship the powers of nature like fire, mountains, trees, rivers, sky, moon, etc.

The *Muthuvans* elaborate seasonal rituals to these Gods are based on the assumption that the powerful divine beings can influence the course of nature and the fate of a man, his family and the whole settlement. The approaches to the various deities differ widely. Underlying the somewhat confusing variety of cult acts is the belief that all gods expect and have the desire to be worshipped by men, that they are accessible to prayers and offerings and that they have the power to grant the supplicant's requests. The difference in the nature of various Gods has some social reasons, for it is obvious that not all deities worshipped by *Muthuvans* today have their origins in the same cultural sphere. Besides *Muthuvan* Gods, whose cult must have developed over a long period alongside the growth of society there are Gods who are worshipped also by the local Hindu castes in Tamil Nadu like 'Palani Andavar' and 'Madurai Meenakshi' and many such Gods. These Gods have their roots in rural Hindu religion. However exclusive the *Muthuvans* may be in their social and cultural respects, in religious matters they are open minded and ready to extend worship to any God or spirit from whom they expect favor and benefits.

Among the important mechanisms of control and adjustment in *Muthuvan* tribe are the mystical beliefs of various kinds. We can quote Evan Pritchard who contrasted 'mystical' beliefs as occurring in operation which are out of sensory observations and control with empirical beliefs which state knowledge of operations in which every step is under sensory observation and control.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Edward Evans Pitchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, London, 1937, p. 44.

To approach the Gods and spirits *Muthuvans* rely on ritual experts. The two functionaries most prominent in a *Muthuvan* ritual and religious life are the priest of a settlement known as '*Poosari*', and the seer or diviner known as '*Vathy/Manthrakaran*'. In many cases the two functions were done by a single person. The position of *Poosari* in a particular settlement is usually, though not always, hereditary. But a '*Vathy/Manthrakaran*' does not owe his powers to descent or selection. He acquires them through an innate affinity to spiritual beings fostered by association with a senior '*Vathy*' from whom he learns the mechanics of the interaction with gods and spirits. It is observed that the senior most '*Vathy*' or '*Manthrakaran*' most probably prefer his nephew or his own son as the assistant and naturally a kind of succession within a family happens in several cases. The '*Vathy/Manthrakaran*' is credited with special powers beyond the reach of ordinary people, particularly with a gift of communicating with invisible forces, by including a state of possession he can become a god's mouthpiece and then act as an oracle.

The *Muthuvans* ascribe the varying course of a man's good and ill fortune almost entirely to his ancestral spirits and to his own destiny/fate which is associated with these ancestral spirits. Ancestral spirits are believed to cause misfortunes for two kinds of wrongful actions; the first is default in performance of obligation due to the spirits. They are entitled to receive offerings and sacrifices on certain prescribed occasions during the year's activities and also in the development of an individual's life. If these personal or familial offerings are omitted, they would send illness or other misfortunes to the individual and his family. The second type of action with which they penalize is default in performance of kinship obligations. In such cases the misfortunes will affect the settlement as a whole.

Diseases and Ethno-medicinal Practices

It is of primary importance to the members of any community to maintain their health and restore to health those who fall ill. Possibly this is because illness

and deaths are disruptive events that impose high economic, social, cultural and psychological cost wherever they occur. Every tribal culture irrespective of its simplicity and complexity has its own beliefs and practices concerning diseases. No culture deals in a meaningless fashion in the treatment of diseases; evolves its own system of medicine in order to treat disease in its own way.⁶⁷ The etiology of disease is central to any discussion of the connection between medical phenomenon and their cultural setting.

The myths and legends of *Muthuvans* reveal that they suffered a lot from a wide range of ailments in the deep forests - endemic as well as epidemic in the past. Edgar Thurston in his work describe that, during his stay in Idukki, small pox had spread great havoc among the *Muthuvan* settlements. The *Muthuvans* lived in the remote areas of deep forest were left largely to their own devices and techniques when got ill, with all healing works beings carried out by the medicine men in the same settlement and community using herbal, ritual and other folk remedies. These forms of indigenous healing have evolved due to necessity, were continued and practiced very widely even today.

Illness ideology of the *Muthuvans*

In *Muthuvan* indigenous medical system, primary consideration in the diagnosis of disease is its cause and causality which is identified on the basis of relationship between the victim of illness and his surroundings. Explanations of the occurrence of illness in tribal societies are at the same time reflection and representation of their world as it is experienced and comprehended by the members.⁶⁸ The *Muthuvans* have a number of causality concepts regarding the occurrence of diseases. This includes both natural and supernatural causes.

I. The Supernatural

The belief in the interference of supernatural agency is particularly strong in the case of their health and disease. Different supernatural forces are connected

⁶⁷ Lyle Saunders, *Cultural Differences and Medical Care*, New York, 1954, p.7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, p. 8.

with various types of diseases. They identify the supernatural powers with a group of powerful forces and deities which control and influence the happenings in the community. We can categorize the supernatural causes of diseases as identified by the *Muthuvans* into

a. Illness of (brought by) God: The *Muthuvans* believe that for maintaining the general well being and prosperity of members of the tribe, they have to keep a good harmonious relationship with their Gods. The Gods will deliver a lot of favors on the people if they are propitiated properly. But the lack of worship will incur the wrath of the Gods and even benevolent Gods will turn into malevolent ones. The anger of these Gods is considered as a main reason for the origin of diseases⁶⁹.

b. Illness of (brought by) Man: It is generally seen that many of the illness, disease and misfortune in the *Muthuvan* society is finally attributed to human antagonists. In other words, the problem is blamed on witchcraft or sorcery through which a man can bring disease to other people.⁷⁰ It is mainly because this elicits sympathy from others. The person is considered as a helpless victim and therefore deserving of concern and attention from the entire *Kudi* or hamlet.

c. Ancestral Spirits: The anger of ancestral spirits also results in some kind of diseases. If the post - funeral ceremonies of a person are not conducted properly and in due time, one of his children will get sick. This will happen exactly thirty days after the parent's death. The victim will suffer from acute fever and headache which could not be treated and cured by the herbal medicines; this was the *Muthuvan* belief.⁷¹

d. Evil Spirits and Soul Loss: We can see a number of evil spirits like *Chekuthan*, *Pey*, *Pishachy*, *Muni*, etc., in the *Muthuvan* religion. All of them

⁶⁹ In an interview with Thanka Swami, *Vathi* of Andavankudi, in May 2011.

⁷⁰ In an interview with Natarajan, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in May 2011.

⁷¹ Interview with Thanka Swami, a *Muthuvan*, in April 2011.

are malevolent and cause various hardships like illness, accidents, crop failures, etc. The *Muthuvans* believe that some of the isolated corners in the dense forest are haunted by the evil spirits who can inflict a number of maladies upon human beings. Entering these regions will result in the attack of these spirits. A demon can capture the soul of a man and hide it in a cave inside the forest. After losing the soul, the happiness and brightness on the persons face will vanish and he will be gloomy always. Gradually he will lose the strength of his body and become a patient in a short while. Thus they usually avoid a visit to such places. Insanity, epilepsy, chest pain, etc., are generally considered the results of the attack of evil spirits.⁷²

e. Illness as Deviance: Purity, pollution and restrictions (taboos) have been observed in plenty among the *Muthuvan* socio-culture. In *Muthuvan* belief, menstruation and menstrual blood are considered as 'dirty' and 'Impure'. The women in these days have to live in a separate hut *Valapura* or *Kuliveedu* in isolation.⁷³ Visiting or going near a menstrual hut by a man is considered as a taboo. Killing of dogs and cobras is another taboo. They consider their agricultural fields and the area around the temples as divine. Defecating or urinating in such places is also a taboo. They hold the view that one had to eat the flesh of a being which he killed; otherwise killing an animal is an offence. Breaching of these taboos will consequently invite the wrath of Gods and they will punish the offenders' with disease. Certain diseases are thus considered as the indicators of a person's deviation from the traditional social norms which are to be practiced in his social life.

II. The Natural

Different physical factors and causes people suffer from through accident, neglect or due to changes in climate/nature are also connected by the *Muthuvans* with various types of diseases. We can categorize them as natural causes. Change in the

⁷² Interview with Madanan, Panchayath Member, at Kandathikudi in April 2011.

⁷³ Interview with Laxmi, a *Muthuvan* woman at Irutalakudi in April 2011.

nature and quality of diet is the main reason for the occurrence of certain diseases. In the past the *Muthuvans* ate only the food gathered from the forest because the food available in the forest is pure and unpolluted and conducive to good health. Excessive exposure to hot sun, rain and cold are other natural causes explained by the *Muthuvans* for the occurrence of certain diseases. Old age and overwork are also considered as reasons for the affliction of diseases. While going out for a journey, they take cooked food with them because they considered the food available outside as polluted.⁷⁴ Due to large scale de-forestation and the rigid forest laws, the collection and availability of food from the forests has been greatly reduced. As a result, they depend upon the food items available from the shops or from the Girijan societies. They say that their health has been affected a lot by the intake of polluted food from outside.⁷⁵

Ethno - medicinal Therapy and the Role of Traditional Healers

Healing process and therapy in ethno-medicine is an important and vast area. It includes magical, religious and chemical procedures.⁷⁶ When illness occurs to a member of a *Muthuvan* hamlet it may be treated or ignored with the help of a specialist in the community known as *Manthrakkaran*. The senior most *Manthrakaran* in a *Muthuvan* hamlet (*Kudi*) is known as *Vathi*.⁷⁷ Usually *Vathi* is an old man who elicits respect from the other members of the hamlet. There will be only one *Vathi* in each hamlet and there may be more than one *Manthrakaran*. Each hamlet will have a special deity known as *Kuladevatha* and is accepted as the household deity by the *Vathi* and *Manthrakaran*. He is a specialist in herbal treatment and at the same time he is equated to the 'shaman' found in the anthropological literature with expertise in magical technique. They combine both magical techniques and herbal plants in the practice of healing. They use

⁷⁴ Interview with Chandran *Kani* at Thayannankudi, in May 2011.

⁷⁵ Interview with Krishna Swami (*Manthrakkaran*) at Andavankudi, in April 2011.

⁷⁶ Richard W Lieban, "Medical Anthropology", in John J Honigman (ed.), *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago, 1973, p.21

⁷⁷ Interview with Krishna Sami, a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in April 2011.

supernatural or magical powers to diagnose the most 'efficient cause' and administer the appropriate remedies. We can thus point out that in *Muthuvan* culture, medical practices are often fused with religion, even when mechanical therapy is employed, magico - religious elements are essential parts of the prescription or treatment which is not complete without attention to mystical factors involved in etiology of the illness.

Ritual Healing

Ritual healing is another term used for ethno-medical therapy conducted with the support of some magical rites and symbols. Before getting into the theoretical explanation of what Ritual Healing is, it is necessary to understand what the term Ritual means. Saunders has stated that a ritual is a generalized medium of social interaction which becomes a vehicle for constructing messages through iconic symbols (acts, words and other things) that convert the load of significance of complex socio - cultural meanings embedded in and generated by the ongoing process of social existence into common currency.⁷⁸ Thus rituals are a set of voluntary, conscious and stylized bodily actions which include iconic symbols such as words, gestures, prayers, chants, songs and other things performed in a defined place, situation or context by particular actors only, encompassing basic rules to accomplish given tasks or goal in any social sphere within a particular cultural frame of reference.

When it comes to Ritual Healing, it is necessary to understand how the meaning of ritual symbols are interpreted and how ideas are ordered and organized into a system (ethno - medicine) within the cultural frame. The outstanding characteristic of *Muthuvan* conceptions of illness is the belief that human beings are integral part of an ordered system and that illness is the consequence of some disharmony with the cosmic order. Accordingly the shamanistic rituals and rites emphasize the restoration of harmony or balance in the nature, within human relationship and in relationship with the world of Spirit.

⁷⁸ Lyle Saunders, *op. cit.*, p.23.

Once a sick person is taken to a traditional healer, he is faced with the task of discovering the cause of sickness. He must also determine the role of God, sorcerer, magician, evil spirit, the evil eye or the ancestral spirit. He then chooses the course of treatment and finally decides on the nature of the preventive measures to block the recurrence of misfortune. Thus, the *Vathi* and *Manthrakaran* first diagnose the cause of illness through the divination rituals. At the time of divination ritual, he will invoke the gods and dead ancestors through appropriate spells and incantations. Divination is aimed to find out the involvement of the causative agents which are discussed earlier. Some divination rituals applied by *Muthuvan* medicine men are *Olippu*, *Kuriveyppu*, etc.⁷⁹

The *Muthuvans* practice a number of rituals in connection with their treatment of various diseases which may vary according to the nature and cause of illness. Only a *Vathi* or *Manthrakaran* can officiate at these healing rituals for the benefit of the patients. Some of these healing rituals need the active participation of the patients while some others are conducted by the ‘Shaman’ himself. *Kozhiye Parappikal* is a magical ritual conducted to ward off the evil spirits and devils possessed in a patient which is believed to be the cause of illness like epilepsy, insanity, anemia and chest pain for a long time. *Thullal* is a very powerful magical ritual performed to cure the diseases originating due to the possession of evil spirits and demons on a person’s body. The warding off ceremony is always conducted during the night, in the courtyard of the patients’ house. It is considered as a very efficacious healing ritual used only as a last resort, in the case of serious and prolonged illness. If a patient could not be healed after performing *thullal*, it is considered that no other medicine can save him.⁸⁰

Smallpox, Chickenpox and Measles are considered as the diseases originating from the wrath of goddess *Mari Amma*. In *Muthuvan* belief, these

⁷⁹ In an interview and prolonged conversation with Velu Sami, *Manthrakaran* of the *Muthuvans* at Olikudi, in April 2011.

⁸⁰ In an interview and prolonged conversation with, Thanka Sami, *Vathy* of the *Muthuvans* of Andavankudi, in May 2011.

diseases cannot be cured by taking material/herbal medicine. *Mari Amma* will get angry if medicine is taken and the condition of the patients will become worse. For speedy relief, water made holy by the chanting of spells will be given to the victim. Prayer is also conducted in a special manner with the help of *Vathy/Manthrakkaran*. A talisman known as *Thayam* in the *Muthuvan* dialect is usually prepared by a *Manthrakaran* to prevent the attack of evil spirits, sorcerers, wild animals and snakes. A fine powder of medicinal plants available in the forest will be filled in silver or steel tube having a length of two inches. The 'Shaman' will enhance power of the medicinal powder by chanting some spells, while it is being filled in the tube. It is then tied on the upper arm or on the waist using a black thread. All these 'Shamanistic' healing rituals often have the function of raising unconscious conflicts and resistance to conscious level.⁸¹ The *Manthrakkaran* does not work with the patient's individual consciousness; from which these problems arise, but rather with the collective and social unconsciousness which is shared by the whole Tribe.

Use of Animals and Herbal Plants as Medicine

Belief in the power of herbal medicine is fundamental to the *Muthuvans* and this belief rests on the idea that the natural vegetation which grows so abundantly in the surrounding hilly forests and rocks are a storehouse of medicinal power. The traditional knowledge of medicinal value of a plant is based on their deep observation and understanding of nature derived through their observation of other animals and birds. It is clear that such kinds of knowledge are not confined to a particular tribe alone.

The *Muthuvans* possess deep knowledge of the medicinal value of different plants and the technique of increasing the efficacy of a medicine by combining the right ingredients in right proportion. For example, an important healing function of traditional healers is bone setting. The medicine men smear the fat of

⁸¹ Extensive Field Studies and Notes.

Malampampu (python) or *Cherapampu* (the Rat Snake) on the broken limb.⁸² Give a bandage with fresh cloth and with straight bamboo splints. Change the bandage and apply the above medicine on alternate days for a month. In another method, they grind the root of *Pannikizhangu* (*Pueraria tuberosa*) along with a hen's egg. They apply this paste after rightly positioning the broken limb. Then cover that portion with wet *Payal* (green algae) from river and secure with two pieces of bamboo splints. For dog bite they grind the seeds of *Marotti* (*Hydnocarpus pentandra*) with some other leaves and apply this paste on the wound. Similarly the *Muthuvan* medicine men have their own traditional medicine prepared from plants and seeds for almost all common diseases like Headache, wound, chest pain, fever, cough, dysentery, ringworm, snakebite, toothache, jaundice, asthma, sprain, vomiting, piles, earache, etc.⁸³ Another crucial function of traditional healers with regard to disease is the making of preventive medicines for their clients. The practices of preventive therapies include massage, dietary restrictions, contraceptives for women, preventive medicines for epidemics, etc., can be seen among the ethno - medicinal practices of *Muthuvans*.

Historically, *Muthuvans* had a strong 'tradition' of ethno - medicine. There are medicines which are effective for many of their ailments. But, they never revealed the ingredients of those medicines to others. Hence, that treasure of knowledge is eventually being lost. Now, they are using their traditional knowledge on certain ailments like treatment of fracture and snakebites. Snakebites are common in the *kudis* and they never go to hospital for treatment of snakebite. If a person is bitten by the snake, first thing they do is to make them drink their own urine. Their belief is that urine contains antibodies against the venom that enters the body. Later on they apply herbal paste on the bite or wound. The application of herbal paste will continue for seven days. After seven days, the person will be all right. But, at times the wound will not heal and they come to the medical camp and ask medicines for the wound. *Muthuvans* completely use their

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Interview with Iswaran, a *Muthuvan* at Kandathi Kudi, in April 2011.

tribal wisdom and what they do not have with them they ‘borrow’ from the ‘outside system’, a clear case of smart adaptation. As mentioned, they have knowledge for treating snakebite but do not have medicine for treating the wound for which they depend on modern medicine. Gradually, partial dependence on allopathic medicine is becoming more common. *Muthuvans* of Edamalakudy have mentioned that they have medicine even for ‘sex selection after conception’ and also for sterilization. They further explained that they could not utilize this ancient wisdom now because only the elderly have the wisdom of this ‘secretive’ medicine and they never would reveal it to other women, who do not have a minimum of six children. When we attempted to get more information regarding this from a *Vathy*, he completely ignored the question.

Status of Women

Any discussion about tribal women in India should take into account the diverse and complex discourses on how this category has been constituted in social science. Studies conducted on women in tribal societies not only provided important insights in their lives but also enriched the theoretical understanding of gender relations. Simplistic structural functional approaches to understand women’s status and role prove *Muthuvan* women as essentially complementary to men of their society to an extent. We can see that *Muthuvan* women were much better placed than their non - tribal counterparts in Kerala. Such a statement is based on the idea that *Muthuvans* were not markedly stratified along gender lines. Gender relationships were seen as relatively egalitarian. Nuances of sexual inequality were not explored to the fullest. One of the major indicators of gender equality found in the amount of sexual freedom *Muthuvan* women enjoyed. Autonomy in terms of choosing the spouse and easy access to divorce, remarriage, etc., were perceived as great markers of their ‘liberation’ or – ‘higher status’.

Positioning Women in the Settlements

The distinction between patriarchy and matriliney operates in a fluid way among *Muthuvans* and so the question of gender is addressed quite differently

among them. In each practice associated with sexual and reproductive health one can see an element of gender demarcation. Women are placed little below in terms of restrictions and punishment. With regard to lineage, *Muthuvans* follow the matrilineal system. But, when it comes to customs and 'traditions' that define gender restrictions and the taboos associated with it, this tribal community maintains deep-rooted dominant attitudes, power relations and restrictions to the grave disadvantage of women. Women are considered as weak and fragile and accordingly their movements and behaviour are defined and restricted by their *kudi* system. One of the customs still practiced in the *kudis* is that if a man holds the hand of a woman it is considered as an act of proposal, and the woman supposedly belongs to that man, without any need of consent from her. Such rules and practices favour men and perpetuate male domination and amounts to negate or invalidate the identity and autonomy of women. The narratives of elderly women give a crucial account of their life in the forest, which is highly demanding and challenging in terms of gender. After marriage, the couple usually stays adjacent to their parent's house. In some cases, but rarely, the bride gets incorporated into her husband's household while yet retaining a foot hold in her own parents' home. She would signal her respect to her in-laws by refraining from addressing them by name and by adapting to conceal her body and remaining secluded in relation to other male members in the family. Her movements are monitored and her contacts with others are regulated by elder men in the family. She is not allowed to talk to other men and she should get permission from her husband to go anywhere outside her house. While discussing about the gender roles among *Muthuvans* it is interesting to note that at home or inside the family the women do not face any discrimination. The couples mutually decide on the financial matters, children's education, marriage and agriculture. However, the *kudi* structure or the *kudi* system overwhelmingly controls women.

Gender demarcation is prominent in many aspects and is expressed through controlling the ways that women have to conduct their lives, adhering to the norms of the *kudi*. Women are not supposed to talk to any male members in the

community even if he belongs to the same clan. Her male circle is her father, siblings and after marriage her husband and son. And she should not appear before a male member who belongs to another clan. When a woman passes through a narrow path if a man happens to come across, the woman is supposed to hide her face from him and also hide herself behind the bushes. In our field visits and stay at Edamalakudi, we used to come across women while we trekked through narrow forest tracks from one *kudi* to another. On such occasions the *Muthuvan* women would invariably hide herself by side stepping into the bushes to conceal her presence. The fact that women have to hide their face from the male member in the *kudi* and from outsiders indicates a gender disparity resulting in discrimination against women. This is the way the girls are brought up for maintaining the clan purity. If they face others that may lead to more interaction and the older generation is scared that eventually that may lead to marriage. This age old practice is for preventing the interaction and marriage of a *Muthuvan* girl to persons outside their tribe. The custom of providing separate dormitories for men and women still exist, in its most traditional form, only among *Muthuvans* and not among any other tribes of Kerala, which again underscores the status of men and women among *Muthuvans* defined by strict gender roles. The other tribes of Kerala like *Ulladan*, *Urali* and *Mannan* also had maintained separate dormitory systems for men and women.⁸⁴ However, these customs had faded away from their culture and even from their memories as evident in their conversations. Sulochana, a forty eight years old *Ulladan* woman married to a *Mannan* man, said that she did not know anything about *thinnaveedu* and had never seen those systems in both *Ulladan* and *Mannan* cultures. *Muthuvan*, wherever they live, still keep the system of *Valamapura*. Girls are strictly made to sleep in dormitories. The *Muthuvan* clan system evolved and developed to preserve their identities, particularly for purpose of marriage and clan hierarchies are still observed. If a woman marries outside the community, from a higher caste and comes back to the *kudi*, after disposing that marriage, she is isolated in the *kudi* for purification for a certain period. Whereas,

⁸⁴ C K Karunakaran, *Adivasikalude Lokam Vanavasikal* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2007, p. 15.

in the case of a marriage with a lower caste man, she is secluded for years and not allowed to redeem her purity and sometimes is not taken back in the community at all.

Socio - Economic Role of Women

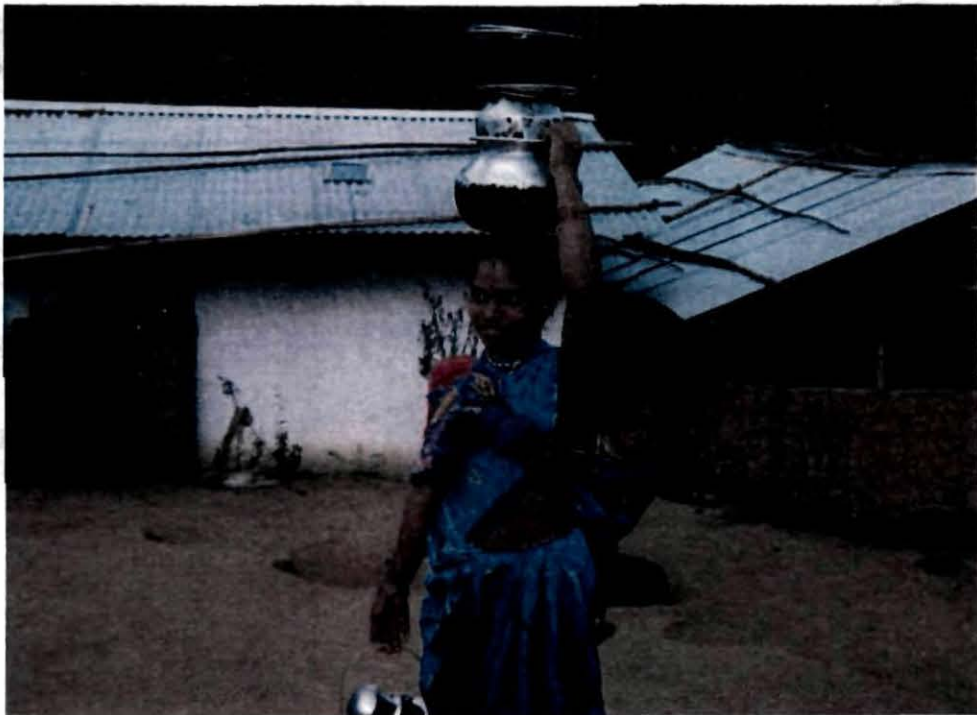
One of the major aims of this approach is to uncover the realities of *Muthuvan* women's worth unlike their counterparts in other societies. *Muthuvan* women contribute substantially to economic activities, and the literatures on *Muthuvans* deal with a variety of these activities. In a society and economy like that of *Muthuvan* where shifting cultivation is the main method of agriculture, women are in a far better position, as bulk of the agricultural and household work is performed by them and the societies allow them a say in the economic process. Among the women of 'Edamalakudi', division of labour was simple and based mainly on age and gender. They enjoy a nearly egalitarian relationship and have a much better say in the distribution and consumption of the produce. They control the income, spending it mainly on domestic aspects. Women here do not actively participate in selling and purchase of the produce in the market place.

There is a substantial role of women in the *Muthuvan* work force. According to the 2011 census, about 82% of *Muthuvan* women were retained mainly as agricultural labourers, clearly indicating the female work as essential to the maintenance of the household.⁸⁵ Field works and observations show that most of the *Muthuvan* tribal economies are still at the primitive stage of agriculture, and a large proportion of tribal female workers engaged in agricultural activities. The involvement of women in almost all earning and livelihood activities is a characteristic of *Muthuvan* economic life. The *Muthuvans* are dependent on firewood as the main source of energy. It is the task of the women and children to collect firewood and fetch water. *Muthuvans* are not only peasants but also craftsmen. Of the crafts, basketry involves the largest in quantity followed by

⁸⁵ *Census of India*; Kerala, Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes, 2011, p.14.



Picture 9. Long walks -for sustenance: A pregnant woman carrying firewood



Picture 10. Multitasking mother

wooden pottery. The women make baskets, mats, grain containers and winnowing baskets for household use.

Muthuvan Language

Majority of the tribal groups in Kerala have their own mother tongue, often quite distinct from the dominant state or regional languages. Our study shows the usage of a distinct language by the *Muthuvans* which is almost pervasive among the different *Kudis*. The dialect of the *Muthuvans* is called ‘*Muthuvan bhasha*’ which is used in their family and in the kin group⁸⁶ which is closely related to Tamil and to Malayalam. It has five vowels and fourteen consonants. The proto - Tamil/Malayalam trill *r* (ṛ) and the flap *r* (ṛ) have merged together in their speech.⁸⁷ Another change is that *l* (ḷ) has become *y* (ḷ) in several cases, such as, for example, *ēlu* has changed to *ēyu* for seven *kōli* to *kōyi* for fowl etc. The *y* is geminated if it follows a short vowel in a disyllabic word, eg; *kuli*(= *pit*) becomes *kuyyi*. In a few cases, *l* (ḷ) changes to *ḷ* (ḷ) as in Tamil, eg., *elai* becomes *eḷa* meaning poor. As in Malayalam, the velar stop *k* is nasalized: eg., *maraṅkal* is pronounced as *maraṅṅal* (= trees). The alveolar *tt* (from the proto form *ṛṛ*) and the dental *nt* (from from *nṛ*) are as in modern Malayalam, but *ṛṛ* and *nṛ* are sometimes pronounced as *tṛ* and *ntṛ* respectively. Instead of the word-final *-an* of Tamil/Malayalam, *Muthuvan* uses *ey*; for example, *avey* instead of the Tamil/Malayalam *avan*, meaning ‘he’.

A directive case is somewhat similar to the Malayalam *-ōttu* in *valattōṭṭu* = to the right is used in the Muthuva language, e.g., *avanāṭṭu* = towards him. The dative forms of first and second person pronouns resemble Tulu, eg., *eṅku* = to me; *ninku* = to you. As in several dialects of Malayalam, an empty marker *-ēn* is added before the accusative and genitive markers, eg., *ānēna* = elephant (accusative), *ānēnṛa* = of the elephant.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ L A Krishna Iyer, *op. cit.*, p. 351.

⁸⁷ *Encyclopaedia of Dravidian Tribes*, Vol. II, Trivandrum, 2008, pp. 286 - 295.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Kinship terms used among *Muthuvans*:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Term</u>
Grand Father	<i>Muttan</i>
Grand Mother	<i>Mutti</i>
Father	<i>Appan</i>
Mother	<i>Amma</i>
Fathers elder Brother	<i>Mōttappan</i>
Fathers elder Brother's Wife	<i>Mōttamma</i>
Fathers younger Brother	<i>Kuncappan</i>
Fathers younger Brother's Wife	<i>Kuncamma</i>
Fathers younger Sister	<i>Vēppa</i>
Mothers Brother/ Spouse father	<i>Māman</i>
Mothers Brother's Wife/Sp. Mother	<i>Māmi</i>
Mothers elder Sister	<i>Mōtta/ Mōttamma</i>
Mothers younger Sister	<i>Kuncamma</i>
Elder Brother	<i>Aṇṇan</i>
Younger Brother	<i>Tampi</i>
Elder Sister	<i>Akka</i>
Younger Sister	<i>Taṅka</i>
Spouse's Sister	<i>Nāttini</i>
Wife's Brother	<i>Eḷiyan</i>
Child	<i>Kunci</i>

There are a lot of words used by the *Muthuvans* which have not been used in Tamil/Malayalam or any other languages; is the evidence of a separate *Muthuvan* Language. Sample of such words used exclusively by the *Muthuvan* are given below

<u>Term</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
<i>akki</i>	sweetness
<i>āna</i>	in that way
<i>camcāri</i>	landlord
<i>cinkāṭi</i>	bow
<i>eṅkuru</i>	master/lord

<i>inatte</i>	yesterday
<i>kālucelli</i>	trap
<i>kaṇṇumēṭu</i>	pupil of the eye
<i>kayyan/kayaru</i>	son/boy
<i>kella</i>	necklace
<i>kilayam</i>	disease
<i>kinkilar</i>	servants
<i>kolayam</i>	tusker
<i>koḷḷa</i>	very/much
<i>kurruveti</i>	blow pipe(a distinct <i>Muthuvan</i> artifact)
<i>miṇi</i>	jackfruit
<i>netṭi</i>	site of waterfall
<i>ocakkam</i>	height
<i>pukāri</i>	bamboo comb
<i>tākku</i>	to suffer
<i>terami</i>	beauty
<i>tikku</i>	to know
<i>viyyāṭṭu</i>	morning

The characteristic features and the words used exclusively in the *Muthuvan* language are clear indications of their distinctive tribal culture.

Literature of the *Muthuvans*

The rich and varied literatures of tribal communities in India have been often marginalized or neglected and not considered as part of the mainstream Indian languages either due to the fact that most of the tribal literatures are in oral form or due to the reason that they have not been collected or documented and studied as part of literary canon. Since literature has always and often considered to be written, the oral literatures of communities such as *Muthuvans* were considered only as mere folklore.

It is to be noted that *Muthuvans*, have many orations preserved and transferred from generation to generation. These orations are performed on various

occasions. Their lives and various life cycle rituals are never devoid of rendering of songs on occasions such as at the time of marriage functions, puberty celebrations and death ceremonies. The collective and communal feeling is always projected in the songs sung at the time of work and at the festival time. The conversations at leisure time, especially after work in the fields and forest, are filled with tales and songs along with the experiences of the respective days. It is clear that the performance of these orations is completely content-based. *Muthuvan* orations comprise of folk songs, tales, proverbs and riddles which are sung at various contexts.

Among the folksongs of the *Muthuvans*, *Asaipattu* (love - songs) plays a vital role in their life and culture. These short songs are mainly in the form of dialogues between the bride and bridegroom, sung at the time of marriage. These songs are also performed in other contexts such as the celebration at the time when a girl attains puberty or when a boy leaves *Chavady* for getting married, etc. The love songs are many in number which deal with emotions and actions like desire, praise, flirtation, mocking, elopement, etc., even though these themes are prevalent in different songs in different ways, the intention in majority of the songs is to explicitly reveal the feeling of love as the name *Asaippattu* itself indicate.

In one love song the woman sings:

*“Velanja tina katile
Veppumar nippatu
Mullutina katile
Mulineku vannavane”*⁸⁹

Translation:

“In the ripe millet-forest
The elders are present
By the thorny shrubs,
Come to meet me.”

⁸⁹ In an interview with Appannan, a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in August 2011.

The situation of the song is that the man has come to see his lover in the weedy shrubs. The ripe millet field is not a right place to meet the beloved since elders are standing there which disrupt their privacy. But in thorny shrubs there is not much chance of interruption and hence the woman addresses the man and sings the particular song to inform and welcome him.

Other genres of folk songs include *Talattu* (Lullaby), *Kummippattu* (songs sung at the time of work and work places) and Festival songs and *Oppari* (songs sung at the occasion of death). These songs are lengthy and more subjects oriented than *Asaippattu*. These songs are notable for their rhythm and rhyme. Lullaby is the first genre of folksong encountered by the child in any community. Few lines of a *Muthuvan* lullaby are as follows:

“*Jyoti minnum rataname, en kanne,
Ullam etitparta rataname, en kanne,
En matiyil pillayayi vanthu pirantha rataname, en kanne,
Sinna malarvayi ciricapathi paal kudiku, en kanne.*”⁹⁰

Translation:

“O, Shining gem, my dearest one,
O, gem wished for by my heart, my dearest one,
A gem born into my lap, my dearest one,
Drink the milk with a smile on your flower like face, my dearest one.”

The lines of the lullaby are sung with deep love and in praise of the innocence and beauty of the child. Apart from calling the child a gem, the Child’s face is compared to a flower and the baby is asked to drink milk. Simple metaphors are used in the songs which are experienced in real life. The songs shows innate love of *Muthuvan* mothers towards their children.

Kummippattu is another musical genre of *Muthuvans*, especially by their women, sung to reduce the boredom of works when they go for work in fields or go to forests with cattle. The *Kummippattu* is sometimes sung with some physical performances to celebrate the occasions like harvesting. Such performances along

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

with songs are usually performed by the women in a particular settlement by sitting together in a circle and clapping hands and moving their body according to the rhythm of the song. The movement of the body, especially the head with flowing hair, in a sort of frenzy when the song is sung in a fast pace, is called *Kummiyadi* which resembles the name of the song. The religious aspects of some of these songs are noteworthy because some songs are sung in praise of their gods and goddesses.

One such song sung like this:

*“Tankamalakku vettakkupoyi,
Viraperumal vertu varar.
Tankakuncam ketti visunkamma.
Vellimalakku vettakkupoyi, viraperumal vertu varar,
Vellikuncam ketti visunkamma.
Nilamalakku vettakkupoyi,
Viraperumal vertu varar.
Nilakkuncam ketti visunkamma.”*⁹¹

Translation:

“Hunting in the golden hill,
Viraperumal comes sweating
Cool him with a fan made of gold
Hunting in the silver hills,
Viraperumal comes sweating
Cool him with a fan made of silver.
Hunting in the sapphire hills,
Viraperumal comes sweating
Cool him with a sapphire fixed fan.”

The description of *Viraperumal* (believed to be one of their gods) coming back sweating after hunting in various hills is narrated in this song. Followed by this, all are asked to cool him with various fans made of precious metals and studded with gems. The presence of divine and mythical characters in some songs indicates the influence of epics in their oral literatures.

⁹¹ In a interview with Kanni Ammal, a *Muthuvan* woman at Nadukudi, in April, 2011.

The other type of folk song is *Oppari* sang in the form of expression of grief on one's death. It is a mourning song sung at death and funerals. The men do not sing these songs. There are set songs sung according to the relation of the singer to the dead. It is not easy work to collect the *Oppari* songs as the *Muthuvans* do not sing it out of context or to please the visitor or for time pass. It is sung mainly by a woman when her husband is dead:

*“Ennevittu pokkunare rasa
Ente rasave
Kattamarama ketakkattara
Nanum otramarama anenne
Etakkattu pinamayittu pokkunare
Ennattu oru varttuti pesiyille cangare
Ini nan etrakalatekku otraykkutane iruppan pontren
Ini atirippanikku anusirippanikku iniyenikku alille ente rasave”*⁹²

Translation:

“My king is leaving me
My king
He is lying like a fallen tree
And I am a lone tree now
After leaving me alone, he leaves for the cremation-ground
O my husband, you don't speak a single word about this
Now, how long do I have to live alone?
Now I have no one to look after or obey, my king.”

The song is filled with images representing the woman's sense of loneliness and loss. The portrayal of the dead by comparing him to a fallen tree is the most striking one in this song. His wife expresses her sense of loss by singing that there is nobody for her to take care of or whom she can obey.

We can observe that most of the songs of *Muthuvans* are related to their real life situations. The songs are distinguished by the use of images, metaphors, similes and other poetic devices. Illustration of nature especially animals, birds, vegetation, mountains and natural phenomena are part of their songs. The tales are

⁹² Interview with *Kolliappan*, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in April 2011.

important in the daily life of the *Muthuvans* and are usually narrated to the younger generation in the evenings during their stay in *Chavadi* to make them aware of their culture, tradition and history. Even though there are some tales that are narrated for pure fun and entertainment, other forms of oral literature like riddles and proverbs have their relevance in daily life. Their oral tradition is rich with riddles (they call riddles as *viti*) that refer to the relationship between the individual/ community and the natural phenomenon, things of daily use, human body, places of cultural importance, etc. Commonly, riddles bear a referential relationship with natural phenomena and things like rain, shadow, corn, pumpkin, etc.

For example, one riddle goes like this:

Vettiyalum vettuvatate, viravanti kallu, avanante?

Trans: Who does not split if you cut him, who is this (hero)?

Answer: *Neyalu* (shadow).

Referential relationship with animals like frog & fish is seen in some other riddles like:

Tantakkum tayakkum valilla, avanka pettetutta kuncilakku valuntu.

Trans: Father and mother have no tail, but their kid has.

Answer- *Tavala* (Frog).

Some other riddles have referential relationship with things of daily use like money, heath stone, matchbox, calendar, umbrella, etc., body parts are referred in some other riddles, for example:

Oru vattapparayilu ancuvirakuketta, avantan?

Trans: Five logs of wood on a round rock- What is it?

Answer: Palm.

Proverbs have their significance in any community to effectively speak of experiences and wisdom that each individual possesses and hence they form the main part of oral literature. These proverbs have great significance in the oral tradition of *Muthuvans* as these are used mainly by the elders of the community to advise and direct the younger ones and to teach moral values and virtues. In their

dialect, proverbs are called *Palamoli*. The need to act wisely in life is said in the example given below:

Attrakkaranukku arivu mattukam

Translation: The one who acts hastily is less wise.

Like riddles, proverbs too metaphorically convey one's experiences and wisdom in a sharp and concrete way. Proverbs are sometimes used with tales to give a moral message.

Traditional *Muthuvan* Economy, Modes of Production and Consumption

The life of the *Muthuvan* is sustained almost entirely by the tillage of the soil and the collection and extraction of forest resources. Thus the whole nature of *Muthuvan* culture can be understood best through the study of the background of the activities like agriculture and collection of forest resources which absorb so much of time and energy of everyone in the tribe. However, in the eyes of the *Muthuvans* the material aspects of his work in the field and in the forest are only one side of a process which involves also the interference of supernatural forces. The interference of supernatural forces, so essential for the success of all human endeavours, can be attained only through the performance of complex rites which interlink closely with the practical side of raising of crops. *Muthuvans* believe that any mistake or omission in ritual has damaging consequences such as bad judgment at sowing time, weeding, faulty rotation of crops or cereals, etc. Even the festivities and celebrations which fill many of the days of the slack agricultural season, when the *Muthuvan* is free from the daily toil in the field, are partly directed towards the attraction of supernatural aid, and the fertility of the seed grains is reinforced by the blessing of gods. Though agricultural works and the cult of deities and spirits are inextricably interwoven, the two would be described separately. The techniques and economics of cultivation, hunting collection of forest products, storage and marketing of crops and wild products, etc., are to be discussed in order to understand the traditional way of life of *Muthuvans*.

Food Habits

The staple food of the *Muthuvans* consist of *Kurumpullu* or *Keppa* or *ragi* (finger millet), rice, tapioca, various types of wild yams, locally available pulses and vegetables, maize, sweet potato, other wild roots and tubers, etc. The flour of *ragi* is cooked as gruel which is consumed in all seasons for the belief that it provides strength. In times of scarcity especially during summer, their diets are supplemented with a wide variety of wild roots and tubers including tapioca, sweet potato, etc. The *Muthuvans* eat flesh of fowl and sheep. Milk and milk products are consumed in a small quantity. Tea without milk and sugar is their favorite drink.

Generally the *Muthuvans* eat two meals a day, breakfast and dinner, at noon time they only drink tea. But there is no uniform pattern of consumption as they eat according to the availability of food stuffs either from farm produce or naturally from forest. They depend on springs, streams, rivers and rivulets for drinking water. However it is important to add that, despite deprivation and poverty (subjective), *Muthuvans* were comparatively less vulnerable to food or other forms of crises in the past because of their continued dependence on the forest. The habit of drinking intoxicants is very common. They drink toddy tapped from a wild palm tree. Almost all of the men from their teen ages begin to chew betel leaves mixed with tobacco, lime and areca nut.

Agriculture

The *Muthuvans* are originally the cultivators of the soil. A specific form of Neolithic production technique is characteristically practiced even today by the *Muthuvans* of hill forests of Idukki distinguished by skillful technique of 'slash and burn' which is ordinarily based on the agricultural side, coupled perhaps with some food collecting and perhaps with some reliance on domesticating animals. In the present millennia, more intensive agricultural systems have taken over the world. Slash and burn is now pre-eminently a technique through which

agricultural tribes around the world are notably represented, for example in the Congo Basin, Amazonia and Oceania also practices this technique.⁹³

Widely distributed all over the world, the practice of slash and burn agriculture is highly varied and in some locales marvelously intricate. Generally speaking, it is a seasonally regulated sequence of procedures designed to open up and bring under cultivation a patch of forest land. After one or two seasons of staple cropping the plot is neglected for years, usually with a view towards the restoration of the fertility of soil through reversion to forest, following which the area may be cleared again for another cycle of cultivation. As a minimal definition, 'slash and burn agriculture' applies where the customary interval of fallow exceeds the usual period of staple crop cultivation.

Iyer describe *Muthuvans* as 'nomadic agriculturalists' who cultivated *ragi* and paddy. The shifting of their cultivation took place in every two years. They cut down the secondary jungle or *cheppukad*, and after burning it off, sow *ragi* (finger millet) or where the rainfall is sufficient, hill-rice, which is weeded and tended by the women, the men contending themselves by trying to keep out the enemies especially the porcupine, wild boar, sambar and barking deer from their crops.⁹⁴ The agricultural work, start just after the *Tai pongal* festival in January. The selection of site was decided on the basis of the characteristics of the locality and also by the oracular declaration made by the priest on the occasion of *Taipongal* festival. The *Mooppan* or headman would allot the lands to each member; it was the headman's privilege to have the land retained by him cleared collectively, free of cost. Widows and incapacitated members of a settlement are also helped by the other members, especially by the members of the *Chavadi*. When the preparations are completed they make an offering to the ancestor spirits at their respective houses, and pray: "O ancestor spirits accept this rice offering and go, do not let elephants, panthers, porcupine or bears come near us".

⁹³ Marshal Sahlin, *Tribesmen*, Chicago, 1968, p. 29.

⁹⁴ L A Krishna Iyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 35 - 36.



Picture 11. **Slash and burn cultivation in Shedkudy**



Picture 12. **Tree House in Iruttalakudy, Chinnar**

One day before the clearing of prescribed forest lands for cultivation, they would gather in the field after a bath; then the *poosari* would cut three reeds. If they find the water inside the reeds clear, the site is considered suitable for cultivation; if not, they would move on to another site. Seeing bad omens also lead to the abandonment of a site. The sight of rat snakes, rats, a man coming with a flowing hair and wet clothes, etc., are considered as bad omens.⁹⁵

The jungle is cleared with the help of a billhook and the debris set afire. A spade (*mammatty*) is used for preparation of the land for cultivation. Ragi, paddy and vegetables are cultivated. If there is not enough rain, the *Muthuvans* perform *Kumbidal*, a kind of ritual to evoke the gods and ancestral spirits. *Muttu keppai* a variety of *ragi* which ripens early is harvested in September and the main *ragi* in November. Grains are stored in small temporary granaries. In some areas like Chinnar, where the rainfall is low and soil is clayish, they resort to terraced cultivation making the terrace ten to thirty feet broad down the hill side. They arrange the irrigation through bamboo pipes or split bamboo channels, the flow being from field to field.

The *Muthuvans* keep buffaloes and graze them on the mountain pastures. Quite a recent innovation is cattle or goat keeping to which a few *Muthuvans* have taken to recently, especially in the Chinnar region. A few had taken up milk production with the cows supplied to them by the Indo-Swiss cattle development project. During the initial period, when the guidance and assistance of the project authorities was immediately available, the scheme worked well, but later on, there was a tapering off. Families also keep fowls; they generally keep the eggs for hatching and sell the birds.

Hunting

Hunting is an important activity in the life of *Muthuvans*. The hunting party of *Muthuvans* consists of about five to ten members. They hunt wild boar,

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

porcupine, deer, nilgiri tahr, monkeys, jungle fowl, squirrels, etc. The flesh would be divided equally after the carcass was de-haired by singe over a fire. The liver, palms and feet of the animal were cut into small pieces, skewered and roasted. It was then offered on a leaf plate to the ancestor spirits with the following prayer: “Just as my parents, grandparents and their ancestors went in quest of food and lived by the spoils of the chase, may we be blessed with the same luck, if I am lucky, I shall offer you a share of the spoils before they are tasted by anyone else”.⁹⁶ The slices were then divided equally among those present.

The traps used by *Muthuvans* are varied according to the needs and there are three principal one, one of which looks like a big bow. It is fixed upright in the ground as a spring to close with a snap, a small upright triangle of sharp edged bamboo, to which it is connected and into which any small rabbit, squirrel or rat may have intruded its head, induced to do so by finding all other roads closed with a cunningly made fence. Another is a bent slapping, from which a loop of twine or fiber hangs on what appears to be the ground, but is really a little platform on which the jungle fowl treads and immediately find itself caught by both legs, and hanging in the air. The third one is very much the same, but of stouter build. The loop is upright and set in a hedge constructed for the purpose of keeping the fretful porcupine in the path, passing along which the beast unconsciously releases a pin, back flies the sapling and the porcupine is hung. They also use different techniques of fishing in the streams and rivers. The fish are caught in very beautifully made cruives and also on the hook. Fishing by poisoning the water with some vegetable matters prepared from palm nuts and other forest nuts were also practiced.

These types of hunting techniques were only found in the remembered past-the black Monkeys, Nilgiri tahr, Bison, jungle fowl, etc., are now protected by the

⁹⁶ In an interview with Vellayappan, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in April 2015.

rigid forest laws. Most of the forest areas in Idukki are classified as one sort of wild life reserve or national park. However, the *Muthuvans* continue, even now to trap small animals like rabbits, squirrels, quail, porcupines, fowl, etc., and also catch fish from the fresh waters. They are experts in killing small animals and birds with a blowpipe and dart.

Collection of Forest Products

Collection of forest products is the most important activity of the forest dwelling *Muthuvans*. They collect ginger, turmeric, *kunkiliam* (resin of *canarium strictum*), *ciyakka* (pod of *Acacia concinna*), *mattipal* (exudates of *Ailanthus malabaricum*), honey, bees wax, edible tubers, etc. The *Muthuvans* are experts in distinguishing among many varieties of honey according to the season and the flowers from which the bees had foraged. The most highly valued honey was that collected by the smaller bees from the *kurinchi* (*strobilanthes* spp), which flowers gregariously once in twelve years, and the flowering has been celebrated in the epics of the post Sangam age.⁹⁷ The honey is somewhat blue in color and has a distinctive flavor.

Wild cardamom is the item which yields the maximum income to the *Muthuvan* families. Under convention, the forest department had allowed the communities to collect the wild cardamom growing in the areas allocated to each, on a 'permanent' basis. By observation and experimentation, the *Muthuvans* vegetatively propagated culms from high yielding individual plants and thus raised the productivity as well as availability of the commodity.

Prior to 1975, traders from Tamil Nadu used to take over the entire produce, and exchanged them with all sorts of items including transistor radios. Being ignorant, the *Muthuvan* were made to believe that the value of items given to them were more than that of the cardamom. So keeping them perpetually in a 'debt trap' was easy. During the period of emergency, the Forest department

⁹⁷ Quoted from, Madhava Menon, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

prevented the access of traders to the forest and tribal settlements. In 1975, government formed the Girijan Service Co - operative Society and the society took over the charge of collection of forest products. The Girijan Co - operative Society then undertook the monopoly sale of the cardamom collected by the tribal communities. Value realization immediately improved, and many *Muthuvan* families became affluent. Now, even though the efficiency of the Society has suffered a setback and it has lost its monopoly hold, the *Muthuvan* know the value of the crop, and are not easily cheated. Several of them trade the cardamom directly in the auction markets. A number of them have bank savings and assets including gold ornaments.

Conclusion

The chapter has attempted a thorough reading of *Muthuvan* life in all its ramifications and scientifically analyzed the social organization, life practices, justice system, language, modes of production, material culture, their peculiar adaptation to the environment to which they belong, etc. The knowledge that emerges from it is clear from the chapter that the *Muthuvan* constitute a unique and distinctive cultural entity.

Yet they are not simply 'exotic tribes' even though they are isolated from the larger society around them in a geographical sense. Their language is Dravidian, related to Tamil-Malayalam sharing a common ancestry in the remote past. They have traditional practice and customary procedures to take decisions and administer justice. The religion, Gods, ancestral worship, etc., remain as fundamental concerns to the community. We can observe hierarchy and purity which dominate over all others when we examine the nature of their rituals and cult. Every element is hierarchically graded and higher the ritual status of an element, the greater must be its ritual purity and the care taken to prevent its pollution. These notions also permeate the data on different ceremonies depicted in the chapter. The interpretation of *Muthuvan* ritual is another matter. More often

than not, these people have preserved the mechanics without the meaning of their rites and as yet we cannot discover a single reliable exegete among them.⁹⁸ Any attempt to explain the symbolism of particular rites must involve conjecture and it seems that in most of the cases, the guess work is almost dangerous and invalid as the speculations of those earlier enthusiastic seekers after *Muthuvan* society.

⁹⁸ When asked the question, "Why do you perform these rituals?" The reply of some Muthuvan youths was "they are necessary ritual acts and are unavoidable". But there was not a clear explanation on the objectives of such rituals.

CHAPTER - IV

EXTERNAL IMPACTS AND PERMEATIONS IN *MUTHUVAN* LIFE

For thousands of years, many primitive tribes in India persisted in forests and hills without having more than casual contacts with the population of the open plains and the centers of civilization. During pre - colonial period, a military campaign extending for a short spell into the vastness of tribal country would bring the inhabitants temporarily to the notice of kings, princes and chroniclers, but for long periods there was frictionless 'co-existence' between the tribal folks and the caste-oriented Hindu society in the truest sense of the word".¹ The forest and botanical wealth of India has existed for millions of years and the so called 'Indian aboriginal people' or 'the tribes' have been enjoying the freedom as the 'natives of forests'. This state of affairs continued happily until about the beginning of the nineteenth century. The East India Company and the British Government started thinking on new lines, realizing the importance of expensive timber of its colonial territories. Meanwhile various geological and botanical surveys led to the discovery of various minerals and important flora respectively. This gave rise to the question of problem and management of forest. The forest became important in the political and administrative affairs.

Realizing the importance of forests for their wild life and botanical wealth and also their relationship with soil, moisture, rainfall and general environment, it was decided by the administrators and rulers to extend their authority and control to these hitherto neglected parts of the territory. The physical isolation of most of the aboriginal tribes drew to an end when the modern means of communication - planned roads and railways introduced by the British in the late nineteenth and

¹ Christoph Von Furer Heimendorf, *Tribes and Hindu Society*, New Delhi, 1971, p. 24.

early twentieth century. The period also witnessed the sudden growth in the country's population.² Land hungry peasants of the plains invaded the sparsely populated tribal regions throughout India. The extension of law and order to areas which in earlier days had been virtually un-administered, enabled traders, money lenders and a host of administrators, social workers, etc., to establish themselves in these tribal lands. It can comfortably be generalized that whenever or wherever a primitive tribe living in the deep forests came in contact with the outsiders, they were in one way or another exploited and deprived by the machinations of the so called civilized people who were cunning and professional in their approach. The plight of the poor and vulnerable *Muthuvans* is the best evidence for the negative effects of greed and exploitation of the so called modern civilization *vis a vis* the tribes.

The *Muthuvans* have been living in intimate relationship with the forests and its environment. Forests had been sustaining these tribal inhabitants being the abode and source of their livelihood. *Muthuvans* collect food, fruits, edible roots, herbs and honey from the forests and their traditional economy is mainly built around these forest produce. Their religious and magical beliefs too revolve round the forests. Many of the flora and fauna have been the objects of worship for the tribes due to one reason or the other. No less important is the fact that the *Muthuvans* achieved a harmony between their lives and the forest environment.

The *Muthuvans* ties with the forests go back to time immemorial. They had enjoyed freedom to use the forests, in whatever manner they like, to such an extent that they had developed a conviction that they belonged to the forests and the forests belonged to them. Hence, any move to restrict this freedom had always been resented by the *Muthuvans*. Such restrictive interventions on their freedom began with the activities of the British to influence the forest administration and forest policies of the native state of Travancore.

² Richard P Tucker and J F Richards (eds.), *Global Deforestation and the Nineteenth Century World Economy*, London, 1983, p. 15.

Colonial Penetration into the *Muthuvan* Land

For long periods of history, the *Muthuvans* were living in the high ranges of Western Ghats, preventing the intrusion of the outside world into their homeland and protecting their culture from the urban mainstream society's dominant culture. In their long drawn battle to protect their culture, they rooted themselves in the remote interiors of the forest to live as collectors of forest products and as agriculturists. However, changes gradually occurred in the harmonic endogamous social system of the *Muthuvans*. In an endogamous system, major structural changes could take place only through external pulls.³ The external pulls can be effective only if the system has effective linkages with the external dominant culture.⁴ That means a system's contact with the dominant culture of the outside world would influence their tribal culture and identity. The chapter attempts to portray the external interventions in the highlands of Idukki which affected the existing land relations of the *Muthuvans* who lived in the area, poised - still a little uneasily - between old and new; conservatism and change.

Manavikrama Kulasekhara who reached Vadakkumkur as a refugee from the Pandyan kingdom purchased a tract of land next to the hills known as Poonjar from the Thekkumkur Raja.⁵ Later Manavikrama Kulasekhara obtained all the rights of a king. During the fifteenth century an extensive area of High ranges, stretching from Peermede to Devicolam which form a major portion of the present day Idukki district was under the control of the Poonjar Raja. The Poonjar kingdom became a part of Travancore when Thekkumkur and Vadakkumkur were annexed by Marthanda Varma in 1749 - 1750.⁶ After that this region was part of the Travancore State and its history was associated with the history of Travancore. The Dutch East India Company was attracted by the varied spices of the High Ranges in Idukki. In the early period of the Dutch East India Company, they

³ Francis Brecks, *Sociology of Kinship: Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction*, London, 1988, p. 11.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ K K N Kurup, *Land Alienation and Tribals of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1988, p. 89.

⁶ *Ibid.*

succeeded in establishing trade contacts with the Thekkumkur Rajas for spices like pepper, cinnamon, cardamom, etc.

The geographical areas of interest of the Europeans in Travancore was the high ranges of present day Idukki district, a region of escarpments and tangled forests so dramatic that traditionally only tribes had inhabited its mountainsides and river valleys. Then the British planters appeared here in the region. The outsiders who encroached there at first were a closely knit network of British missionaries, planters and officials interested in both immediate profits and retirement homes. In 1817 - 1820, Ward and Conner conducted the first survey on the forest areas of Travancore.⁷ Following this survey a forest conservator was appointed for the first time in the history of Travancore state. Till the beginning of the nineteenth century, cardamom was not cultivated on a large scale. It was considered as a forest product and the tribes were the collectors of cardamom and other forest products. In 1823, with the advice of the British, the Travancore government started a separate cardamom department. John Joseph Murphy was the first European planter who constructed the cardamom plantations at an organized level.⁸ He established the first cardamom estate in Pambadumpara in the Udumbanchola Taluk with an area of 1400 acres. Later estates were started in Santhanpara, Vandan medu, Kumili, Anavilasom, etc. His efforts were to raise cardamom, so far considered as a wild produce in Travancore, into an organized plantation crop. The thick canopy, one of the major hurdles in raising any crop on a plantation was a blessing in disguise as cardamom need heavy shade. He also tried his hand at growing pepper and later in Yendayar, he successfully experimented rubber cultivation in an organized manner for the first time in Kerala.

⁷ M Mohandas, *Impact of New Settlers in the Western Ghat Region on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Tribal Population*, Wayanad, 1992, pp. 46-48.

⁸ *Ibid.*

Henry Baker, the son of an Anglican missionary who had arrived in the Travancore low lands in 1819, had been working with tribes in the lower hills since 1843. Travancore government started granting 'waste' or uncultivated hill lands to planters in the 1860's with the directions of the Conservator of Forests. By this programme, large areas of land under free grants went to Baker. Many planters moved in from Ceylon due to the coffee disaster there. They were attracted by the virgin lands of the Travancore hills. British officials too were equally interested in investment opportunities in the plantation process.

In Travancore, the plantation era started in the early 1860s. In 1862, the first clearing for coffee was made and in 1865 the government published rules allowing the sale of lands for the purpose of cultivating coffee and other crops. Much land was in the form of free grants.⁹ By 1893, roughly 40,000 acres of land in Travancore had been sold for the purpose of coffee cultivation. However coffee was facing major problems. A leaf wilt disease had begun to affect the plantations in the 1870's and by 1880 the disease combined with low prices and foreign competition had caused cultivation to be suspended on many plantations.¹⁰ Planters then turned to tea. Most of the large tea estates in the High ranges were started in the last two decades of 19th century.¹¹ At that time vast areas of forest were given to British planters in lease by the Travancore state. In 1877, the Poonjar kings granted permission to the British company under John Daniel Munro, grandson of Colonel John Munro, the first British diplomatic representative to the court of Travancore, to start a coffee plantation in the Peermade hills at an area of 227square miles. This move was sanctioned by the Travancore Raja in 1879. Munro formed the North Travancore Planting and Agricultural Society in 1879. It was handed over to the Finlay and More Company

⁹ Thomas Fulton Bourdillon, *Report on the Forest of Travancore*, Trivandrum, 1892, p.17.

¹⁰ Heather Lovatt, *A Short History of the Peermade Vandiperiyar Plantation District*, London, 1970, p.9.

¹¹ S Playne, *Southern India:Its History, People, Commerce and Industrial Resources*, London, 1915.

in 1895 and they formed the Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company in 1897. The estate constructed by John Daniel Munro in 1870's remained under the British for eighty years in the banner of Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company.¹²

In London, the Companies Act of 1862, led to a change from many small family firms in the import sector to the concentration of capital in limited liability corporations with hired management.¹³ Similarly in Kerala, as the century wore on, individual tea estates in the early years which were relatively modest in size, usually between two hundred and five hundred acres began to be dominated by a few large firms, often with corporate connections to estates in the hills of Ceylon as well.¹⁴ Large scale capitalization had not mattered decisively in the earlier years when coffee plantations were being set up, for hill wasteland had cost little or nothing, cultivation and processing could tolerate unskilled labor and work was only seasonal; coffee plantations in Idukki as elsewhere could be competitive in international markets even on a very small scale. But with tea, the process was different; maintenance of the tea plants, harvesting the leaves and processing them for the market are all year - round activities and require considerably more specialized skills. With more capital at their disposal, corporate planters were better able to finance the change from coffee to tea and organize stable labor recruitment from intensely populated Tamil districts of Madras. Typical of the new twentieth century agricultural economy was the Travancore Tea Estate Company, which began in 1897 with a capital base of 150,000 pounds. With that core, it consolidated several family estates and opened new areas as well, clearing the high forest as it went.¹⁵

British planters aggressively lobbied the governments whose land policies concerned them. As early as 1874, they founded the Peermade Planters Association. In the year 1880, the association held an annual Planters Week in

¹² Heather Lovatt, *op. cit.*, p.10.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ M Mohandas, *op.cit.*, p.51.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

Travancore, with the *Raja* presiding over its discussions. Similar efforts were ripened farther north and in the adjacent Nilgiri Hills as well, culminating in the United Planters Conference in 1893, while local associations merged to form the United Planters Association of South India. In Travancore as well as the districts under the direct control of Madras Presidency, the tea and coffee interest lobbied systematically for liberalized wasteland sale regulations and tighter labor control laws. The major result of the planters lobbying was its environmental impact: *rapid forest clearance to make room for tea, especially in Central Travancore*. The conditions of the labor force in plantations during these years varied somewhat, but most planters resisted reforms imposed by the government just as their colleagues in Assam did.¹⁶ In 1896, under the pressure of British, the Travancore government gave up the property right at cardamom by imposing the land tax which did not benefit the traditional collectors of the wild cardamom like the *Muthuvans* but it favoured the British who established large Cardamom plantations.

What losses in the land resources and life did this trend imply? In the early days of coffee planting, little was known about which soils and drainage patterns were most favourable for the bushes, or which climatic conditions were necessary in order to ensure financially viable operations. Plantations were attempted at elevations over the entire spectrum from 400 to 4000 feet and from the fertile alluvial soil, so thin and lateritic that they were used by the tribals for their light shifting cultivation. Many of the early plantations failed financially, their lands reverting to second - growth scrub forest with severely damaged vegetation.

More alarming still was the effect of de-forestation on the higher hills, which constituted the watersheds both of the series of rivers which flow westward and of the great Cauvery river system to the east. As hill tops were stripped of their trees, rivers began flooding more severely during the rains and drying up

¹⁶ See, *The Report of Royal Commission on Labour in India* (Whitley Commission), Calcutta, 1931, Chapter 19, pp. 203-206. Also see, D V Rege, *Report on an Enquiry into the Conditions of Labour in Plantations of India*, New Delhi, 1950, pp. 34-35.

sooner in the dry season. Moreover, their flood waters carried increasingly high loads of silt into lowland channels. Beginning with the pioneering forester and natural historian Hugh Cleghorn, only a few voices warned of disastrous erosion, land slides and flooding stream beds as high ranges were stripped off their forests.¹⁷ The combined appearance of coffee and tea transformed wide areas of Kerala's middle hills into plantation mono crops by the first years of twentieth century.

After long years of uncontrolled plantation activities in the High ranges, finally in 1913, the Travancore government passed its first law limiting the extent of tea and coffee planting.¹⁸ By this Law, there was to be no new cultivation within fifty yards of any stream bed and within one-fourth mile of the crest of any hill; nor was the grazing of livestock to be allowed in natural second-growth forests since that would severely inhibit re-growth of the vegetation. This law was generally ignored in practice for many years, but at least it provided first legal precedent and an ecological standard for later governments to follow. But coffee and tea cultivation still continued dominating the lands of High ranges. Two of the main plantation areas were centered on Peermade and Munnar. By 1914 the Kannan Devan Hill Produce Company owned 26 estates and had 17300 acres of tea, most of that near Munnar. A variety of smaller European owned estates ranging from a few hundred to several thousand acres were established in the Peermade and Munnar area.

Although the Travancore government was concerned with the issue of limiting encroachments and forest clearing as an objective to obtain full revenue from the lands, these incompatible objectives were held away during the different periods. Encroachments were common. This was the ambiguous environmental legacy of Travancore. Like most colonialists regions, the British in Idukki expanded the agricultural lands at the expense of a forest mantle which had once

¹⁷ Hugh Francis Clarke Cleghorn, *The Forests and Gardens of India*, London, 1861, p. 22.

¹⁸ Heather Lovatt, *op.cit.*, p.78.

been far greater than the needs of its local human population. European legal institutions and technology accompanied the intercontinental market economy in penetrating even Remote Mountain and jungle lands, turning forests into commodities. In this transformation of forests, Planters, traders and landlords were benefited while tribes and local labor force in the plantation were deeply affected and clearly suffered.

How these plantation processes affected the life of *Muthuvans* and other tribal groups? Before the beginning of the plantations in 1870, the High ranges of Idukki were covered by thick forest. The region was the main habitation of different tribal groups like *Muthuvan*, *Mannan*, *Malapulayas*, *Uralis*, *Malayarans*, *Malapandaram*, etc., where they lived their life by establishing their own settlements and regions of control. Actually these forests were occupied and owned by these aboriginal groups long before the intervention of the Europeans into the forests of Travancore. They planned to exploit these forest lands and resources by the tactics of admiring the native kings as the real owners of land and making them their allies. When the British planned to exploit the hilly regions of Idukki, by making alliance with the Travancore *Rajas* and native rulers of Poonjar, the lands which were owned and occupied by the tribal's for centuries were put under the ownership and control of the native rulers on the directions of the British. The British never considered the tribe and their hereditary ownership of land. The Travancore *Rajas* who supported the British colonial views and policies also followed the same methods. The British then made a tactical move by entering into agreements with these rulers and occupied the lands for lease agreements.

The Travancore rulers also introduced some laws regarding the ownership of the forests which destroyed the full freedom that was enjoyed by the *Muthuvan* and other tribal groups. The royal order made cardamom, a valuable forest produce as the state property led to the loss of the tribal rights over the forest produces. In 1896, under the pressure of the British, the Travancore government

gave up the property right over cardamom by imposing land tax but it only benefited the British cardamom planters and the Tamil planters who also started cardamom cultivation in the region.

The regions in which the British started tea plantations were the nerve centers of *Muthuvan* tribal life. When the tea plantations encroached into the *Muthuvan* lands and the forests were cleared and destroyed, they lost their traditional modes of life like gathering, cattle rearing, hunting, shifting cultivation, etc. British planters used the *Muthuvans* for preparing initial facilities for plantations such as clearing of forest, construction of sheds for nurseries, to guard the crops from wild animals, etc. The *Muthuvans* thus became the laborers in their own homeland. British Planters brought permanent labourers from Madurai district of Tamil Nadu and low ranges of Kerala and settled them in the estates. The Tamil planters also brought daily laborers from Tamil Nadu on a large scale. At this time, in 1886 the British constructed a rope way from Korangini to top station.¹⁹

In 1900 the first hydro-electric project in Kerala was started in Pallivasal.²⁰ In 1910 another hydro-electric project was started at Periyar Canal and followed by this other hydro - electric projects were started in Mattupetty, Chellapetty, Vaguvarai, Kannimala, etc.²¹ They also constructed roads between Aluva and Munnar and between Iravikulam and Kodaikanal. All these activities of British resulted in the loss of vast areas of land owned and enjoyed by the *Muthuvans* for centuries and they were shifted and isolated to deep forests of Chinnar, Marayur and Edamalakudi which are situated near to present day Tamil Nadu. All these moves ended the freedom that was enjoyed by the *Muthuvans* who had settled in the fertile areas of the forest centuries back. Their freedom of movement and freedom to collect the wild cardamom and other forest produce were curtailed by

¹⁹ State Central Archives, Trivandrum, Cover Files, Bundle 28, File No: 112, 1886.

²⁰ *Ibid*, Bundle 36, File No: 45, 1900.

²¹ *Ibid*, Bundle 52, File No: 86, 1910.

Law. Hence, in the newly formed estates which were once the lands of the tribal's, the restrictions imposed profoundly affected their means of life and modes of production. A geographical marginalization and isolation of the *Muthuvans* occurred in the high range region of Idukki due to the British plantation process.

Restrictions Imposed through the Forest Policies

Thus it was in 1894, that the first forest policy was enunciated in India. The forest policy of 1894, which is considered as the oldest one in this category, as given in the Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission states, "The sole object with which state forests are administered is the public benefit. In some cases the public to be benefited are the whole body of tax - payers; in others the people of the tract with which the forest is situated; but in almost all cases the constitution and preservation of a forest involve, in greater or lesser degree, the regulation of rights and the restriction of privileges of user in the forest area which may have previously been enjoyed by the inhabitants of its immediate neighbourhood. This regulation and restriction are justified only when the advantage to be gained by the public is great; and the cardinal principle to be observed is that the rights and privileges of individuals must be limited..."

In this way, it was only in 1894 that forest officials seriously appeared on the scene and claimed authority to limit and regulate tribal rights. From this juncture onward, the extension of governmental authority has been the root cause of resentment and restlessness among the tribal people of India. This policy classified forests into four categories.

1. Forests, the preservation of which was essential on climatic or physical grounds.
2. Forests, which afforded a supply of valuable timber for commercial purposes.
3. Minor forests; and
4. Pasture lands.

The Travancore *Girijan* Law, 1911²²

The Travancore government passed the *Girijan* Law in 1911 with an aim to occupy the tribal lands for the sake of availing land for European planters. The Law of 1911 was the first strong move of the Travancore government to occupy/own control over the land possessed by the tribal people of high ranges. By this law, the Forest department formed under the Travancore government started imposing control over the free movement of the tribes through the forest. The forest lands were demarcated with the name reserve Forest under the control and supervision of forest department. The Law declared that the tribes will not get land ownership in the reserve forest. The order was the clear evidence of the government move to alienate and marginalize the *Muthuvans* and other tribes from their homeland. The *Girijan* Laws again tried to restrict and control the migration and re-settlement of tribe with the provision that a tribe who is settled at one place be registered at the forest division of the region. The leader of the settlement should submit an annual report on the details of all the families and persons who inhabit in the settlement every year. If a tribal man or family wants to shift from one settlement to another, they will have to seek permission from the settlement leader. The law also made provisions to demarcate and decide the boundaries of each settlement which was a new experiment to the *Muthuvans* who considered the whole forest as their own. The *Girijan* law allowed the shifting of settlement only during the time of drought and epidemics. The law also banned the cutting of royal woods and clearing of reserve forests.

Even though the Travancore government published the Law as a means to protect the reserve forests and the forest lands, the real intention behind the law was the occupation of total control of the vast tribal lands in the high ranges of Idukki by restricting the tribes to a limited area granted by the government. By this law, the Europeans and the Migrant planters from Tamil Nadu could expand their

²² See, Travancore State, *Travancore Girijan Law - 1911*, Trivandrum, 1911.

plantations by occupying the tribal regions in Munnar, Udumbanchola, Mankulam, etc.

The Settlement Phase (1940 - 1965) and the Loss of Tribal Lands

During the early 1920s severe food shortage occurred throughout Travancore. Food shortages and famine (1941-1944) led to increased demand for the opening of large forest areas for food cultivation. In response to these needs, the government opened forest lands on an emergency basis for food cultivation and encouraged encroachments. Large migrations particularly by Syrian Christians of Central Travancore took place to the high ranges of Idukki.²³ In 1941, the Travancore government granted exclusive cultivation rights (known as *Kuthakapattam*) in the forest areas of the State.²⁴ Five acres of land could be distributed to individuals for food cultivation on a short term lease (*Kuthakapattam*) basis. The land grants by the government were temporary leases and no permanent improvements were allowed. In 1944, the Conservator of Forests reported that roughly 13,600 acres of reserved forests throughout the state were offered for cultivation. Encroachments on forest land went on unhindered during this time.

The first major migration by Syrian Christians into high sections of the Western Ghats occurred in the 1940's.²⁵ Between 1931 and 1951 as many as 70000 Christians have migrated from Central Travancore to forest areas in the Western Ghats of Malabar. Most of these migrations occurred in the period from 1940 -1950 from areas of Kottayam and Thodupuzha. By the time of the country's Independence in 1947, the stage was set for widespread settlement in the High Range areas. All that was needed was a catalyst to open the areas. Post -

²³ P Sivadas, "Land Hunger and De - Forestation: Case Study of Cardamom Hills in Kerala", in *EPW*, Vol.XXI, No. 13, 1986, pp. 546-550.

²⁴ C Chandrasekharan, *Forest Resources of Kerala: A Qualitative Assessment*, Trivandrum, 1976, p.81.

²⁵ P K Michael Tharakan, "Dimensions and Characteristics of the Migration of Farmers from Travancore to Malabar 1930 - 1950", in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, 5 (8), Trivandrum, 1978, p. 56.

independence politics provided this catalyst. The 'grow more food' campaigns (1941- 50) and the migrations of Syrian Christians to high Ranges had exposed a wide section of the small holder population to the idea that cultivation in the High Ranges, even if not easy, was at least possible.

Even after the post independent state organization period brought with it a revival of the Tamil - Malayali tussle for control of the High Ranges. The government of Travancore-Cochin initiated settlement programmes in the high range areas in order to shift the regional linguistic balance. More importantly, the government and politicians encouraged or at least turned a blind eye to Syrian Christian encroachments until the process of State reorganization was completed. Pattom A Thanu Pillai, the former Chief Minister of Travancore - Cochin who had started a colonization scheme made it clear that, the colonization scheme was a major reason why High Range area was to remain in Kerala. The goal of High Range colonization scheme was to settle 8000 families on 50000 acres of land at four sites in the lands adjacent to present day Tamilnadu.²⁶ Each family was to be given financial assistance plus 5 acres, the remaining land was for common use. The total settlement goal had never been reached, however, a number of settlement colonies could be set up. The Kallar Pattom colony near Nedumkandam is the largest settlement and contains roughly 1300 families. Other colonies contain less than 100 families each.²⁷

As in the case of grow more food campaigns, large scale forest encroachment accompanied the High Range colonization schemes also. Farmers living near the Kallar colony say that while families who came on the scheme, a much larger number preferred to occupy the land in adjacent areas. The people who came at first were often relatives or friends of the colonists, but later many others also came as well. The high Range area was included in the new State of

²⁶ *Vide*, Government of Kerala, *Status Paper on Idukki District*, Trivandrum, 1982, p. 232.

²⁷ *Ibid*.

Kerala but, in the process huge areas of forest land were encroached, cleared and brought under cultivation.

The tribes of Marayoor also faced the consequences of encroachment. Earlier, the lands of Marayoor having irrigation and water facilities were in the hands of the *Muthuvans* and other tribal groups. But gradually the migrants and encroachers had occupied these fertile lands and started the plantations of areca nut and sugar cane. The remaining areas were demarcated as Sandal Reserve Forests by the Government. The *Muthuvans* who lost their lands tried to settle down in the wet regions of Chinnar Wild Life Sanctuary but were driven out by the forest officials. The authorities forced them to settle down in the dry lands of Marayoor and Chinnar with very little annual rainfall. Thus the *Muthuvans* of the region were forced to live in the lonely rain shadow region in Kerala with an annual rainfall of 75 cm.

As soon as State reorganization had been completed, the government attempted to evict unauthorized settlers and those whose leases had expired. Politicians and officials profited from illegal land distribution. Government departments could do little to control encroachment in the context, even when inclined to do so. Widespread evictions proved impossible in the political context of the newly formed Kerala State. As Catholics dominated in the settler groups, eviction could be interpreted as having a communal element. Furthermore in Kerala politics, minorities have substantial power. Attempts at eviction led to the gradual recognition at the state level of the political power of the settlers in the high ranges. This culminated in the fall of the Congress government in 1964 and the formation of the Kerala Congress Party, a party to represent the farmers and settlers of High Ranges.

Since 1964, the right of the settlers to occupy lands in the High Ranges has never been seriously threatened. Titles had been granted to some settlers; others occupy lands under a lease agreement and others have no legal right to lands. Few settlers still live in great fear of eviction. Encroachments have been regularized in

1976 except in a few blatant cases of encroachment in which few evictions have occurred. The government is still attempting to regularize the encroachments and settlements that occurred till 1st January 1977 and hoping to grant title, despite the requirement of central concurrence contained in the Forest Conservation Act of 1980.

The massive deforestation and degradation of natural resources took place in the high ranges of Idukki from the eighteenth century which adversely and immediately affected the local tribes of the region. These original inhabitants of the forest lived inside or at the periphery of forest land dependent completely on its resources for their subsistence. Of these tribes, *Muthuvans* was one of the numerically dominant groups. With the degradation of forests, indiscriminate encroachments, etc., lives of these tribes had deteriorated as the socio - economic and cultural systems are interlinked with the ecology of the forest.²⁸ During the period between 1850 and 1980, majority of the forests in Idukki region were cleared for the purposes mentioned above.

In the past the *Muthuvans* remained isolated from the mainstream of national life perhaps due to their innate desire for self - sufficiency. The *Muthuvans* who like to live in isolation, deep in the forests and away from the mainstream of life, had their own traditional social fabric and culture. They retained their traditions and values even though they were found inconsistent with modern life. They used the available natural resources sparingly and with utmost care. They practiced shifting cultivation and subsisted by the collection of forest produce. *Muthuvans* remained outside governmental control for long due to their inaccessible and perilous site of habitation. Subsequently, with the multi pronged interventions of modernity and the growing contact with outsiders *Muthuvan* life and society were impacted with far reaching consequences. There was an upheaval in their traditional outlook as they were exposed to the alien features of modern

²⁸ V Anitha and P K Muraleedharan, "Joint Forest Management, Hope on the Horizon", in Kerala Forest Research Institute, *Evergreen*, No.5, Peechi, 2007.

life which brought about changes in their socio- economic and cultural life. The effects of external interventions and deforestation and degradation of natural resources on *Muthuvans* were as follows:

- (a) Destruction of traditional life support systems of the *Muthuvans* and the consequent socio - cultural alienation.
- (b) The conflict between the ‘*Muthuvans*’ (for whom the forest is a life support system) and the ‘outsiders’ (for whom forest is only a source of raw materials) leading ultimately to the displacement and alienation of *Muthuvan* people. For example, development projects for national interest like big dams (Idukki dam, Pallivasal hydro - electric project, Neriamangalam, etc.), roads, plantations, etc., resulted in massive displacement of *Muthuvans* from their natural vegetation.
- (c) Physical deterioration by a change in the nutritional content of the food.
- (d) Land alienation, poverty, indebtedness, etc., due to total lack of education, awareness, bargaining power, etc.

One of the most prominent problems faced by the *Muthuvans* was the increased land alienation due to the large scale influx of settlers from the plains of Malabar and Travancore.

Post - Independence Situation: Not much Changes

The transfer of political and administrative power from Britain to an independent government in India in 1947 did not bring sudden alterations to the Tribal ways of life. Consequently one of the worst forms of exploitation to which tribal people are still exposed is through traditional money lending. The chronic indebtedness had been, and is still, probably the most difficult problem faced by almost all tribal population in India. Reliable ethnographic evidences prove that the *Muthuvans* were certainly not gravely handicapped in their struggle for living a free life as many of their places of habitation were isolated and devoid of middlemen and contractors. In such a situation they could develop a self - sufficient economic life and conditions. Forest wealth was at their disposal to

sustain them. Unfortunately when their abodes were thrown open in the name of development in the form of plantations, migrations from low land, indiscriminate encroachments, etc., they found themselves completely ill - equipped to enjoy the fruits of modernity and development. Outsiders, the so called civilized people, exploited their vulnerability in the absence of any strong efforts from the part of administrators to protect these hapless people. The chronic indebtedness presently seen among the *Muthuvans* is certainly due to a disruption in traditional life styles leading to rampant poverty and deficit economy. With the passage of time, their plight continued to worsen and they were marginalized to the near pathetic condition in which we find them today.

Although we have little scientific statistical data about the extent of indebtedness among *Muthuvans*, it is obvious that the size of the problem is enormous. Indebtedness among the *Muthuvans* not only has economic dimensions but have social and psychological too.²⁹ For a large number, happiness and peace desert them, for others it makes the entire system impervious to hope. Among a large number of *Muthuvans* indebtedness has nowadays become an unavoidable and thus a normal phenomenon of their existence. Following are some of the important reasons of indebtedness common to almost all the affected persons.³⁰

1. Loss of cultivation due to frequent raids by wild animals like porcupine, wild boar, elephants, etc.
2. Poor and primitive modes of cultivation resulting in deficit production.
3. Illiteracy and Ignorance.
4. Expenditure beyond their means due to extravagant spending on rituals and ceremonies at the time of marriage, death, fairs, festivals, etc.
5. Adherence to the decision of *Orumurai* or *Oorukkoottam* regarding fines for fear of excommunication.

²⁹ In an Interview with Kurian Joseph, TEO, Adimali, in February, 2013.

³⁰ In an Interview with A Vijayan, Forest Guard, Edamalakudi in April 2011.

Due to these inter - woven reasons, a *Muthuvan* is always in need of money and thus becomes an easy victim of exploitation by unscrupulous money lenders and middlemen. Small amounts borrowed at usurious rates of interest from time to time transform into a sum beyond his capacity to repay and what little he earns or possess through land is snatched by the money lender. When we observe the settlements in Edamalakudi Panchayath where the *Muthuvans* traditionally engaged in cardamom cultivation in the reserve forest areas, the cardamom traders were continuously exploiting them for a long time and paying only a nominal price to their products. There are several reasons for their exploitation and economic backwardness even if they are getting a good harvest of cardamom. They do not have any bank account or savings as they spent their earnings lavishly for festivals and rituals. They usually borrow money from the cardamom traders in advance to meet the expenses of social obligations like marriage, puberty ceremony, etc. On many occasions, the traders themselves play the role of money lenders as well, advance loans for cultivation and for consumption at exorbitant rate of interest on the understanding that the poor and innocent *Muthuvan* should repay the amount in the form of cardamom and minor forest produce they collect. The *Muthuvans* who were totally unaware of the original market price of the cardamom or other forest produces were exploited easily by the money lenders who collect their produces by calculating the prices of commodities very much lower than the existing price.

Apart from borrowing in cash, a system of borrowing in kind is also in vogue in many parts of the *Muthuvan* settlements in Chinnar, Neriamangalam, etc. Under this system the needy person take seeds on loans at the time of sowing and return thrice or even four times the original quantity at the time of harvest. Grain taken for consumption at any time during the year is also returned at the time of harvest at this rate. Thus during the harvesting time he would have to surrender a major portion of the crop or sometimes the whole crop to the money lender. In some cases the creditor purchases the whole crops in advance even before cultivation at very low rates.

Role of Money Lenders in *Muthuvan* Life

It is essential to study the role of traditional money lenders especially from Tamilnadu to understand the failure of various government and semi - government credit agencies to wean away the *Muthuvans* from these traditional sources of credit. The modus operandi of a traditional money lender is very simple and convenient to a tribal debtor.³¹ He is the man on the spot and ever present on the scene. Whenever a *Muthuvan* need money for whatever reason he has to walk directly to the money lender, where he is always welcome - day in and day out. The money lender will give him money without any securities, guarantees or guarantor since an average *Muthuvan* has very little to offer in the way of movable or immovable property.³² All that he has with him is his honest desire to fulfill his loan obligations out of his earnings from the small land that he may possess. By way of any formality the only thing a debtor has to do is to affix his thumb impression on a blank piece of paper or under a draft which he cannot read.³³ The personal contact and the relationship that a money lender maintains with his debtor is also a significant factor. He speaks to the *Muthuvans* in their own language; knows the entire family history and background and circumstances leading to the debtor's need for money. At some time or the other practically almost all the families in a settlement are indebted to him.

Now compare this procedure with other sources of credit like co - operative credit societies and banks at the state and national level. Most of these are found to be situated at far places from the *Muthuvan* habitat.³⁴ He has to encounter a number of formalities, cumbersome proceeding and documentation. Besides, security and guarantor are also needed to fulfill various provisions of credit disbursement.³⁵ Normally there is a time lag of at least a week between the date of

³¹In an interview with Easwaran P, a Moneylender in Marayur, on March, 2011.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ In an interview with Chellamuthu, a *Muthuvan* at Periyakudi, Marayur in May, 2011.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

application and date of disbursement of loan. Apart from all these hurdles, the government sponsored credit societies and banks advance loans for only productive purposes like improvement in cultivation, purchase of implements, soil conservation, etc., but the poor *Muthuvans* need loans for consumption and subsistence and also to fulfill various social and ritual obligations. The money lender places no conditions and offers loan for any purposes.

Consequences of Money Lending

Since most of the *Muthuvan* people are illiterate, they do not have any idea of what is being entered in the account book of the money lender. They put their thumb impression very submissively wherever desired by the money lender and that seals their fate forever. In many cases, transactions are oral and they cannot afford to approach a court of law for seeking redress. Even those transactions which are recorded in the account books are nothing but legal fiction because of the wrong entries of inflated amounts. Studies from various settlements bear testimony to the fact that in most cases, indebtedness leads to several kinds of bondedness. The total picture of these states of affairs, however, indicate that one or more of the following consequences engulf many *Muthuvans* as a result of their indebtedness to the money lender.

1. Loss of freedom of cultivation and freedom to sell their cultivated products in the open market as they should have to hand over the harvested products to the money lenders as compensation for the money borrowed from him in advance.
2. Alienation of land as they are under the custody of the creditor to whom the *Muthuvans* have given land on lease for a few years, after accepting a meager amount of money.

Legislation and other Control Measures: Are they effective?

The fifth schedule of the Indian Constitution empowers the Governor of a state to regulate the carrying on of the business as money lending by persons who lend money to members of Scheduled Tribes in Scheduled Areas. In pursuance of

this provision the Kerala government promulgated and enacted the Kerala Money Lenders Act, 1958 to control money lending, debt redemption and abolition of debt bondage.³⁶

However, the enquiries and studies made as part of this research reveal that despite regulations, the exploitation of *Muthuvans* and other tribal people still continue uncontrolled and un - debated. There is a lot of evasion of the regulations and legislation and the money lenders have taken very little notice of the restriction imposed on their operation in Scheduled Tribal areas.

Report of the Study team of the State Planning Commission on the Tribal Development Programmes had summed up this situation with clarity. "No programme of economic development is likely to have any impact on the tribal economy unless vigorous measures are taken to rescue the tribal from the clutches of the money lenders."³⁷ It is of the view that the attack on tribal indebtedness should be two pronged if it is to be effective and enduring; on the one hand long term credit should be provided to enable the tribal to free himself from the stranglehold of the usurious money lenders, and on the other hand his repaying capacity should be raised by improving his economic condition.

Government of Kerala took some drastic steps to put a check on the exploitation of the tribes by money lenders and cardamom traders in the High ranges of Idukki. The first step was the prohibition of the private traders from entering the reserve forest areas for the purchase of cardamom from tribes. The second step was the formation of Devicolam Girijan Service Co - operative Society Ltd., which was registered on 23-02-1976.³⁸ The jurisdiction of the society consists of four Panchayats, viz., Munnar, Marayur, Vattavada and Kanthallur. At

³⁶ Government of Kerala, *The Kerala Money lenders Act - 1958 (Act 35 of 1958)*, in *Manual of Kerala Laws*, Trivandrum, 1959.

³⁷ See, State Planning Commission, *Report on Tribal Development Programmes*, Trivandrum, 1999, p.22.

³⁸ Govt. of Kerala, *Report of the State Planning Commission*, Chapter V., Working of the Corporation: Assistance to Co - Operative Societies, Trivandrum, 1981.

the time of the formation of the society, 90 percent of the *Muthuvan* lands were alienated by cardamom traders and their intermediaries. The society was successful in its efforts to restore their lands from the intermediaries in its entirety. The society was successful in procuring bulk of the cardamom produced by the *Muthuvans* in Edamalakudi and arranging their sale at prevailing market price. The society supplied the tribes with the essential consumer goods on credit till the harvest of cardamom and other agricultural products. The activities of the society were very effective and successful in the early years. The society used to procure 16000 kgs. of cardamom from the *Muthuvans* and arrange their sale at existing market price. These fetched considerable profits for them and many *Muthuvan* families in Edamalakkudi have been placed on a sound economic footing.

But what had happened in following years was that, even though outsiders were prevented successfully from entering the reserve forest areas during the early years, the money lenders and cardamom traders gradually started entering these areas again and purchasing cardamom from the *Muthuvans* at very low prices by giving them various inducements. In spite of the fact that the Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) is the president of the Society, the machinery of the forest department definitely failed to prevent the influx of cardamom traders and their agents into these reserve forest area who lift almost the entire produce of cardamom from the *Muthuvans*. The loans taken by the members were usually adjusted when they supplied cardamom and other forest products to the society after the harvest. The present crisis has developed on account of the non-supply of cardamom to the society by its members. If effective steps are taken to prevent unauthorized entry of outsiders to reserve forest areas it will be possible for the society, as in the early years, to procure bulk of the cardamom produced by the tribes.

Forest Policies in Independent India

The previous forest policies and objectives had to be revised after independence to satisfy the approaches of the new government in India. The new

forest policy was laid down in 1952 on the basis of the reassessment and modification of the 1894 policy and by taking into consideration; (a) the population of the country that had increased by forty percent between 1894 and 1950 resulting in the relentless pressure on forest and wasteland to secure more land for agriculture, (b) the importance of forests in mitigating the rigors of climatic conditions, (c) the importance of forests in the economic field, such as the development of agriculture, industry and communications and (d) the two great world wars brought to the fore the hitherto unsuspected dependence of national defense on forests.

All these priorities on forests severely affected the tribes who were formerly lords of the forests and were enjoying unhindered freedom in the forests and placed them under the mercy of the forest officials. The traditional rights of the tribes' which were recognized in 1894 as 'rights and privileges', became 'rights and concessions', in the revised Forest Policy of 1952.³⁹ The forest legislation of 1952 had shattered and disturbed the tribal lives depriving them even of the privileges hitherto untouched by the former policy formulated by the British. The following points may be cited as deviations from the old policy causing great concern to the tribals:

1. The old policy envisaged the release of forest land for cultivation, subject to certain safeguards while the new policy withdrew this concession.
2. The old policy had left a margin for the supply of the villagers needs from outlying areas in the reserved forests. The new policy decided that there should be separate village forests for this purpose.
3. The old policy did not touch the forests privately occupied by the tribes. The new policy applied the same controls to them.
4. The old policy did not touch the right for free grazing in the forests. The new policy sought to bring it under control. Fees were introduced and grazing was to be kept to the minimum.

³⁹ Government of India, *G.O. No. 13-1/152-F, National Forest Policy, dated 12th May, 1952.*

5. The 1952 policy made one important concession. It admitted that while it was emphatically opposed to shifting cultivation, persuasive and not coercive measures should be used in a sort of missionary rather than in an authoritarian manner to attempt to wean the tribals from their traditional axe and fire cultivation.⁴⁰

Thus, due to the government policy to exercise closer control over the use of forest products and to regulate the rights and privileges of users, the tribes had been deprived of their traditional rights in forests. Under this policy the tribes had no statutory rights or privileges but could enjoy only certain concessions such as:

1. Right to take water for agricultural purposes.
2. Digging of wells and canals for agricultural purposes.
3. Free grazing in open forests (under passes).
4. Removal of stones and earth for domestic or agricultural use
5. Removal of timber, bamboos, reeds, cane, etc., for construction and repair of houses and for making agricultural implements.
6. Collection of dead wood for domestic use.
7. Collection of grass for cattle and for covering their huts.
8. Fishing & hunting excluding the protected fauna.
9. Cultivation of forest land.⁴¹

Exploitation and Harassment through Forest Laws

It is undeniable that the rights and privileges of individuals can be taken away for the larger good of the society. But it should be done only by creating informal public opinion. Unfortunately ever since the national forest policy has been enunciated and promulgated, very little has been done to educate the victims - mainly the tribes. This lapse on the part of the administration coupled with the harassment and exploitation by the local forest officials, revenue officials and

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

private contractors had created a sense of dismay, frustration and alienation among the affected tribes.

Before pinpointing the exact areas of harassment of the tribal folk by the forest officials, it will be in the fitness of things to take a view of the powers conferred on these officials and only then one can understand the *modus operandi* of misuse of those powers. The Forest Act had created an extremely powerful, and adequately protected executives consisting of officials like the Chief Conservator of Forests in a state, District Forest Officers, Forest Rangers, Deputy Rangers, Forest Guards, etc. "The Forest Acts gave certain powers to the executives to make rules which are not of a permanent character. These rules have the force of law, as soon as they are published in the local gazette. These officers have legal powers as:

1. Any forest officer can arrest without warning any person against whom a reasonable suspicion exists of being concerned in an offence punishable with one month imprisonment or above.
2. They can seize forest produce, cattle, tools, carts, etc., in respect of which there is reason to believe that a forest offence has been committed.
3. They are bound to prevent and interfere to forbid an offence, to warn people to take cognizance of persons carrying axes, saws (though this is not an offence in itself), etc., in a forest.

Since the forest officers have to function in extremely difficult physical areas, they are given legal protection of a far - reaching character.

1. No civil suit will be alleged against a public servant for any act done in good faith.
2. They cannot be criminally prosecuted for offence done by mistakes of fact, but not of law.

3. They cannot be prosecuted without the approval of government, or otherwise, according to the status of the officer.⁴²

Under such conditions, the poor tribes who live in the forest region should have certainly been placed at the mercy of the forest officials. The unscrupulous officials among them should have been playing havoc with their lives and harass them at the slightest pretext.

In many of the states, the forest boundaries run very close to the tribal habitations or come within the forest. These lead to conflicts between the tribes and the forest department. For example, in Kerala where this conflict is much pronounced, the tribes are constantly harassed by the petty officials of the forest department on the pretext that the tribes encroach upon forest land and steal timber and forest produce illegally. Collection of minor forest produce is not at all likely to hinder the forest either in its growth or its preservation. But at certain places the tribal inhabitants are not allowed to avail of these concessions. It is also observed that there are many areas of forest land on which not many trees were standing. For instance, in the tribal areas of Idukki, there were large tracts of lands with not much vegetation claimed as forest area and the tribes who live nearby are deprived of the opportunity to use these lands for cultivation and transform them into a source of their livelihood.

Muthuvans' Opinion on the Forest Policies and Forest Officials

The *Muthuvans* vehemently deny the most oft repeated allegation of the officials that the inhabitants within the forest are destroying and plundering the forests. According to the Report of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, the tribes counter this argument by asking, "how could they destroy the forest?" The *Muthuvans* also raise the same question. They own no trucks; they hardly have even a bullock cart. The utmost that they could carry away was a

⁴² *Ibid.*

head load of produce for sale to maintain their family.⁴³ The utmost that they wanted was the deadwood to keep them warm in the winter months, the bamboo to reconstruct or repair their huts and to carry on their little cottage industries.⁴⁴ Having explained their own position they invariably turn to the amount of destructions and plunders that are taking place all around them. They relate how the contractors stray outside the contracted zone and carry loads in trucks in excess of their authorized capacity before the eyes of the officials and exploit both the forest and the tribes.⁴⁵

The *Muthuvans* strongly feel that the administrators put forward all the arguments in support of preservation and development of forest only to counter their just demands and they are, in a way, intended to destroy the forest - the traditional natural abode of the *Muthuvans*. They are complaining that even though the government decides to implement any of its schemes; outsiders are allowed to clear and destroy the forests according to their whims. They also resent the highly cumbersome procedures for acquiring permits, licenses and passes to avail of various concessions given by the government. Though the fees or levy are not much heavy, they have to undergo all sorts of inconvenience and harassment in the hands of officials to avail off the needy documents.

While dwelling upon the desired approach and role of the forest department, B H Mehta sums up the situation with clarity.⁴⁶ He observes that “the primary aims of the forest department seem to have overlooked the fact that human communities have lived in or near the forests for innumerable centuries. Certain human rights follow such historical association of man with his habitat. Legislation can not overlook history and the natural rights of the people. It is true that the forest

⁴³ Interview, with Krishnankutty, Societykudi, in March, 2011. He is an employee in the Girijan Society, Edamalakudy for 23 years.

⁴⁴ Field Notes.

⁴⁵ Field Notes.

⁴⁶ B H Mehta, “Gonds and the Gondwana Land”, in the *Report Submitted to the Planning Commission*, Government of India, New Delhi, 1968. P. 52.

department recognized the value of national botanical, zoological and mineral wealth. But at the same time, these natural resources have to be discovered and appreciated in the first instance; by the forest dwellers themselves... sociological, psychological and human considerations must affect legislation, so that law does not give undue preference to property, overlooking the true welfare of the local population.”⁴⁷ There is definitely a scope for more human approach in the implementation of the National Forest Policy through principled, committed and scrupulous officials who have equal, if not, more compassion and sympathy for human beings.

This discussion shall be incomplete without the wise recommendation of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, which took highly humane view of the problem; “The forest department, as a branch of Government, *should consider itself responsible for the development of the tribes as well as the forest areas.* It should not think in terms of an exclusive obligation to trees or vegetation, but should also accept an obligation to utilize the forest as much as possible from the angle of the economic development of the tribes residing in it. In return the tribes should recognize the need to preserve the forests. The forest department should also undertake the responsibility of giving adequate employment to the tribes living in and around the forest areas. Development of the forest and the betterment of the tribes should no longer be at loggerheads. It calls for a partnership, rather than an exclusive approach which aroused from the policy enunciated in 1894 and 1952 and the manner in which it had been implemented...”

Implications of State Policies on *Muthuvans*

After the formation of Kerala state in 1956, the State government introduced the Kerala Forest Act in 1961. Following this Act, The Girijan Laws were enacted in 1964. Travancore Forest Laws introduced in 1911 was also

⁴⁷ See, *ibid*, pp. 26-27.

followed along with these newly formed Acts and Laws. These laws were enacted with provisions to control the forest areas which were freely occupied and used by the Tribes for centuries. The State government at the same time provided all supports to the planters and migrants to encroach the forest land and the tribal lands. The government gradually began to grab and occupy the tribal lands directly in the name of various development projects. Several hydro electrical and water irrigation projects were started by the State government which resulted in the direct encroachment of tribal lands. These types of encroachments continue even today. There are 52 dams constructed in the Western Ghats region of Kerala. Among them more than two dozen are in Idukki District. For construction of these big as well as small dams, government acquired the forest lands near to the reservoir. Majority of these lands were the traditional habitations of the *Adivasis*. But the fact is that, neither the Electricity board nor the water irrigation department introduced any plans or projects for the re - habitation and re - settlement of these voiceless and poor tribes who were alienated from their original home - land from time to time.

Mullaperiyar, Idukki, Cheruthoni, Kulamavu, Lower Periyar, Idamalayar, Bhoothathankettu, Kundala, Mattupetty, Kallarkutty, Neriamangalam, Anayirangal, Kallar, Irattayar, Chenkulam, Kuttungal, Malankara, etc., are some important dams in Idukki for the construction of which the tribes including *Muthuvans* were alienated from their homeland. For the construction of Chenkulam dam, the *Muthuvans*, *Ulladans* and *Mala Aryans* were driven out from the region and then shifted to the Anakulam, Matnapara, Kurathikudi and Pinavurkudi settlements in the Pooyamkutti region. They were again alienated from their newly formed settlements for the construction of Pooyamkutti hydro electric project. The hydro electric projects like Idamalayar, Chenkulam, Neriamangalam, Lower Periyar, Panniyar, Idukki, etc., resulted in the highest rate of land alienation of the tribes including *Muthuvans* from their home land.

Reserve Forests and Wild Life Sanctuaries

The total areas of Wild Life Sanctuaries in Kerala are 2315.44 square kms. It covers the 25 percent of total forest area in the State and 6 percent of the total geographical area of the state. The declaration of a particular area of the forest as Reserve Forest is also a factor for the land alienation of the tribes. The State government followed policy of continued encroachment of the tribal lands through its varied policies and programmes. If we analyze the government programmes in Idukki we can observe a chain of actions which made the life of tribes unsettled and inconsistent. It is common to see that in Kerala, the government constructs a dam in a forest region, after that they declare the adjacent areas either as Reserve Forests or as the Wild Life Sanctuaries. This was adopted as an unwritten policy of the government to encroach upon the tribal land and drive them out from their home land.

For example, the Mullaperiyar Dam was constructed in 1895, after independence, the government declared the adjacent regions as Periyar Tiger Reserve. Around 59.83 square kilometers of forest land were drowned with the construction of Idukki Dam. The remaining 70 square kilometers of forest area adjacent to Idukki Dam were demarcated and declared as Idukki Wild Life Sanctuary. The tribes including *Muthuvans* living in the region were driven out from the forests with the rationale that no human presence is allowed in a Reserve forest or in a wild life sanctuary for protecting its flora and fauna. Similar incidents occurred with the construction of Bhoothathankettu Dam, Neriamangalam Dam and other major hydro - electrical and irrigation projects.

The best example of the attempts made by the State government to encroach on the tribal lands is visible in the Chinnar Wild Life Sanctuary. Chinnar is the region where the State Government is implementing the Eco - development Project with the help of World Bank. The World Bank observes that the tribal people are the main impediments in the protection of the bio - diversity and

ecology of the region. The bank put forward a condition that if the State needs financial aid for Eco - development Project, it should have to put the tribes out of the Project region. On these reasons, the forest department started programmes to drive the tribes out of the Chinnar Forests. Champakad, Inchapetti, Palapetty, Adapetty, Mangapara, Mulangamutty, Vellakkalkudi, Olikudy, Thayannakudi, Iruttalakudi, etc., are the ten tribal settlements in the Chinnar forest region. Among them the last four are *Muthuvan* settlements. As a first step of their plan, the forest department closed down the Tribal Hostel and the Hospital in the Chinnar region and the process is still going on.

Kannan Devan Hills (Resumption of Lands) Act, 1971

The Kerala government put forward The Kannan Devan Hills (Resumption of Lands) Act in 1971 with an aim to capture the excess land from the Tata Finley Group and re-distribute it to the tribes who lost their land due the construction of the plantations, encroachments, etc., during the colonial and post-colonial period.⁴⁸ The *Muthuvans*, *Mala Pulayas*, *Mannans*, etc., were the major tribal groups who lost most of their traditional land in this regard. Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company occupied 127904 acres of land as concession in Devikulam taluk for purposes of tea plantation, firewood plantation, grazing land and private forest. Only 57192 acres of the total lands were used for plantation purposes. The excess land acquired was re-distributed to the *Muthuvans* and other tribes.⁴⁹ The KDHP Company approached the Supreme Court against this move but the court sanctioned the enactment of the Law.⁵⁰ The government acquired 70462.56 acres of land and retained 57192 acres with the Company for the plantation purpose.⁵¹

⁴⁸ See, Kerala Government Act: 5, The Kannan Devan Hills (Resumption of Lands) Act, 1971

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ *Vide*, Supreme Court of India, *Judgment on the Petition of Kanna Deva Hills Company Ltd. against Kerala State Govt.*, dated 27/04/1972., New Delhi, 1972.

⁵¹ *Vide*, *Report of the Legislative Assurance Committee appointed by the Kerala Govt. to enquire about the non-implementation of The Kannan Devan Hills (Resumption of Lands) Act of 1971*, submitted in 2000.

The government appointed a committee in 1975 to study and submit a report on the re - distribution of the acquired land of 70462.56 acres to the tribes. The committee submitted the report on 1976 in this regard.⁵² But the government did not take any effective follow up measures to make the redistribution process a reality. Gradually the Tata Tea Company re - encroached the 50,000 acres of land out of the 70462.56 acres acquired by the government.⁵³

The Kannan Devan Hills Resumption of Land Act, 1971 which aimed at the re-distribution of the lost land of the *Muthuvans* and other tribes was torpedoed by the government officials themselves in favor of the Company. The Legislative Assurance Committee which studied this issue submitted a report in 2000. The Committee blamed Tata Tea Company for the encroachment of the government land and the re-sale of the land for the construction of private resorts. The committee observed that - the increased and continued influence and presence of encroachers and forest thieves made the peaceful, self-reliant/self-sufficient life of tribes restless and difficult. The tribes who meet their ends by the collection of forest produces are struggling hard due to the large scale de-forestation in the area. The encroachers and their external contacts later influenced the tribes to deviate from their century old traditions and customs and adopt new habits and life styles of alcoholism and usage of drugs. The encroachment in the forests and the related activities thus resulted in the process of destruction of centuries old tribal cultures from the root.⁵⁴

State Interference in the Issue of Land Alienation

Land alienation is a dark blot on the much discussed tribal development and tribal welfare measures in Kerala. The settlers from central Travancore who encroached into the forest lands in the High Ranges were the main beneficiaries of the alienation of tribal land. The plantation schemes and leases also alienated the

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

tribes from their original home land. The state had also appropriated forest lands under different schemes and projects. Statistics show that more than half the tribal population in the state (i.e., 55.47 percent) is composed of landless agricultural labourers, compared to the all-India average of 32.99 percent.⁵⁵ But the extent of landlessness among non - SCs and non - STs is much lower in Kerala, i.e., 20.78 percent.⁵⁶ According to one estimate, the total land alienated until the end of 1996 were 80590 hectares, of which only 440 hectares were restored to the tribe.⁵⁷

The tribal questions on land was first addressed with the formation of the Dhebar Commission in 1960-1961 by the Central Government, which suggested that all land alienated from 1950 onwards should be restored.⁵⁸ Before looking into various legislative steps taken to safeguard tribal interest in land, it will be in the fitness of things to study the crucial recommendations of Scheduled Areas and Schedules Commission, 1960-1961, on the basis of which various states including Kerala passed a number of legislations. His major recommendations were:

1. "There is a need for a detailed scrutiny of all legislations affecting tribal's land. The complicated procedures that have resulted in depriving the tribal of assistance also require to be examined. All existing Acts and Regulations should be examined by a committee in each state and Union Territory with the ultimate object of preventing completely transfers of tribal's lands to non - tribals for some time to come. It may be necessary in many states to amend the present laws drastically. If this is likely to take time, we recommended, the governors may, in exercise of the powers conferred on them under the fifth schedule, issue the necessary Regulations without delay".
2. "We also recommend that there should be a general prohibition of all transfers, whether by sale, mortgage, gift or lease under any kind of

⁵⁵ *The Pioneer*, dated 29 October, 2001.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

⁵⁷ *Ibid*.

⁵⁸ Govt. of india, *Report of The Dhebar Commission 1960-1961*, New Delhi, 1961, p. 66.

agreement or contract entered into by tribals in favour of non-tribals without the permission of the Deputy Commissioner or the Collector. The government should make rules in consultation with the Tribes Advisory Council governing grant of the permission by the Deputy Commissioner or Collector, after ascertaining the conditions prevailing in each area”.

3. “There should be a bar against suits or applications against any such order made by a Deputy Commissioner or Collector and courts of law should be precluded from taking cognizance of such transfers by sale, mortgage, gift or lease or any other agreement or contract and from passing decree thereon unless arrangement has been entered into with the previous permission of Deputy Commissioner or the Collector”.
4. “Deputy Commissioner or the Collector should have the powers *suo moto* or at the instance of the aggrieved tribal land holders within a period of 12 years to institute enquiries and restore possession of the land with or without payment of any compensation to the transferee. This provision should be made applicable to all transfers of lands by tribals to non - tribals with retrospective effect from the 26th January, 1950. Adequate machinery should be created to implement these laws or regulations.”
5. “Finally we recommend that all surrenders must only be to the state, which should hold the surrendered land as a trustee for the tribals”.⁵⁹

R Shankar ministry, which was then in power in Kerala, had suggested to the Dhebar Commission to include the tribal areas in Kerala in the scheduled areas. It was on the recommendations of the Dhebar Commission and its endorsement by the Centre that the 1975 act was passed unanimously during the tenure of the Achutha Menon ministry. The Act was known as The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975.⁶⁰ This was enacted by the government to fulfill the constitutional obligation under Article 224(1), under which the state is obliged to

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Vide, The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act 1975 (act 31 of 1975), Trivandrum, 1975.*

make suitable legislation to protect the Scheduled Tribes. The entire discourse about land alienation of Tribes was centered on the 1975 Act. The Observations, Suggestions and Objects given in the Act 31 of 1975 are described as:

1. "It has been noticed that the extent of land which has been under the traditional occupation of the Scheduled Tribes in the State is steadily on the decrease due to alienation, lease, mortgage and above all, due to unauthorized occupation of tribal lands by non-tribal people. In tribal areas the unsophisticated tribals are being duped into transactions which make them part with their traditional lands for very small sums of money. The Evaluation Committee constituted by the Government in 1961 had suggested that special legislation should be introduced to protect the interests of the tribes in lands under their traditional occupations; and that this legislation should result in a general prohibition of transfers whether by sale, mortgage, gift or lease of tribal lands to non-tribal people. The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission (Dhebar Commission) had also made similar recommendations".
2. "It is proposed to accept the recommendations of the committees mentioned above and to enact a law restricting the transfer of lands belonging to Scheduled Tribes. The Bill is intended for this purpose."⁶¹

The 1975 Act was significant that it had acknowledged the in alienability of tribal land and the need for restoration of alienated land.⁶² However, the rules and regulations accompanying the act were not framed for many years. It was only in 1986 that efforts were made to implement the act. As per the 1975 Act, all land alienated from 1960 should have to be restored to the tribes and all such transactions should have been nullified. There were 8553 applications submitted by the tribes for the restoration of around 10177 hectares of land. Later the number of applications rose to 8879 among them 4524 applications which were

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

accompanied by supporting evidences (evidence is necessary to come under the 1975 Act) found valid. Accordingly 3170.12 hectares of land had to be restored included the *Muthuvan*'s land in Mankulam, Kallar, Adimali and Neriamangalam regions. However, the Kerala government did nothing in this regard. There were many political interests and pressure on the government to withdraw from the Act.

Blaming the nonchalance of the government in 1988, Nalla Thampi Thera filed a public interest petition seeking the intervention of the Kerala High Court. The Court issued an order in October 1993 calling for the restoration of alienated land. The Order also advised the government to settle all cases relating to land alienation within six months of the issue of the order. In 1996, the government of Kerala under UDF, through an ordinance, tried to effect some changes to the 1975 Act, but the then Governor failed the attempt. The next government under LDF also tried for the same but it too failed. Since the court had issued a deadline that the alienated lands had to be restored by September 1996, the government passed an amendment to the 1975 Act to escape from the Court Order. By this amendment the government sought to leave out non - tribals who had acquired tribal lands up to one hectare prior to 1986. Even those who had acquired more than one hectare were to be compensated before the land was retrieved from them. The amendment was returned by the President as the tribal activists had made a representation to the President of India in this regard. Since the President of India refused to accord his approval to this amendment, the State government then passed the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1999, scrapping the 1975 Act. According to the provisions of the 1999 Act, where transactions were done on less than two hectares of land, the affected tribe was entitled to get matching land from the government. The Act also made clear that the State should provide a minimum of one acre of land to the landless tribes in their residing district within a period of two years from March 1999. Even those tribes having less than an acre of land were entitled to receive an acre of land from the State. A welfare fund was also proposed to be set up under the act for rehabilitating those tribes affected by land

alienation. The High Court of Kerala nullified the 1999 legislation and observed that the Kerala government had committed contempt of court. However, the government went in appeal to the Supreme Court, resulting in the possibility of retrieving alienated land becoming enmeshed in numerous legal entanglements. Until this phase the tribal demand for the retrieval of their lost lands was waged through legal means, but it now became clear that legal measures alone would be insufficient to address the question of land alienation.

With the failure of legal measures, the tribes in Kerala then shifted to the path of agitation. This was the first time in the history of tribal struggles in Kerala that a woman, C K Janu, came forward to lead the struggle. She led the struggle under the newly floated organization known as the *Adivasi- Dalit Samara Samiti* (ADSS). The ADSS started the agitation focusing on poverty related deaths, which the leaders alleged had been a regular feature every year and neither the media nor the officials recognized or highlighted this issue in the name of 'saving the vaunted Kerala model of development'. Land alienation was recognized as the crucial causative factor behind these deaths and the State was blamed for hoarding most of the tribal land. With the support of the State, large private Plantations and Estates kept huge amounts of land in their custody without any authorization to do so. The movement began with the submission of an open letter to the chief minister of Kerala on 24 August 2001 by C K Janu. Prior to this, about two months earlier, there had occurred 23 poverty-related deaths including suicides among the tribes of Kerala.

The ADSS at the time of struggle demanded 5 acres of land for each tribal family in Kerala. Land was not seen as only a commodity with exchange value that made it dear to the tribes or only as a status symbol. It was also seen as connected with their culture, identity and also livelihood. Janu even identified the existence of some spiritual elements in land, trees and so on, which tribals

worship.⁶³ It is clear that unlike others, adivasis have a special relationship and dependence on land which give them the notion of territoriality. Their existence as communities is possible only if their inalienable right to their territories is acknowledged.

The method of agitation was non - violent and it primarily targeted the state government and in no way expressed any hostility towards the settlers. The widespread support that the movement got from the intellectuals of all hues is precisely due to the peaceful nature of the protest. It was also for the first time that the tribal issues came to the forefront of the political agenda of Kerala.⁶⁴ The agitators occupied the entrance of the Kerala secretariat and its premises, constructed makeshift huts, cooked food and performed cultural events in front of the chief minister's residence. The government finally consented to try and provide five acres of cultivable land to all the landless tribal families in Kerala, who were around 45000 in number. The government initially identified some 42000 acres of land for this purpose. The state government agreed to recommend to the centre to include tribal lands in the fifth schedule so that their lands could not be alienated later. The state also assured that it would enact a law to prevent land grabbing and would also make a master plan for creating jobs for the unemployed tribal youths.

It may be noted that until ADSS launched its agitation, tribal grievances had not found a place in the liberation discourse in Kerala. Even though Dalit activism was present in certain areas; this did not have any impact on the tribal communities. The left, with which many tribes and Dalits had some early association, saw the tribal question within a class frame work, and was not prepared to see it as constituting a problem specific to certain communities. This universalizing stance of the leftists even on tribal issues was one of the reasons for

⁶³ Interview with C K Janu, published in *Madhyamam* (Malayalam Weekly) dated 28 October, 2001.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

the influence of Naxalite movement in some tribal areas, particularly in the late 1960s and early 1970s and the acceptance of Maoist people in the tribal areas which are reported by the police recently.⁶⁵ A state level organization outside the political party frame work, the *Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha*, was formed during this period, which functioned as an apex decision making body of the tribes in Kerala and fought for tribal interests across the state. The *Mahasabha* had representatives from different tribal groups and the formation of this body gave the movement greater legitimacy among various tribal communities. The activists of ADSS largely laid emphasis on the distribution of forest lands in Wayanad and Idukki. Among other important activities of ADSS, the protection of tribal land and culture and distribution of the land in the Scheduled Areas occupied prominent position.

On 16th October 2001, on the basis of the agreement of the state government with the ADSS, it was decided to grant five acres of cultivable land to each tribal family. In case sufficient land was not available, each of them would be given at least one acre of cultivable land. The state planning board was told to prepare a master plan for integrated tribal development and to implement it on a time-bound basis from the very beginning of the Tenth Plan. However, there were numerous hurdles in the identification of excess and illegal land held by different government departments, private companies and plantations. Even though district collectors were supposed to co - ordinate this by collecting information about land held by each department within each district, it will take a long time for them to efficiently implement the government decision on excess land. Further, the lands should be distributed to the landless tribes in places where it is available and not at places adjacent to their traditional hamlets. This will result in the uprooting of the tribes from their homelands. Such dispersal of tribal hamlets would make the lives of tribes even more difficult, as they were used only to a collective way of life with a lot of customs and tradition practiced on a group basis. For the tribes like

⁶⁵ Vide, Suresh Jnaneswaran, *The Naxalite Movement in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1991.

Muthuvans who have elements of self - governance under the guidance and control of *Orumurai* and still practicing collective farming and community life could not even imagine such uprooting and dispersal.

To make things more complex, for distribution of forest land, the state governments needed clearance from the central government. The Kerala government in its latest move decided to give the tribes 'record of rights on the land' since it was found difficult to identify land for which clear title deeds existed. Since the record of rights should be given on forest lands, their legal status is in doubt. The government hopes to follow what it had done earlier with respect to settler farmers

Effect of *Adivasi* Struggles on *Muthuvans*

The *Adivasi* Mission was formed by the State Government after the 2001 struggle to speed up the land distribution to the tribes which was a provision in the agreement between the government and the *Adivasi Gotra Maha Sabha*. The Report of the *Adivasi* Mission itself starts with an introduction that there is no adequate data available for the preparation of a Master Plan for tribal development. A list of tribal families and the available land for redistribution were prepared and included in the Master Plan but the criterion adopted for the selection of families and the nature of land available for redistribution are not clearly explained.

The Master Plan Committee found out 6215 acres of revenue land in Idukki for redistribution. But there arose a lot of problems and controversies regarding the lands selected for redistribution. The Tourism Department claimed that 1605 acres out of the total 6125 acres of land for redistribution are the lands which were handed over by the government earlier for the promotion and development of tourism activities in the District. The Master Plan Report itself admits that the lands listed in the Master Plan could not be redistributed due to the Forest Act of 1980. The state government sought the permission of central government in this regard but was rejected as the state government did not provide the list of the

places which should be used for a substitute forestation. At the same time, the State government's proposal for granting ownership to the migrant farmers submitted to the central government was submitted along with the detailed plan for substitute afforestation. This shows the double dealing of the state government in handling the problems of the tribes. The Master Plan Committee found out only 190 tribal families in Idukki as landless and only 85 *Muthuvan* families were listed as landless. The list shows that the Master Plan presented a tutored short list of the number of landless tribal families in the district. The fact remains that thousands of *Muthuvans* and other tribes who lost their land and were uprooted and displaced to the deep interiors of the forest and live there do not possess any ownership of the lands they occupy. The forest department is trying to drive out these tribes from the Reserve Forest region. The 'Master Plan' keeps quite on the problems of these insecure tribal families.

As part of the agreement between the 'Gotra Mahasabha' and the state government, immediately after the Adivasi struggle of 2001, the government inaugurated the Tribal Rehabilitation and Development Programme in Marayoor in Idukki district by conducting a distribution ceremony of 1078 acres of land to 388 families. Seventy three *Muthuvan* families were included in this list and were selected for a grant of five acres of land each in Kundala and Marayoor region. But there are hundreds of *Muthuvan* families left out in Idukki who became landless during the acquisition of land for the construction of Kannan Devan and other Plantations, Dams, Reservoirs, Wild life sanctuaries, etc., who still remain landless.

Marayoor - Kundala Land Distribution: A Betrayal

Among the 900 acres marked out in Marayoor to distribute to different tribal groups, 450 acres were found waste or useless by the government itself. So the area of land for distribution was reduced to 450 acres. Immediately after the Government's declaration on the distribution of land in Marayoor, the Idukki DFO declared that majority of the lands marked for distribution were lands belonging to

the forest department. The government gave direction to the forest department to withdraw from their protest till the day of the official distribution ceremony. It was a tactical move of the government to escape from the real issues of land facing the *Muthuvans* and other tribes. Soon after the distribution ceremony, the forest department approached the high court to get a stay for the distribution of forest land to the tribes. The forest officials stopped the *Muthuvans* who were engaged in the clearing work of the above said land with the directions from the district collector. Thus the celebrated land distribution to the *Muthuvans* and other tribals was torpedoed by the forest department.

The same episode was re-enacted in Kundala also. Kundala is situated at the centre of the Tata Tea Plantations. These regions were once owned by the *Muthuvans* themselves. The government through a Land Distribution Programme declared that five acres of land would be given to another 141 *Muthuvan* families. The programmes and ceremonies were conducted with an expense of 12 lakh rupees. However, here in Kundala also the *Muthuvans* could not enter into the land granted to them. The forest department claimed that the lands given to the *Adivasis* belonged to forest department and the papers regarding land right provided by the State Government were fake.

The government finally cut short the list and only 12 *Muthuvan* families were granted the land in Kundala and 7 families in Marayoor region. The *Muthuvans* who were granted land in Kundala had to follow a lot of terms and conditions. Among them the most important was that they did not have the right to plough the land deeply. The reason was that the lands given to them were situated in a steep mountain side, 1700 meters above the sea level. If these lands are ploughed or tilled deeply, it will cause landslides. Cattle rearing and vegetable cultivation are the only suitable means of production in the region. The Master Plan itself reports that the lands granted to the *Muthuvans* in Marayoor having very little rainfall of 70cms had no scope for cultivation. In the files, these poor

Muthuvans became owners of lands but they live there without any scope for profitable agriculture.

State Interventions Lead to Social Change

In India, the pace of social change had increased its momentum in the recent past. Social change has become our constant companion. The tradition bound tribal life and culture, which prior to the independence of India was almost a closed system, suddenly became exposed to the forces released by the 'Community Development Movements', continuous urbanization, education, technology, etc., which in total, led to the process of modernization. These elements of modernization brought the tribal society in contact with the wider society in urban areas. These contacts of different tribal groups with the 'other society', however, were not of an organized or uniform nature. These were really selective and uneven and perhaps haphazard. It would be erroneous to assume that the entire tribal society in India is homogenous. In fact, it is stratified. This stratified nature of the tribal society makes relationships with the wider society selective.

The model of tribal development and transformation accepted and opted by the government of India and Kerala are the results of their historical experience and the constitutional provisions. When the constitution and the government decided to help the tribes to come out to the national mainstream, it became essential to define or frame out a terminology for identifying these groups. The government model of tribal integration with the mainstream society and the outside world is based upon the theory that while the group is allowed to maintain its ethnic structure, it is simultaneously persuaded to participate fully in the national life. The *Muthuvan* tribes today are confronted with two major, but conflicting problems; (i) A keen desire to retain their separate identity, and (ii) a certain level of willingness to incorporate themselves into the national mainstream. In this context, analyzing the government programmes implemented for the tribes and their effect on the *Muthuvans* should be meaningful.

After independence, Govt. of India adopted programmes and policies for a planned economic development to strengthen its mixed economy and to make it more effective. Hence, the authorities formulated the Five Year Plans where the country makes long term plans for integrated development of the nation. On the basis of these plans for an integrated development, India molded her tribal development programmes. A review of the tribal development programmes of the first six five year plans show that tribal development programmes in India have been marked by two broad approaches. They are:

1. Community Approach at block level.
2. The Integrate Tribal Development Approach under the Tribal sub-plan.

The tribal development strategies followed by the governments of Kerala from time to time were invariably became a part of the tribal development strategy adopted in India as a whole. Again these strategies have been in conformity with the general development strategy. Thus at the initial stages of planned development when the Community Development Programmes were adopted in India, the same community development programmes were followed by the Kerala State. The mode of implementation of Tribal Sub Plan strategy was transformed in to a new mode during the fifth five year plan (1974-1979) which focused on the comprehensive socio-economic development in consonance with the development of tribal areas.⁶⁶ Accordingly, considering the peculiar nature of the tribal concentration and to ensure effective co-ordination of development programmes, Integrated Tribal Development Projects (ITDP) started during Fifth Five Year Plan. Seven ITDP offices were started in Kerala as part of the Fifth Five Year Plan that are now functioning in the state.⁶⁷ They are:

1. Nedumangad (Thiruvananthapuram District)
2. Thodupuzha (Idukki District)
3. Nilambur (Malappuram District)

⁶⁶ Govt. of India, *Report of the Planning Board on Tribal Sub-Plan*, New Delhi, 1980, p. 54.

⁶⁷ Government of Kerala, *District Handbook of Kerala: Idukki*, Trivandrum, 2004, p. 6.

4. Kanjirappally (Kottayam District)
5. Attappady (Palakkad District)
6. Kalpetta (Wayanad District)
7. Kannur (Kannur District)

We have seen that tribal development strategy followed in Kerala from time to time has been a part of the tribal development strategy adopted in India as a whole. Accordingly the government of Kerala introduced several developmental and welfare programmes for tribes in order to boost the socio-economic transformation of the tribes and to improve their interactive behavior with the outside world. How these programmes and policies influenced the *Muthuvan* life is important in analyzing the impact of states interventions in modernization programmes carried out among the *Muthuvans*.

Implementation of Educational Schemes and Programmes

The formal elementary education system in India is now a gigantic enterprise and is one of the largest in the world. The ultimate goal of education should be to meet the basic learning needs of all; children, youths and the adults. These needs comprise both essential learning tools such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, problem solving, etc., and the basic learning contents such as knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, etc., required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work without indignity, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions and to continue learning. Education provides the necessary tools, skills, knowledge, values and attitudes required for the realization of the four cardinal values applicable for all humans, *viz.*, survival, security, prosperity and progress.

Recognizing the importance of education, the framers of the constitution had made specific provisions in Article 15(4) and 46 for promoting education among the Scheduled Tribes. Article 15(4) is an exception to the fundamental right of the people of equal treatment irrespective of religion, caste, race or sex

granted under Article 15(1).⁶⁸ It empowers the State to make any special provisions for advancement of any socially or educationally backward class of citizens or for the scheduled Castes or Scheduled tribes. Article 46 contains the directive to the state government to promote with a special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular, of the scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Indian Constitution has specifically identified the tribes among the weaker section of society and had made special provisions to check their exploitation and to further their upliftment. Education has been widely accepted as one of the major means for achieving this objective. Special educational incentives such as opening of separate schools, reservation of seats in educational institutions, provision of student's special scholarship, etc., have been introduced for the benefit of the tribes. The basic responsibility of promoting education has been cast up on the state governments. The union government is responsible for co-ordination of facilities and determination of standards in respect of higher education, research, scientific and technical education.

The main efforts in the central sector to help the Scheduled Tribes pertain to installation of post-metric scholarship, setting-up of boys and girls hostels and coaching centers for competitive examinations, etc. The ministry of education, which is responsible for the educational development in the country as a whole has also been making special efforts for the educational development of the Scheduled tribes and Castes. Some of the important facilities provided by the ministry of education include 7.5 percent reservation of seats for Scheduled tribes and another 15 percent for Scheduled Castes in all Central Universities, IIT's, Regional Engineering Colleges, Medical Colleges and Central Schools. The educational institutions had been instructed to relax the norms for students seeking admission to the reserved seats for various courses.

⁶⁸ See, *Constitution of India*, Part III, Fundamental Rights - Article 15.

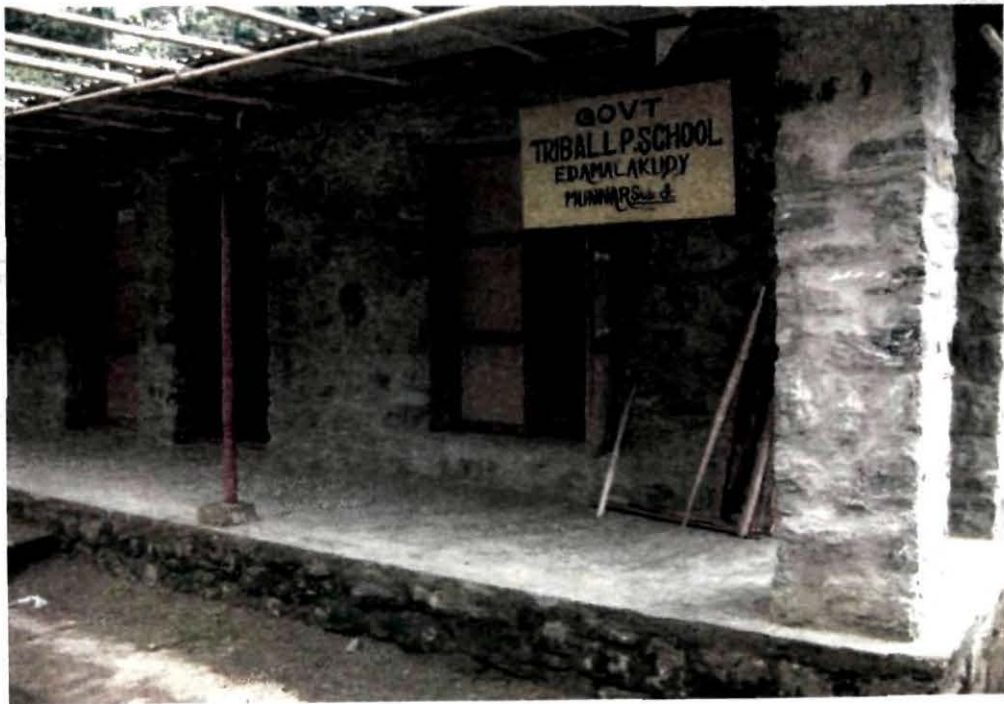
Some of the activities taken up by the Ministry of Education for promoting education among the Scheduled Tribe are provision of scholarships, research fellowships, research and training facilities for improving their educational levels, reservation of seats in hostels, etc. Priority is also given in the areas predominantly inhabited by scheduled tribes for opening centers of non-formal education and adult education. Departments of Education, Tribal Welfare and Social Welfare jointly implement the education programmes for Scheduled Tribes and operate the facilities of scholarships, hostels and ashram, schools, etc. In spite of all these measures in India, tribal education is in a pitiable state beset with many problems. Kerala, the first state which practiced a complex literacy campaign and declared as the 100 percent literacy state is also facing the problem of tribal education.

For *Muthuvans*, education is the pivot on which their future depends. Education disseminates knowledge. Knowledge gives inner strength which is very essential for them for attaining freedom from poverty and exploitation. Due to lack of education and requisite skill, the *Muthuvans* are not able to take advantage of the various economic opportunities within their region which have been grabbed by the outsiders who came into the tribal areas as planters, money lenders and encroachers. The most important aspect of education in tribal areas is of informing the community about new innovations in science and technology as well as the developments in economic and political fields.

According to the 2011 Census, the literacy rate among the total ST population in India was recorded as 47 percent, while among the tribes in Kerala it was higher as 64.4 percent. Literacy among the *Muthuvans* has increased over the years. But it is still far below the general literacy level in the State. The literacy rate of *Muthuvans* was 52 percent in which the male literacy rate is 65 percent whereas the female literacy rate is only 39 percent which is very low when it compares with the general literacy rate in Kerala which is rated as 90.86 percent. The yawning gap of 26 percent in the male- female literacy rates is really a matter of concern. Even if the statistical data shows a decent rate of literacy among the



Picture 13. **Single Teacher School in Edaliparakudy, Edamalakudy**



Picture 14. **Government LP School in Edamalakudy**

Muthuvans and other tribal groups in Kerala when compared to other States in India, the data shows that the number of tribal students attaining education above the primary level is very low.

4.1 Educational level of the literate people among major tribes in Kerala

Name of Tribe	Literate without educational level	Below primary	Primary	Middle/ UP	Matric/ Higher Secondary	Technical/ Non-technical diploma	Graduate and above
All Scheduled Tribes	2.8	30.7	29.3	22.9	12.4	0.8	1.2
Paniyan	4	50.5	33	10	2.3	0.1	0.1
Kurichchan	2.5	23.8	34.5	28.6	9.9	0.4	0.4
Malai Arayan	1	17.9	22.5	27.9	24.4	2.1	4.1
Maradi	1.4	23.1	29.6	24.2	19.2	0.6	1.8
Kurumans	2.1	23.2	29.3	30.3	17	1	1
Irular	5.8	33.2	31.8	17.7	10.7	0.5	0.3
Kanikaran	0.9	16.9	25.3	38.5	16.3	1.2	1
<i>Muthuvan</i>	9.9	47.5	27.9	12.7	1.6	0.1	0.04

Source: Office of the Registrar General, India.

So far as the levels of education are concerned as much as 33.5 percent of tribal literates in Kerala did not attained primary level of education. The proportion of literates who have attained education up to primary level and middle levels are 29.3 percent and 22.9 percent respectively. Persons educated up to matric/secondary/higher secondary, etc., have a share of only 12.4 percent in total literate population. Graduates and above are 1.2 percent while non-technical diploma holders constitute a meager 0.8 percent only.⁶⁹

Among *Muthuvans* 57.4 percent of the total literates who attained education are below the primary level. The proportion of literates who have attained education up to primary level and middle levels are 27.9 and 12.7 respectively.

⁶⁹ Scheduled Tribes' Department and the Department of Local Self Governance, *Pattikavarga Samudayangalude Adisthana Vivara Sekharanam - 2008: Idukki Jilla Report*, Trivandrum, 2011, pp. 60-64.

Persons educated up to matric/higher secondary have a share of only 1.6 which is very low compared to the state average of 12.4 percent. Non-technical and technical diploma holders constitute only 0.08 percent while the graduate and above degree holders are 0.04 percent.

4.2 Percentage of School Going Children between 5 - 14 years.

All STs	Paniyan	Kurichchar	Malai Arayan	Maradi	Kurumar	Irular	Kanikaran	Muthuvan
75.2	63.0	87.9	90.1	85.2	86.2	84.3	84.3	61.1

The data show that almost 75 percent of the tribal children in Kerala between the age group of 5-14 years are enrolled in the school. Among the major tribal groups, the *Muthuvan* show the lowest rate of school going children with only 61.1 percent.⁷⁰ Even with the attempts of central government and the State, there is a huge gap between the general literacy rate and the literacy rate of the *Muthuvans*.

***Muthuvans* Confronting with Neo - Colonial Powers and their Interventions**

The collections of minor forest produces by the tribes were not restricted even during the period of British colonialism. But the prime leaders of neo-colonialism made an attempt to drive out the entire tribal population from the forest land. The sole aim of these neo-colonial agencies is to occupy the vast treasures of bio-diversity and the gene banks existing in the Western Ghat regions in India. The Earth Summit of 1992 which was held in Brazil found India as a hot spot of Bio - diversity.⁷¹ Bio - diversity is a word put forward by Watter G Rossel in 1985, include various plants, animals, microscopic organisms, etc., on earth.⁷²

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), known as the Rio Summit was a major UN Conference held in Rio de Janeiro on 3 to 14 June, 1992.

⁷² Bio-diversity is a new international buzz word, catapulted into the center stage of worldwide environmental politics in the last handful of years. This focus is not surprising, though belated, for the conservation and wise management of bio-diversity is likely to be critical to the very survival of humanity.

Before the coming of the concept of bio - diversity, the colonialists identified timber as the main resource from the forest. But with the agenda of occupying gene banks, the bio - diversity got much importance. Eighty percent of bio-diversities on earth concentrate in the tropical and semi-tropical countries. The Western colonialists who once built their capital and wealth through the exploitation of these regions still continue the exploitation through the neo-colonial policies. The lack of adequate technology restricts the tropical countries from effective exploitation of their own bio - diversity. The advanced science and technology helped the colonialist in gaining control in the exploitation of the bio-diversities on the earth.

In 1994, India signed in an international environmental agreement named 'Convention of Biological Diversity' (CBD). Can it help achieve conservation? What would be the impact of an international environmental agreement like CBD signed with much fanfare at the Earth Summit of 1992 on a tribal group like *Muthuvan* who live in the deep interiors of forests of Western Ghats?

India's bio - diversity is the most significant one in the world. 47000 wild species of plants and over 81000 wild species of animals have so far been recorded and together comprising about 6.5% of the worlds known wild life. It is not only the sheer diversity which is significant but also its uniqueness. According to the botanical survey of India, as many as 33% of the flowering plants and 18% of the total plants, found here are believed to be endemic, i.e., grow only in India. In the case of fauna, endemism is high among group amphibian, of which 62% of species are believed to be found only in India.

Access to Our Genetic Resources

Throughout history biological species and varieties and the technologies and knowledge related to them have been exchanged between societies and individuals resulting in all - round enrichment of humanity. But in a present day world order, with an unequal world of economy and power, a global genetic agreement has every chance of misuse. This was quiet clear in the last couple of

centuries. It had been seen that the countries of the North like Britain, themselves poor in biological diversity, literally looting the resources of the biological rich nations of the South like India. No wonder that, in the negotiation for CBD, countries of the South fought for the deletion of the term 'common heritage'. They instead pressurized for and got acceptance on the principle of a 'national sovereignty' over their biological resources.

Countries of the North gradually designed several programmes for global bio-diversity, like studies on global bio-diversity, the bio - diversity rate, researches on bio-diversity, etc., to exploit the bio - diversity rich countries like India. For this purpose the capitalist nations sought the help of the World Bank. World Bank adopted a tactics of giving financial aid to the Developing Countries including India. In return to their financial aid, they demanded facilities for studies and research programmes under their control in matters like bio-diversity and other interested areas.

The European capitalist nations started working on the resources they collected from India and other countries in their laboratories and presented new biological materials and products in front of the world to get admiration. They raise the argument that these materials are the outcome of millions of dollars worth experiments; then they attempt to acquire the 'Intellectual Property Rights' (IPR) like patents, ostensibly to guarantee suitable return for the producers but more obviously to maintain monopolies for maximum profit. The problem became worse when they tried to patent not only industrial or medicinal products but also the plants, seeds, genetically modified organisms, germ plasma, etc., by putting them under the widening net of patents. Species wide monopolies are now becoming a possibility with the instances of granting of a single patent on all genetically modified soya bean and genetically altered mice have in USA and Europe.

The profit motivated neo - colonial powers like USA gradually realized that the tribal people are the knowledge centers of bio - diversity and knowledge of

medicinal values of different plants. They designed a new strategy to exploit the traditional knowledge of the tribes and then drive them out from the thick forests of the Western Ghats of Kerala that are the treasure houses of bio - diversity. Thus, the neo - colonial interventions began to affect the *Muthuvan* life directly.

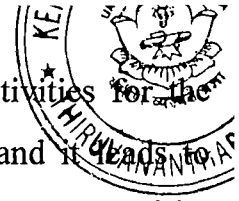
The first step of the US sponsored World Bank for the exploitation of the bi-diversity in India was to provide long term loans to the Central and State governments. The first project introduced by World Bank was the 'India Eco - development Project'.⁷³ The project was introduced by the World Bank as:

Name of Project	: India - Eco development Project
Project ID	: P036062
Country	: India
Region	: South Asia
Area	: Western Ghats especially Periyar Tiger Reserve.
Agency	: Forest Ministry, Kerala
Total Project Cost	: US \$ 67.00 million
Approval Date	: 5 September 1996.
Beneficiaries	: Regions of Bio - diversity and Ecological importance and the People within and nearby.
Project Aims at	: Tribes

After such an introduction to the project, the World Bank report continues - "India is the hot spot of bio - diversity which contains the total 60-70 percent of the bio - diversities in earth. It is one of the 12 Mega - bio - diversity countries of the world. These treasures of India have great economic value. These diverse bio-diversities are not exploited in a commercial or industrial basis. Nowadays these bio-diversities are on the verge of destruction and loss. The activities of the local people and tribes in the forest for their daily life are the main threat to the

⁷³ World Bank, *India Eco-development Project (Credit 2916 IN)*, May - 2000, Washington, 2000, p.1.

U154677



existence of these bio - diversities. The Kerala government's activities for the protection of forest and the bio - diversities were not effective and it leads to several conflicts with the tribal people. The joint forest management enacted by the Kerala government since 1970's with the help of World Bank also proved a failure. On the basis of these conditions, the World Bank is directing the new India Eco - Development Project. The Bank will give effective direction at times. The volunteer associations (NGOs) listed out by the World Bank should get a major hand in the implementation of the project."⁷⁴

The 34th condition of the project is that the government should take necessary actions to utilize a share of the amount granted by the World Bank for the development of the tribes and the gradual re - settlement of the tribes from the hot spots of bio - diversity in the Western Ghats to the outside lands. The funds were proposed to be utilized for the rehabilitation of the tribes shifted from the areas identified by the project team as bio - diversity hot spots. The intention of the World Bank and the multinational companies are to monopolize the bio - diversity of the region. The World Bank gave direction to the state government to drive out the *Muthuvans* and other tribes who live in the 10 settlements in Chinnar region. They indicate that Chinnar region is a hot spot of bio - diversity which are adversely affected by the interferences of these people. The ten settlements include the Champakkadu, Inchapetti, Palapetti, Alappetty, Mangapara, Mungamutty, etc., which are inhabited by *Mala Pulayas* while Puthukudi, Olokudi, Thayannankudi, Iruttalakudi, etc., which are inhabited by *Muthuvans*.

With the directions of the World Bank, the Kerala government enacted an order with *G.O. No: 40/2001* which aimed at the protection of the forest resources. The order says that, "the government is aimed: (a) to retain the forests as the nerve centers of the natural forest resources, (b) to transform the tribes from collectors of minor forest produces, (c) to take necessary actions for the protection of the forest

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, p. 3.

resources with the participation and co - operation of the tribes and (d) to the maximum utilization and exploitation of the traditional knowledge of the tribes.”⁷⁵

The attempt to exploit the bio-diversities in the world became strong with the enactment of CBD as an international law in 1992. By this agreement we, the Indians are the prime owners of the bio - diversity in our country. Other countries can have the right to use these resources only with the mutual consent. Here, the World Bank utilized the benefit of this provision and granting the state government a huge amount of money in the name of aid protection of Bio-diversities. Through these aids, they are trying to own the right to conduct studies and researches in the forests of Western Ghats through which they aim to occupy the traditional knowledge of the tribes on medicinal plants, seeds and bio - diversities, etc., and take Patent on this knowledge as findings and the results of the researches conducted in the region.

While providing funds to the India - Eco development Project and the Periyar Tiger Reserve, the World Bank aimed at the collection of information about the rare species of plants in the world and the rich bio - diversity. This exploitation was done by the experts of World Bank in Forest and Ecology, Jerika Mott and Malcum in the name of collection of primary data on the flora and fauna of the Reserve.

In an article titled “Adivasimekhalayile Vikasana Prasnangalum Sadhyathakalum” in the magazine *Aaranyam*(Mal.)” which was published by the Forest Department, the author who was the Chief Officer of the Eco - development - Tribal Welfare Section, describes about the World Bank Projects and their implication on tribes.⁷⁶ The article deals with a new project which was initiated by the World Bank and implemented along with the 10th five year plan. The article

⁷⁵ Govt. of Kerala, *G.O. No: 40/2001*, Triandrum, 2001.

⁷⁶ C Krishnan, “Adivasimekhalayile Vikasana Prasnangalum Sadhyathakalum” in Forest Department Bimonthly, *Aranyam* (Mal.), 2003, p.37.

clearly states that the project aimed at the control and prevention of tribes who inhabit the forest and its surroundings through the collection of forest resources.

Looting 'Intellectual Property Value' of Traditional Knowledge of Tribes

The neo - colonial powers were well aware of the great value of traditional knowledge of the tribes especially in the field of ethno-medicine and the knowledge of medicinal plants. It is evident from the example of a plant 'Catharanthus Roseus' (locally known as '*Savam Nari*'), which is used among various tribes in Kerala for the treatment of cancer and some other diseases is now widely used by the multinational companies in US for the preparation of medicines. The scientists calculated the commercial value of this plant as more than 700 million dollars, but the tribes did not get even a single rupee for their knowledge. The Tropical Botanical Garden Institute admits that each medicinal plant of the tribes has the value of millions of dollars. The multinational companies looted many such traditional knowledge and intellectual properties of the tribes and established Patent on them. The CBD never admits the right of the traditional (tribal) people on the bio - diversities of their region. Instead, it declares that the rights of natural resources as entrusted on the concerned countries. Due to this provision, the multinational companies could loot the natural resources and medicinal plants which are preserved by the tribes with a lot of difficulties, through the help of the ruling governments through various programmes like India - Eco development Project.

The 8.J provision of the CBD agreement says that it is necessary to respect and protect the traditional knowledge and the traditional people's ability to discover things. However there is no provision to ensure this and prevent the violation of this provision. The clauses 15 and 16 reads that if any intellectual properties or ability of tribes are extracted or exploited, then the utilizer must share the profit out of it with consideration and on the basis of mutual agreement. But these clauses do not put forward any preventive measures or any immediate judicial support to the tribes if they are betrayed.

The activities and programmes for exploitation of the traditional knowledge of the tribes are strong in Kerala. The exploiters adopt several measures to achieve their goals. The *Muthuvans* of Idukki are secret repositories of traditional knowledge regarding the practice of their ethno - medicine. They are familiar with hundreds of plants and their medicinal values. Some of them are explained in the previous chapter. Several foreign pharmaceutical companies, foreign agencies, etc., are providing funds to the researchers to tap this knowledge. Evidence in this regard is that a researcher from Plymouth University, USA, who is conducting research on a comparative analysis of the life and custom of *Muthuvans* and *Mannans* evinced unusual interest on information about their traditional medicinal and related knowledge when asked about it in person, she admitted that she was funded by an American Multi-national Pharmaceutical Company.

The tribes in Kerala commonly use a medicinal plant known as 'Arogya Pacha' (*Trichopus Zeylanicus*). This plant has the ability to resist many diseases; both endemic and epidemic. This knowledge of the tribal's is already exploited by the multi - national companies. The medicinal plant *Arogya Pacha* (*Trichopus Zeylanicus*) was processed and a medicine with the brand name 'Jeevani' was marketed by the Arya Vaidya Pharma with the help of *Kani* tribe of Kerala. The agreement between the *Kanis* and the Arya Vaidya Pharma was signed in 1995 with Rupees seven lakhs as royalty for the *Kanis* for a period of ten years. But the right and patent of the *Kanis* over this medicine ended when the Arya Vaidya Pharma handed over the patent right of 'Jeevani' and 'Arogya Pacha' to an American Multi - national Company for millions of dollars. These kinds of neo - colonial interventions in the Western Ghat region of Kerala and especially of Idukki region through highly sophisticated capitalist strategies and their inevitable interaction with the tribal inhabitants have jeopardized the future tranquility and harmony of the *Muthuvans* with nature and environment.

CHAPTER -V

AT THE MARGINS OF MODERNITY: THE CHANGING *MUTHUVAN* WORLD

For a long period of history, the *Muthuvans* were settled in the high ranges of Idukki, standing against the intrusion of the outside world into their life and hearths. In this long drawn battle, they were rooted to the remote interior parts of the forests living as collectors of forest products and as agriculturists. The study endeavors to trace the *Muthuvans* struggle and determination to forestall the intrusion of the outside world and their culture into their exclusive socio-cultural domain. However, in face of persistent onslaught of modernity in myriad forms, the *Muthuvans* have slowly and gradually been drawn into the influence of the dominant political economy and culture. The argument here is that the change in the *Muthuvan* social stratification was due to the influence of their incessant contacts with the outside world for umpteen reasons and modernity influenced their socio - cultural transitions. The chapter portrays *Muthuvan* society as poised a little uneasily - between the old and new. Change and continuity at the micro level alters the rather static and stagnant picture of the *Muthuvans* as picturized in most government records and anthropological writings.

The contemporary idea of modernity with which we are dealing or concerned with in the study is of recent origin. In 1960's, the American society, which was in search of an alternative to Marx's socialism took a new turn. The American sociologists gave a new shift to the definition of modernity. However it is difficult to define modernity as the concept is highly controversial. There are theorists who argue that the contemporary American and European societies are modern. By this they mean that these regions are bureaucratic, rational, secular,

democratic and capitalist. They emphasize that there is no alternative to such a kind of modernity. Although modernity was also the subject matter of classical theorists namely Durkeim, Max Weber and Karl Marx, the new concept of modernity refers to the American notion, which tries to posit modernity as an alternative to socialism. The idea of the 'new modernity' came into vogue in 1960 and Talcott Parsons was the first person who used the word new modernity to mean social differentiation.¹ The American modernity and by implication the present day modernity is social differentiation. It differentiates the people of the community by their acceptance or rejection of new ways of life. In a community there are people who readily accept modernization; at the same time there are people who reject modernity. In addition, there are also people who are prepared to accept modernity but they do not fulfill the pre - requisites which are indispensable to modernity. The end result of modernization is, therefore, as Parsons avers - social differentiation.

Modernity has been defined in various ways. Antony Giddens in his book *The Constitution of Society* has argued that modernity cannot be explained by a single term only.² It is in all respects multidimensional. Giddens is among those scholars who have resisted the equation of modernity with liberation or capitalism; industrialization or rationality. He says that no single variable can provide a satisfactory definition of modernity. However, there are other sociologists who also define modernity. Scholars explain that modernity may be regarded as a permanent revolution without a single goal or direction. As an on - going historical process, modernization represents a continuous departure from the past and an emphasis on change and development. The endless quest for higher levels of efficiency in goal attainment places a premium on innovation. The underlying assumptions hold that in specific areas of social life and in the performance of

¹ Jeffrey C Alexander, *The Modern Reconstruction of Classical Thought: Talcott Parsons*, London, 1983, p. 34.

² Antony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society*, London, 1984, p. 11.

specific tasks, the future potential offers an improvement over anything that existed previously.

Coming to India, modernity has been defined in different ways by different scholars. D P Mukherji argues that modernity in India should be made a synthesis of Western liberalism, Marxism, Vedanta and Indian Culture.³ Yogendra Singh's *Modernization of Indian Tradition* is a pioneering work, but he has a bias for tradition. In his analysis he argues that in the interaction between tradition and modernity, the former gets modernized. He, however, tries to give some of the elements of modernization. His approach to modernization is that; "Modernization approximates to such a cultural order. It symbolizes a rational attitude towards issues, and their evaluation from a universalistic and not particularistic view point... Modernization is rooted in the scientific world view; it has deeper and positive association with levels of diffusion of scientific knowledge, technological skills, and technological resources in a particular society. But what may be essential to modernization is the commitment to scientific world view, the internalization of humanistic and philosophical view point of science on contemporary problems and not merely the volume of technological achievements."⁴ He thus includes cultural phenomenon, rational attitudes, universalistic law, scientific world view, technological skills and humanizing attitude as parts of modernization. Dipankar Gupta, another theorist makes a valuable understanding of modernity in India. We should not make the mistake of understanding modernization in terms of technology. It is about people and how they look at other people. What is important in the analysis of modernity is that there are multiple modernities.⁵ What Gupta argues is that the variety of modernity that we find in USA is different from modernity of Delhi or Mumbai or in other words, the modernity that we find among the *Muthuvan* is different from the modernity which we find among the *Mala Arayans* or *Todas* or other tribal groups.

³ D P Mukherji, *Diversities*, New Delhi, 1979, p. 23.

⁴ Yogendra Singh, *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, Jaipur, 1994, p. 43.

⁵ Dipankar Gupta, *Mistaken Modernity: India between Worlds*, New Delhi, 2000, p. 32.

There is a variety of modernities. In this context an attempt is made to look at the traces of modernity which is found among the *Muthuvans* and compare it with the modernity found in the outside world.

What is problematic to epistemology and society is that there are scholars and lay men who do not consider modernity as beneficial for society. It is this aspect which makes the definition of modernity quite controversial. For instance Ulrich Beck in his book, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* argues that the new modernity has created a large number of risks for the people. The western modern world is now faced with fast food, global warming and several other risks including the degradation of environment. Ulrich Beck calls the new modernity as second modernity and says: The old industrial society is disappearing and it is being replaced by a risk society...⁶ The management of the risk is the prime feature of the global order. There is yet another sociologist Zygmunt Bauman who cautions the world saying that the present modernity is a holocaust.⁷ However, despite these controversial observations, it may be said that Habermas has argued at length that modernity is rationality and is still an unfinished project.⁸

Keeping all these theoretical explanation on modernity in mind, let us examine the modernity situation found among the *Muthuvans* based on some of the characteristics of the community. The third chapter had dealt with the traditional feature of the *Muthuvan* social life, the formal rules of the social organization, the relations which once existed between these people and their neighbours, the economic activities of the *Muthuvans* and those culturally inherited procedures which punctuate the individual *Muthuvan*'s passage through life. Nonetheless, it is observed through the field studies that the *Muthuvans* have modified, abandoned or innovated in several respect their social and cultural institutions. In effect the chapter is an effort to analyze the traditional picture of

⁶ Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, New York, 1992, p. 21.

⁷ Zygmunt Bauman, *Intimation of Post Modernity*, London, 1992, p. 65.

⁸ Ritzer J Blanning, *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas: From Modern to Post Modern*, New York, 1998, p. 78.

Muthuvan life which are expressed by the tribal people during the time of interviews and pictured in the ethnographic works of the authors like Edgar Thurston and to trace out the changes and modifications that came into effect in the traditional life of these *Muthuvans*.

***Muthuvan* Response Democracy and Constitutional Safeguards**

The year 1947 made no revolutionary impact on *Muthuvan* society. However, in the long run, the new India did certainly make its impact on *Muthuvan* society and other tribal groups in India. It is argued that like other tribal and non-tribal groups of the state, the *Muthuvans* also accepted the norms of democracy. Democracy is one of the forces to build the Indian nation. We very often talk about the national mainstream. Our political leaders are not tired of saying that they want to bring diverse multi - ethnic groups of the country into the national mainstream. There is however no mention of national mainstream in our constitution. What we can make out is that the elements of national mainstream mean democracy, socialism, secularism and rationality. The people of India along with the tribes and other multi - ethnic groups of the country are engaged in making India a democratic secular - socialist country. Later democracy got decentralized from Parliament to Panchayath Raj. Consequently, the eastern region of Idukki also became a part of the wider political process of the country. It goes without saying that the adult franchise and elections have been the most effective institutions of socio- political awakening of the villagers. The villages had a full of grown response to the democratic process in India.

Our data collected from different settlements in the various Panchayats of Idukki indicate that the *Muthuvans* are less responsive to the democratic processes. They use their right of franchise in a moderate way. The *Muthuvans* of Idukki had not found a predilection to any political party. During the time of elections, they did not become prey to factionalism. We cannot find any *Muthuvan* settlement divided into a large number of factions on the basis of political ideologies. The region near to Munnar where 35 *Muthuvan* settlements are situated is known as

‘Edamalakudy’. Government of Kerala declared Edamalakudy as a tribal (grama) Panchayat in January 2010. The election process in the region was very interesting as we cannot see any dispute over the selection of candidates or any political rivalry between candidates. The intra factionalism in the name of political ideologies or parties is absent among the *Muthuvans*. Politicization of community relations which is a characteristic feature of so called modern society is not visible in the *Muthuvan* community. However, we cannot ignore the increasing interference of both left and right parties in the Edamalakudy region after its declaration as a separate Panchayat. These kinds of political interferences may lead to factionalism in the tribal settlements in the near future.

Modernity in Religious Practices

Religion especially tribal religion has been of immense interest to anthropologists from the beginning of the discipline. This was because of a reading of the tribe as ‘Primitive’. Tribal religions have been seen as simple and more to do with nature worship. Mostly, they have been considered as static.

David Hardiman theorized the Devi movement in Gujarat in the beginning of this century for an understanding of tribal religious movements.⁹ G Aloysius’ study saw religion as an emancipatory identity in his analysis of the Buddhist movement among the Dalit groups of Tamilnadu under the leadership of Iyothee Thass. When it comes to the changes in *Muthuvan* religion, we can see different forms of religious beliefs, especially in its dynamic form of transition in certain settlements. We could not reach an emphatic conclusion in the absence of quantitative data. We can draw certain inferences from qualitative data personally witnessed during field studies. Multifarious changes are no doubt occurring in the physical and mental makeup of the *Muthuvans*. Traditional *Muthuvan* life and its conservative values are slowly but steadily making way for habits and practices that have entered the community from external relations and contacts. Changes in traditional identities recorded in micro detail will definitely be useful to place the

⁹ David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, Delhi, 1987, p. 65.

situation in a better light. The changes in the religious beliefs that occurred in the *Muthuvan* settlements of Idukki can sometimes be seen as resistance to the various power centers that are operating within the tribe. Yet they should also be simultaneously analyzed for impacts of the externally existing ‘great traditions’, ‘gender protests’, ‘dissipation of isolation’ and ‘shrinking of geographical space’ within the tribal communities.

This view ought to be juxtaposed to the kind of work done before, especially by scholars like M N Srinivas who see the changes in subaltern societies only as a hollow imitation of a “higher culture”.¹⁰ His concepts of Sanskritisation misses out on the situation that is making the subaltern cultures ‘imitate’ other cultures. Moreover, it completely elides over the effect of this so called imitation. When subaltern groups try to occupy certain rituals of the dominant groups, they change the ritual that would have acquired meaning only because of exclusion, very often exclusion of these very subaltern groups. So when they imitate, at one level it can be read as the acceptance of the dominant cultural ideologies. On another level, since it is also an effort to enter spaces, including ritual spaces hitherto shut to the subaltern, it is also resistance.

Looking into some cases observed during the field visits will make the problem easier to understand and analyze to what extent outside religions influenced the *Muthuvan* traditional beliefs and facilitated the phenomenon of conversion. None of the field studies could find any evidence of official conversion of *Muthuvans* from their traditional way of life and religion to another, but some evidence of change in their faith was visible. The study here takes the position that spiritual conversion, whether they use the rhetoric of individual change of conscience or not, always will be determined by material circumstances. This holds true for the subaltern as well as the dominant. In this scheme conversion can be seen, especially if executed by the subaltern groups, as a statement against the existing social order. We have many examples for this in India’s history. We have the example of conversion of Dalits into Buddhism in the

¹⁰ M N Srinivas, *Social Changes in Modern India*, Hyderabad, 1972, p. 98.

latter part of the nineteenth century in Tamilnadu.¹¹ Ambedkar himself converted to Buddhism and made his famous statement that he will not die as a Hindu given a choice.¹²

Examining the extent of the changes that are occurring in individual perception of religion among the *Muthuvans* of Idukki, we cannot make a sweeping statement on the whole region by pointing some deviations in the case of religious beliefs among a few *Muthuvan* people. The cases presented below should be taken as pointers to read contemporary societies, especially *Adivasi* societies in India. The two cases that are examined are varied. In no case has formal conversion to another religion or belief taken place. Yet, the interviewed subjects have all realized a change in their religious attitudes, this you can perceive to be conversion. These *Muthuvan* women have been chosen for specific reasons. Ratnamma, a *Muthuvan* woman had started worshipping Jesus Christ recently while Vellayammal had started believing in Amrithanandamayi, a god woman from South Kerala.

1. Ratnamma's Relation with Christianity¹³

Ratnamma of Plamalakudi, a *Muthuvan* settlement near Adimali has now an attachment to Christianity that took place at a time of great personal crisis for her. Her daughter was diagnosed with a serious gynecological problem. She suffered constant pain in her abdomen after she was treated by a local quack. At this point of time the daughter's husband left her. Ratnamma went to a meditation camp in Adimali conducted by the neighboring Christian missionaries. After that meditation she came back home with a calendar of Jesus Christ and installed that in her small one room house. She also began to wear a locket with a picture of Madonna with Jesus Christ. She holds the view that the Christian missionaries will

¹¹ G Aloysius, *Religion as Emancipatory Identity: A Buddhist Movement among the Tamils under Colonialism*, New Delhi, 1998, p. 86.

¹² Christophe Jaffrelot, *Ambedkar and Untouchability: Fighting the Indian Caste System*, New York, 2005, p.67.

¹³ Interview with Ratnamma, a *Muthuvan* woman at Plamalakudi on May, 2012.

provide a chance to the *Adivasis* for acquiring some education and ‘cultural improvement’.

It is clear that Ratnamma did not think of this change in the religious belief and conversion as a statement against the local social situation existing around her. A significant thing about Ratnamma is the peacefully co - existing way in which different spiritual universes exists in her life. At a point of time, she claimed *Murukan*, a Hindu god to be ‘our protector’, at the same time she describe Jesus Christ also as ‘our savior’. The existence of several divinities in Ratnamma’s thoughts and deeds point to the practical way in which she was approaching religion. Along with these gods there exists Ratnamma’s own world of Ancestral spirits. She used to get possessed by the ancestral spirits of the dead in her family.

She did not find it contradictory to have all the gods existing together. In fact she did not like the way her daughter Radha was ashamed of and kept denigrating *Adivasi* gods. For Ratnamma, belief was also a practical business. No need to antagonize anyone, she said. For Radha, who is educated up to seventh standard and belonged to the younger generation, it might have been important to say that there is no use worshipping their traditional gods or ancestral spirits. She says that, “it is not that I am a disbeliever in religion. But worshipping *Adivasi* gods or ancestral spirits does not seem to work for me, that is a truth”.¹⁴

2. Vellayammal’s Experience with a New God¹⁵

The motive which made Vellayammal of Kurathikudi to become a devotee of Amrithanandamayi is completely a different one. Unlike Ratnamma, she sees the motive as social, rather than just personal. She witnessed that the people of her settlement were suffering from excess drinking and use of other intoxicants. She believed that drinking and domestic conflicts as a result were tearing at the very fabric of *Muthuvan* life. She believes strongly that her community was in a

¹⁴ Interview with Ratnamma, May, 2012 .

¹⁵ Interview with Vellayammal, a *Muthuvan* woman at Kurathikudi on May, 2012.

backward state because of individual bad habits and drunkenness. Alcoholism is a social evil in Adivasi areas. It had become the biggest vice destroying individual lives.

She came to know about Amrithanandamayi through a television program; *Amrithavani* in which Amrithanandamayi give messages to the people. Amrithanandamayi in this context comes as offering a very clear alternative to her. 'Amma' who advises people to control their greed and avarice, became an icon for Vellayammal. This is how she describes her becoming a disciple of Amrithanandamayi. One night 'Amma' came in her dream and told: "you have seen me". This vision turned her life. She feels that her conversion is a social activity. She now wears her goddess's locket and desires that all the *Muthuvans* should believe in 'Amma'(As Amrithanandamayi is popularly known). To the question of "why should they do so?" Vellayammal explain that *Amma* knew the correct way of leading a happy and peaceful life. *Amma* would advice everyone to give up bad habits, especially drinking.

***Muthuvans'* inclination towards Mainstream Hindu Religion and Gods**

There are such instances of change in the faith among *Muthuvans* and advent of new beliefs and practices among the younger generation in the last two decades. The younger generation of the *Muthuvans* who began to go outside their settlements for daily wage labour brought back with them various ritual markers and beliefs for themselves. Instead of their traditional Gods, they began to worship the Gods of upper caste Hindus like Vishnu, Siva, etc.

Veeramani, a young *Muthuvan* from Andavankudi, who is regularly going outside of the Kudi for plantation works in Munnar and also works as a head load worker of the Girijan Society in Edamalakudy, speaks about the destruction of an earlier powerful *Muthuvan* clandom. He says, perhaps ironically, that it was 'rigid tradition' and 'custom' which led to the slow decay of a past glory. By tradition what he must have meant is the customs of the *kudy* especially the dormitory system which did not recognize individual's needs at all. Speaking of his

childhood days, he says: “I feel like we could not even eat what we liked, since everything would be decided by these elders”.¹⁶ He now believes in popular Hindu Gods like Vishnu and Siva. He keeps the pictures of these Gods in his house and offer prayers to them. Here we can see the example of a *Muthuvan* who is adopting the popular Hindu symbols as ‘new’ and as something that revolts against the rigid tradition and custom of the community. The powerlessness and irrelevance of tradition is symbolized by the lack of power of *Adivasi* gods in ‘modern time’. As Veeramani claims, even if many *Muthuvan* still believe in *Kottamalaswami*, *Muthi*, *Muniandi*, etc., but it is of no use because these Gods’ powers are on ebb now. New illnesses won’t be cured by these traditional gods.

A middle aged *Muthuvan* man from Plamalakudi, named Manikkan said, “Our gods are powerless these days”.¹⁷ In a situation of certainty of the powerlessness of their traditional gods and ancestral spirits, some *Muthuvans* are going for a change of the rituals they practiced. Very often, as in Ratnamma’s case, belief in a new god and conversion is not a wholehearted affair. It is an addition to an already existing belief system. Into her pantheon of various gods, mostly tribal and some Hindu, she also added Jesus Christ. She does not follow the logic of conversion that one leaves a religion to take on another. Though her relation with the new god is quite personal, there is also some kind of community association that she makes with the God of her choice at the moment. The context in which the change of belief happens is not just only the personal crisis in her life but overall frustration. “In the past, we did not dare to speak out our thoughts, because we were uneducated. But now we can question the elders and speak our minds” says Veeramani.

Can we consider the above mentioned cases of changes in belief and tradition under the frame of ‘Rejection of tradition’ or ‘Redefining of it?’ or ‘The face of Modernity’ as there is a clear distinction that is made with the earlier times and there is a rejection of ‘tradition’ of sorts. Though the adoption of new

¹⁶ Interview with Veeramani, Andavankudi on April, 2012.

¹⁷ Interview with Manikkan, Plamalakudi on May, 2012.

religious beliefs and Gods comes as a protest against the existing tradition, it is surely not a complete rejection of the old. In fact, it is a re - deployment of what is perceived as tradition. *Muthi* or any other *Muthuvan* god is not rejected outright. In fact they were redefined and reused. In this scheme of things *Muthi* becomes an *Upadevada* or sub god. The change in the prominence and position of the gods and their faces reveals whole lot of lessons about how the changes that are happening in the field of religious beliefs bases on rigid custom and tradition and the *Muthuvans* willingness to accept a new religion or a new God.

Modernity in the sphere of Economy, Land and Land relations

The mainstay of the *Muthuvan* economy in Idukki, before the time of extension of the control of the outside world over it was primitive subsistence agriculture of the 'slash and burn' type. The slash and burn method is described by Marshall Sahlins as "A specific form of Neolithic production which is characteristically practiced in tropical forests. It is a seasonably regulated sequence of procedures designed to open up and bring under cultivation a patch of forest land".¹⁸ This slash and burn method continued for a long time among the *Muthuvans*, though the duration of the fallow period got progressively reduced, even after the juxtaposing of the settled agriculture of the low-land people in the high ranges.

Traditionally, land in the wider sense of the term formed the pivot of the *Muthuvan* economy in general. However the question of who owned the lands did not arise among the *Muthuvans* so long as the land was commonly owned. After they reached the stage of 'slash - and - burn' agriculture, each family within a tribe used to be allocated an area by the headman according to its needs and ability to cultivate. That plot was cultivated for the subsistence of the family. So long as the family remained within a *kudi* and cultivated a plot, its occupancy or operational right over that plot remained undisturbed. Thus, while the tribe as a whole retained the ownership right, the individual *Muthuvan* family enjoyed the operational right.¹⁹ This type of institutional arrangement was possible in the earlier period

¹⁸ Marshall d Sahlins, *Tribesmen*, New Jersey, 1968, p. 22.

¹⁹ Field Notes.

because land was not, at that stage of evolution of the tribal economy, a limiting factor of production; labor alone constituted the scarce agent.

Under the system of such collective ownership of land by the headman of the *kudi*, the *Muthuvan* economy had been characterized as an undifferentiated, homogeneous community of primary producers. As explained in the previous chapter, the interaction which developed between the *Muthuvans* and the people outside the system gradually introduced changes in the structure of the *Muthuvan* economy. These structural changes varied spatially according to the type of socio-economic system to which the outsiders belonged as well as the policy measures followed by the rulers of the larger political systems encompassing the tribal areas. Restrictions began to be placed on shifting cultivation during the beginning of the 20th century in Travancore with the Girijan laws which is explained in the previous chapter. Since then, the *Muthuvan* agriculture in Kerala had been foregoing its extensive nature of 'slash and burn' in favour of settled cultivation.

Nicholson had stated that the 'slash and burn' method of agriculture followed by the traditional societies is a method that did much damage to the forests and the ecology.²⁰ However, others like Grigson stated that shifting cultivation does no harm to the soil.²¹ Whatever may be appropriate agricultural technique, the outside capitalist forces invariably attracted the tribes in varying degrees, to the ambit of the market economy whose rules of the game were in contradiction to the 'internal dialectics' of the *Muthuvan* economy and sowed the seeds of a differentiated *Muthuvan* economic structure.²² The central government and the state governments in India made legislations to prevent shifting cultivation followed by 'slash and burn' methods in the tribal areas.

This differentiation of a particular area of forest for cultivation purpose affected the man - land relationship among the *Muthuvans* which had significant regional variations. In the tribal settlements like Kurathikudi, Veliyampara, Moothasserry, Elampilasserry, etc., in Adimali Grama Panchayat, it resulted in the

²⁰ T F Shaxson, *New Concepts and Approaches to Land Management in the Tropics with emphasis on Steeplands*, Rome, 1999, p.12.

p. 13

otes.

replacement of shifting agriculture by the intensive mode of settled agriculture. In the settlements of Edamalakudy Grama Panchayat, where more land is available for cultivation, 'slash and burn' agriculture continues undisturbed for a long time. As a result of this historical process of differentiation and settled agriculture as part of plantation process, migration of the outside people and the interference of the Government, the *Muthuvan* peasantry has been divided into two categories, viz., the landed and landless. Thus, among the *Muthuvans*, landlessness - a problem unknown in their traditional society - became a grim reality. Surely, the extent of landlessness varied from one region to another.

However, what is more striking in this context is the spatial variation in the proportion of landless households. The government records on tribes shows that the landless *Muthuvans* are only 1.56 percent of the total population. The below table shows the area of land possessed and enjoyed by the *Muthuvans*.²³

5.1 Percentage Distribution of Land among *Muthuvans*

Sl No.	Land Possessed	No. of Families	Percentage
1.	Below 5 cent	318	9.61
2.	5-9 cents	185	5.59
3.	10-24 cents	306	9.25
4.	25-49 cents	218	6.59
5.	50-99 cents	474	14.30
6.	1-5 Acres	1754	53.1
7.	Above 5 Acres	2	0.06
8.	Landless	52	1.50
	Total	3309	100

The *Malayarayans*, *Uralis* and *Muthuvans* were the first to become settled tribal agriculturalists in Kerala.²⁴ The attempts the *Muthuvans* made against encroachments along with the adjustments they made to become capable of the emergent market situation had implanted firmly in their minds the desire for individual ownership of land and settled agriculture for separate families instead

²³ ST Development Department and Department of Local self Governance, *Pattikavarga Samudayangalude Adisthana Vivara Sekharanam*, - 2008: *Idukki Jilla Report*, Trivandrum, 2011, p. 45.

²⁴ *Ibid*, p. 77.

of collective farming based on shifting method. This fact, along with the continued market involvement brought about changes in the intensity of cultivation and cropping pattern, further strengthening the desire for land ownership. Thus a cumulative upward process has been set in motion, leading to greater realization of productive potential of permanent land - holding and acting as a counter veiling force against the tendencies towards dispossession.

On the whole, 45 percent of the land holding *Muthuvans* in Idukki possesses less than one acres of land on an average. We can term them as 'marginal farmers' as cultivation being insufficient to meet the subsistence requirements of these households throughout the year. Thus the private ownership of land and the change in the cropping pattern from collective farming to individual/familial farming made almost half of the *Muthuvan* population depend on the collection of various forest products or on the sale of their man power for wage labour for supplementing household income.

Around 53 percent of the cultivating *Muthuvan* households in the district belong to the 'small farmers' category operating an average area between one to five acres. Considering the location of the land, nature of the soil in the hilly regions, etc., it can be inferred that within these 53% of the *Muthuvan* population, 80% of them too have to supplement their income from agriculture by collecting various forest products and working as wage labourers in the nearby plantations. Thus 87 percent of the cultivating *Muthuvan* households in Idukki have to offer themselves, to varying degrees, in the labour market or on the process of collection of forest products to supplement their income from self - cultivation. Only 11 percent of households derive their income from self-cultivation.

Shifting agriculture which is the basic mode of production of the traditional *Muthuvan* community has therefore been on decline due to the forces of modernity and only a small proportion of the *Muthuvans* are now engaged in it. No information is available regarding the total area of land under shifting agriculture. However, given the forest regulations and the numbers engaged in such

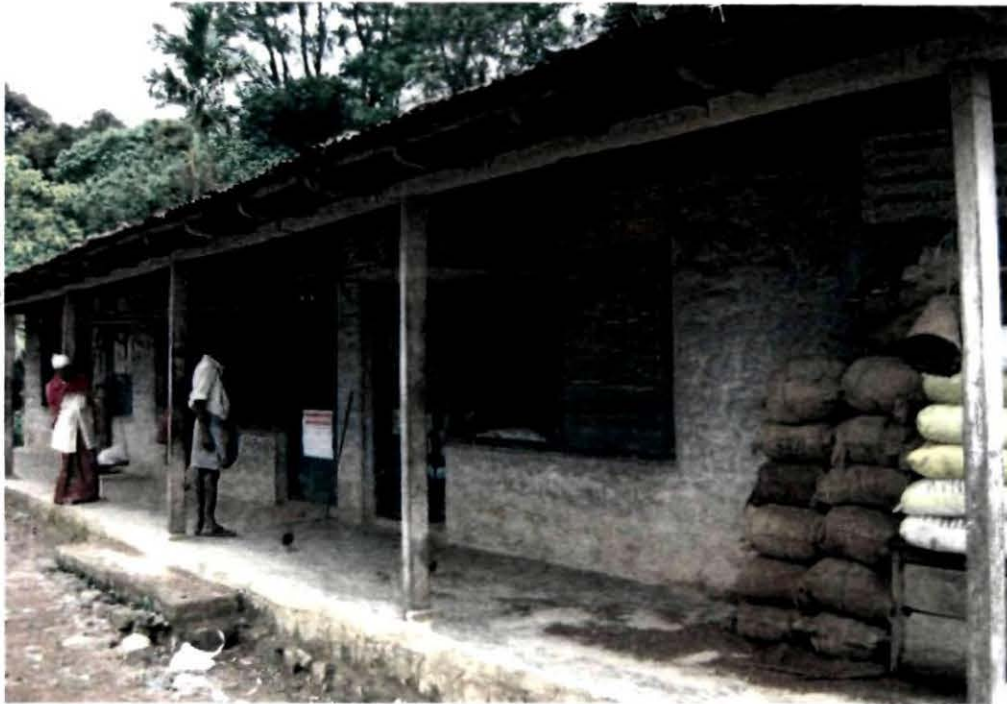
agriculture, it can be presumed that only some of the *Muthuvan* families inhabiting in the settlements of Edamalakudy Grama Panchayat, Marayoor Grama Panchayat, Mankulam Grama Panchayath, etc., are now practicing this primitive method of agriculture.

Changes in the Agricultural Commodities and Food Habits

Due to the penetration of various forces of modernity and the pressure of market forces, the traditional monoculture of *Muthuvans* which consisted of cultivation of coarse cereals such as *ragi*, *cholam*, etc., were substituted by diversified agriculture with commercial crops resulting in crop - mix in *Muthuvan* cultivation.

Ragi, the staple crop of cultivation of *Muthuvans* as mentioned by Edgar Thurston,²⁵ still continues to occupy the major share of the crop acreage at many settlements. At the same time, other food crops like rice and tapioca which were not used by them in the past are now cultivated at an increased rate. This reflects a sign of change in the traditional food habits of the *Muthuvans* with regard to food grains. They cultivate orange, mango and lemon in some areas. Guava is a common fruit found in almost all the *kudi*. Along with agriculture *Muthuvans* collect the wild tubers and honey from the forest. They also collect *rudraksha* and *kunthirikkam* which is also known as *thelli* in *Muthuvan* language from the forest and sell it through the Girijan society. *Muthuvans* rear goats and chicken. But, they use neither the milk nor the egg; they believe goat milk is for goat kids and keep the eggs for breeding. *Muthuvans* eat the meat of goat and chicken. Very rarely, do they use milk and that too is used for children. However, in Marayoor area those who have cattle, use its milk. There is a *kudi* in Edamalakudy named Kavakkattukudi, where they rear cows but never use its milk. They use the cow dung as manure and for flooring. Their food timings vary depending on their work. They usually go to work by 9 am in the morning and are in the field up to 3

²⁵ Edgar Thurston assisted by K Rangachari, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V., Madras, 1909, p. 91.



Picture 15. Girijan Society and Public Distribution Centre, Edamalakudy



Picture 16. Indran of Shedkudi carrying 50 kgs of rice from Pettimudy to Edamalakudy Girijan Society(28 kms.)

pm in the afternoon. *Muthuvans* often drink black tea without sugar. They eat twice a day that is around 8 am in the morning and 6.30 pm in the evening and drink black tea several times a day. Traditionally, the staple food of the *Muthuvans* was finger millet. Their daily menu includes rice and finger millet. The place of their *Katti* or *korangatti*, a gruel prepared from finger millet has now been taken over by rice meals. Government of Kerala provides 22 kg of rice in a month for Rs 1 per kg. This has brought drastic changes in their food habit. They prepare either *sambar* or *adaka*, a curry prepared out of a green vegetable or its varieties along with rice. They never cook more than one curry. *Muthuvans* rarely use vegetables and mainly use pulses like yellow gram and red gram. Women on their way back home from the field collect green leaves, wild vegetables, mushroom and tubers for supper. But, the availability depends on season. Some months they hardly get anything. Especially during the monsoon season with heavy rain and wind they cannot go out to collect anything and it is difficult to survive during those months. Most of the households do not keep sugar, though some of the households keep jaggery.

Chinnar Wild life Sanctuary is the home of approximately 755 *Muthuvans* who live within the 90 sq.kms area of the Sanctuary. They have been living in the region for centuries, practicing shifting agriculture, hunting wild life and gathering variety of products from the wild habitats. Since the declaration of the area as Sanctuary in 1984 these tribes have been asked to cultivate crops only in the area allotted to them resulting in the enforced change from the 'slash and burn' to the short rotation shifting cultivation in the area allotted to them. The mixed crop cultivation in *Muthuvan* settlement is an enforced sedentary form of cultivation with a short fallow period of 2 years. Finger millet (*Eleusine Coran Cana*), maize (*Zea Mays*), pigeon pea (*Cajanus Cajan*) and chilli (*Capsicum Annum*) are common in almost all plots while lady's finger, sweet potato (*Ipomaea Batatas*), etc. are also seen in many plots.

Recently, many families in Chinnar - Marayoor region started cultivation of lemon grass (*Cymbopogon Flexuosus* Wats) for commercial purposes.²⁶ The lemongrass cultivation in Chinnar region shows that this new crop allowed the *Muthuvan* farmers to become more productive and economically efficient using lands with infertile soil not suitable for mixed food crop cultivation. Therefore, the lemongrass cultivation may be considered as a sub-system adapted to micro - environmental variation and economically efficient one. It may be also be pointed out here that among different sub - system, of the land use system of the Chinnar region nowadays more emphasis is placed on lemongrass cultivation. Because of this, it appears that there is less interest among farmers on other subsystems such as hunting and gathering. It is also seen that the *Muthuvans* have now turned their attention to cultivation of high value crops such as cardamom, arecanut, pepper, lemongrass, etc., with a considerable degree of inter-regional variations. For example, the settlements of Edamalakudy cultivate cardamom as their main source of income, while the *Muthuvans* of Adimali cultivate pepper in large quantity.

The above mentioned changes in the agricultural products, crop-diversification, modes of production, etc., have taken place in imitation of the cropping pattern of the market-conscious immigrant non-tribal farmers and planters, who introduced in their newly acquired lands of high ranges, crop-diversification appropriate to the market demand and the agro-climatic conditions.

Another plausible reason is the economic compulsions arising out of the new situation in the '*Muthuvan* region' having close proximity with the 'non-tribal sector' and the former has no existence independent of the latter, one such economic compulsion was the prevalence of the debt credit nexus forcing the *Muthuvan* farmer to cultivate the kind of crops preferable to the non-tribal creditor. Thus the imitative tendency and economic compulsion played their part in the adoption of new cropping pattern, production of high value crops, which are the indicators of modernity in the sphere of economy and land relations.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

Market Participation

Since data are not available on the total quantity of output produced, we are not in a position to examine directly the degree of participation of *Muthuvan* farmers in the product market. "The Planning Commission Report on the Assistance to Co - operative Societies" report that the annual production of cardamom from the Edamalakudy Panchayat, which is solely occupied by *Muthuvans* is about 40000kgs. It is evident that there are considerable inter-regional variations in the extent of market participation of *Muthuvan* households. The mode of transaction in the markets is also important in understanding the relative ability of the *Muthuvans* to take advantage of the market forces. The Devikolam Girijan Society itself procured 160000 kgs. of cardamom from the tribes in one year at the existing market price.

A free market enables a producer to decide the time and place of marketing and to realize the full value of his market surplus. In an imperfect market situation, with the active operation of intermediaries those choices of the producer get restricted, and consequently he is handicapped in realizing the full value of his marketed surplus. The modern capitalist market system and the role of moneylenders and cardamom traders increased in the *Muthuvan* settlement regions and exploitation was common by lending them money in advance. This situation was more acute when the producers are poor and have to depend upon the credit advanced by these intermediaries during the time of agricultural off seasons. As these loans are often crop-secured, the *Muthuvans* are obliged to sell the products immediately after the harvest at pre-determined prices. Once indebted, a vicious circle develops from which the *Muthuvan* households seldom escape. The market participation and product market, which has developed along with modernity as its feature made the *Muthuvans* subject to exploitation.

Modernity through Social Mobility

Like most other tribal groups, the activities of *Muthuvans* remained restricted to their isolated geographical and physical space for a long period of

time. Prior to the arrival of the European planters and settlers from the low land, in the Western Ghats region, the *Muthuvan* work - force was dependent on agriculture as self cultivators. The subsequent displacement of the *Muthuvans* from their lands, which is explained in detail in the previous chapter, resulted in a high proportion of them being reduced to the status of agricultural laborers. The migration which started gradually among the *Muthuvans* is characterized by 'pull' factors. Outmigration promised high income and an attraction of modern ways of life. It is evident that the migration of small and marginal farmers, whether temporarily or permanently, helped them to supplement the meager agricultural income from their land. Migration also helped the poor *Muthuvans* to reduce disguised unemployment and mounting pressure on land. The *Muthuvans* wish to hang on to their tribal base and migrate repeatedly and for varying duration, either to the same urban areas or plantations or to different ones. It can be termed as circulatory migration. The trans - locatory migration is the process in which migrants move from their rural living areas to settle down permanently in the urban area of their choice. This phenomenon is not prevalent among the *Muthuvans*.

The numbers of migrant agricultural labourers among the *Muthuvans* have steadily increased. Several *Muthuvan* youths go outside of their settlements to engage in agricultural labour work in the nearby tea, cardamom and pepper plantations of the non-tribal land holders. We can see the shift of *Muthuvans* from their traditional role as self cultivators to a new role of agricultural wage labourers. This phenomenon is an effect of the market and the increased influence of outsiders in the high ranges of Idukki and the marginalization and displacement of the *Muthuvans* from their original land to the deep interiors of forests. Among the displaced *Muthuvans* who occupied enough area of land under their operation remained as the cultivating tribal households and the *Muthuvans* who were left without any cultivable land had to depend on wage labour for their livelihood.

Role of Modern Medicine in the *Muthuvan* World

The introduction of modern medicine has multiple impacts on the *Muthuvan* community in general and the ethno medical system in particular. The allopathic medicinal aid and medicinal practices came to the doorsteps of the *Muthuvans* during the plantation period itself. The allopathic medicine is a new system of medicine and all its methods and concepts of etiology were alien to the *Muthuvans*. At the initial stages of its introduction, the *Muthuvans* never bothered to avail its facilities. They thought that modern medicine was not ideal for their culture and it could not able to treat their illness. At the early stages of the introduction of modern medicine it was a period of non - contact between the community and modern medicine. Some of them even feared to approach the modern medicinal practitioners. During this time they continued the use of ethno medicine for the illness afflicting them. Because of the withdrawal of the *Muthuvans*, modern medicine could not do anything worthwhile for the health care of the *Muthuvans* in its initial period of introduction in the *Muthuvan* areas.

However, with the passage of time the *Muthuvans* started availing the facilities of modern medicine. The efforts of the medical personnel, the awareness programmes, education of the youths, increased mobility, close association and contact with non - tribal immigrants etc., influenced the way of thinking of the *Muthuvans* and persuaded them to experience modern medicine. Initially, the use of modern medicine by a small percentage of the people especially the younger generation, who were mainly working as wage labourers in the plantations, evoked a rebellious attitude among the rest of the community. Often the elders and traditional medicine men (*Vathy*) ridiculed the people who used modern medicine, which in their opinion would bring the wrath of Gods and ancestral spirits. Modern medicine was thus judged as anti - cultural and useless.

In the area of general health, it is observed that there is a growing pattern of treatment-seeking behavior from the part of *Muthuvans* especially among the men going for wage labour outside. If they suffer from fever or chest pain, they will

treat themselves with their traditional medicine. If they are sick for many days, they cannot go for work and it affects their financial status and enjoyment of other activities like celebration of festivals they resort to allopathic medicines for a fast cure. The men consume foreign liquor, which is a new element that has entered into their life from outside. They believe alcohol has some medical potency to cure diseases. Vasanthi, a *Muthuvan* woman, says that, 'After heavy loading work it is necessary to take alcohol, otherwise her man will suffer from chest pain'. If the chest pain is not cured even after two or three days then he goes to the hospital for an injection. *Muthuvans* prefer injections rather than tablets for fever and other diseases. They believe that the injection works faster than tablets.

The Role of Government Agencies

One of the important external agencies that had influenced the health system and culture of *Muthuvans* is the Department of Health, which through their interventions promoted by government initiatives and projects, viz., medical camps, vaccination programmes, distribution of medicines and injections, etc., has impacted tribal culture and their curative care process. Most of the *Muthuvan* settlements are in the remote and inaccessible places. Health department provides sufficient funds to the District Hospital and Community Health Centers for providing free treatment including medicines and laboratory tests to all tribal patients. The schemes namely "Comprehensive Healthcare Project for ST's" with the funds provided by the central government are being utilized in Idukki for the health care of the tribes. Health camps have been the major health intervention introduced into *Muthuvans* life. In the medical camps the doctors give medicines and vaccinations to children and pregnant women. As per the record of department of health, all the children below five years from Edamalakudy *Panchayath* are vaccinated. Now the impression of *Muthuvan's* on vaccination is that, 'This medicine will protect our children from all the illnesses. The Health Department allows *Anganwadi* workers to keep some medicines in the *Anganwadis* of Edamalakudy for common ailments like fever, cough, diarrhea and also for body pain. They write the names of medicines on the cover and supply it to the needy.

All these initiatives had resulted in the increase of dependence on modern medicine among *Muthuvans*.

Going to town for medical help, undergoing tests, X-rays, scanning and so on appear as herculean tasks for the *Muthuvans*. This shift to hospital often happens at a last stage of disease when the case is beyond recovery through treatment and in many cases the patient would die. Hence a belief gradually emerged into their mind that those who are going to hospital will come back dead. It was reported recently²⁷ that a person was taken to hospital (Medical College, Kottayam) with advanced stage of jaundice and declared dead in the hospital. The people of Edaliparakudi to which he belonged are scared of treatment at the medical college, based on such past experiences and observations and hearsays about it. Health Inspector Ravichandran observes, “*Muthuvans* usually depend on modern medicine at the last stage of illness. In the last phase of an illness, it may not be possible to save one’s life. But the people blame the modern medicinal system and its treatment.”²⁸

ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) workers try to make people in the tribal settlements aware of the need for treatment at an appropriate time but *Muthuvan* people are not much interested to seek treatment from outside and are also to some extent unwilling to avail of treatment offered by modern medicine. Many of them avoid meeting non *Muthuvans*, as language is a barrier and less exposure to the outer world prevents their interaction with others. However, after introduction of traveling allowance to hospitals, free medication and daily allowance of food for those who are admitted in the hospital by tribal welfare board, things are changing slowly. Now, the number of *Muthuvans* taking medical treatment has increased whereas earlier there were no cases of hospital admission. Department of Tribal Development introduced a scheme to spend Rs.50000/- on each *Muthuvan* for their medical treatment. This amount includes vehicle (taxi)

²⁷ Field Notes, July 2011.

²⁸ Interview with Ravichandran, Health Inspector, Munnar in February, 2013.

charge from the nearest vehicle accessible point to hospital, food, cost of medicines and doctors fee.

Role of Modern Medicine on the Settlements

In the case of illness, *Muthuvans* first think of local healers who are available in the *kudi* or nearby *kudi*. To treat any disease they first apply their knowledge of ethno medicines and in addition to this, they take allopathic medicines available in the *kudi*. If they are not cured, then they decide to go to the hospital. Some individuals in the *Muthuvan kudis* are experts in treating jaundice, skin diseases and problems related to eyes. They do not reveal those medicines to the fellow *Muthuvans*. They believe by sharing the contents of medicine to others it may lose its effectiveness. Their ancestors who passed the knowledge to them strictly warned them not to tell anyone. But restricting the knowledge to a limited number of people will slowly erase that wisdom from the *kudis* and may be after one or two generations such valuable treasures of knowledge may disappear totally.

Muthuvan people of Adimali region now started keeping allopathic medicines within their houses and use them during emergencies. Many of them go to hospital for further treatment if the illness lasts for a week and in cases when the self treatment does not work. However, such practices are not observed in Edamalakudy Panchayat (except Societykudi, Edaliparakudi, Nadukudi, etc.) and settlements in Marayoor and Chinnar region where they take complete rest and lie down on the mud floor near the hearth and take traditional ethno-medicine for common illness. They also perform certain rituals using water and they drink that water along with medicine. Babu, a male staff of the Health Department, shared his observations about the health status of *Muthuvans*. According to him *Muthuvans*, are very healthy as they live inside the forest area and have the advantage of enjoying fresh air and water. Therefore, they need less medication to cure an illness as compared to outsiders.

The *Muthuvans* struggle inside the forest during times of epidemics. On some occasions, *pooja* and ethno - medicines do not help. Their helplessness during such times has made them dependent on allopathic medicine. In a way, the *Muthuvans* have lost or abandoned lots of traditional health knowledge, but still they have not yet fully succumbed to the lure of modern medicine and health facilities. They are caught up in the dichotomy of apprehensions and doubts over embracing modern medicine, the inability to access it and more importantly the fear of erosion of their valuable traditional knowledge and their authentic sources. Hence it was natural for them to depend on these external medicines which could save their life during emergencies. Even, when they have accepted these modern medicines they still prefer and value their ethno-medicine and their traditional healing practices.

Dynamics and Response in SRH Practices

Modern medicine brought in many changes in sexual and reproductive health practices of the *Muthuvan*. One of the key points this research brings into focus is how ‘modernity’ and modern medicine affect sexual and reproductive health practices of *Muthuvan* (women) and how do they interpret the role of contemporary practices in their life along with the struggle for preserving their traditional medicine. Reproductive and sexual health practices are the areas where the push and pull of ‘modernity’ are observed. *Muthuvan* women do not know their exact delivery date since they never note down their last menstrual date so the accurate calculation is not possible regarding the date of delivery. It is observed that in the *kudis* after the expected time (as per their calculation) pregnant women would wait for delivery pain. As they have no other choices, they would have to wait till the pain actually starts. Special care for pregnant women, like intake of iron tablets, is unheard of in their traditional life. Hospital deliveries are a recent occurrence in the *kudi* and even now the hospital deliveries are very few. Interestingly, most of the women who go from the *kudi* to the outside hospital for delivery had Cesarean session. In all cases, the reason was no sign of delivery

after the due date. The due date is decided by the doctor through a scanning process in the third trimester. It may be in some cases a few days or a few weeks later. In cases which reach the hospital, the doctor decides the due date and if delivery does not occur even after one or two days, they take the baby out surgically.

What is Mala-D for *Muthuvan* Women?

Mala-D is subjected to diversification in terms of its original purpose and practical use and is popular among ordinary *Muthuvan* women. Their typical mode of usage of Mala-D is always in tune with cultural conveniences and thus this external object, Mala-D, easily became an artifact for the actors. The Health Department introduced Mala-D among *Muthuvans* in the mid-1990s as a birth control measure. When the women started using it for menstrual control both men and older women vehemently opposed this trend, but gradually they do support the use of Mala-D in private spaces. The *Muthuvan* women are hard working and have a major role in the household and agricultural works. If they go to stay in *Valamapura* during their 'impure' days, it becomes difficult for men and older women to handle the agricultural and household works. Therefore husbands silently (sometimes openly) support the use of Mala-D for preventing/stopping menstruation. The men, who go to shops outside the *kudi* bring Mala-D and give it to the women. Chinnaswami, 25 years old, who is a married man from Andavankudi, adds, "In our *kudi*, a lot of women use Mala-D. We know it is wrong, but that is also convenient for women. So we men cannot oppose them if it is their decision to take that pill".²⁹ Again, Mayilswami from Ampalpadikudi, 70 years old, expresses his anger at using Mala-D, "If anything happens to any women in this *kudi* after taking this medicine, no one here will take them to the hospital. Those who get sick because of this medicine will die here only; that is it."³⁰ Health department strictly warned all medical shops in Idukki from selling Mala-D to *Muthuvans*. But Ramani told us that, cartons of Mala-D were being

²⁹ Interview with Chinnaswami at Andavankudi, in June, 2012.

³⁰ Interview with Mayilswami at Ampalpadikudi, in May, 2012

bought by men from Tamilnadu since it is not available in Munnar. Even small teashops run by *Muthuvan* men in the settlements also sell it, which shows the demand and popularity of the capsule.³¹

An Anganwadi teacher named Vijaya working in Edaliparakudi says, “we are giving awareness to the women individually that menstruation is a process that is natural and if we try to stop it with these substances that will damage their body. Even though they listen to us always, they go back and use it without any remorse”.³² Padmanabhan, Health Inspector in Adimali says, “We are not giving contraceptives to anyone in the *kudi* except the married mothers.³³ If anyone misuses this contraceptive for other purposes than birth control measures, we are not responsible for that. They make available these tablets from outside shops too. Any way it is affecting the health of the women and therefore, we are planning to conduct awareness classes for that”.

Socio - Cultural factors behind the usage of Mala-D

There were plenty of arguments in the *Muthuvan* community in support of the use of Mala D. The most important of them is a woman’s feeling of isolation from the community during the time of menstrual periods. Isolation in the *Valamapura* for five days is not an easily digestible and bearable proposition for young *Muthuvan* women. Secondly, leaving agricultural field for five days may lead to loss of cultivation and crops at the peak time. Thirdly, when a married woman moves over to *Valamapura*, her husband is left alone with their children, if any. He has to cook for himself and the children, has no one to talk to, and has to take care of the children especially those who reside in the home. In their custom the husband has to keep a distance from in - laws. Hence, more and more women prefer to stay back at home and bypass the restrictions around menstruation.

³¹ Interview with Ramani, a *Muthuvan* woman at Societykudi, in May 2012.

³² Interview with Vijaya, Anganwadi teacher working at Edaliparakudi, March, 2012.

³³ Interview with Padmanabhan, Health Inspector in Adimali, in June 2012.

The introduction of modern medicine and usage of these contraceptive pills are new threats to the *Muthuvan* community itself. The excessive use of these contraceptive causes increased rate of infertility and ovarian cancer among the *Muthuvan* women. The health department conducted a survey in which they observed that from adolescent girls to the mothers, there is a widespread use of Mala-D. The health department also observed that the rates of infertility among women are increasing among *Muthuvans* and the number of children in the family decreased from an average of 3-4 to 1-2 in the past 10 years. There are many cases of childless couples in the *Muthuvan* settlements. The excessive use of contraceptive medicines and the decrease in the birth rate in *Muthuvan* settlements are indicators of the negative effect of modernity and modern medicine.

Usage of Mala-D and its Effects

Muthuvans re - conceptualized and re - configured the world in which they live, in terms of reproductive and sexual health practices without upsetting their traditional cultural domains regarding pregnancy and child birth. However, the interventions of modernity disturbed this tribal scenario. Mala-D, a contraceptive was introduced among *Muthuvans* by the Health Department. It has been the least preferred contraceptive among women from higher economic groups as it is a government owned brand of mass produced oral contraceptive pills and is provided at a subsidized rate under the contraceptive social marketing programme of the Government. Rural women in the villages are the target groups under this programme. The thrust behind promoting these contraceptives seems to be a rather hidden technique of population control implemented among poor women especially from the marginalized communities. The reason they pointed out for targeting these marginalized and poor women is that usually they have more number of children and it is easy to control their population with oral contraceptives and allopathic medicines. Government, as part of implementing their agenda to control population growth exploits the illiteracy and ignorance of these poor women.

One of the features of family planning programmes is the treatment of infertility. However, a paradoxical effect had occurred in Edamalakudy Panchayat and in many *Muthuvan kudis* in Marayur and Chinnar region as many women had become infertile due to the long term and continuous use of Mala-D, in an 'innovative' way adapted to their local-specific needs.³⁴ Only recently the Departments of Health and Tribal Development began to notice the extensive usage of oral contraceptives among both married and unmarried *Muthuvan* women, and they decided to conduct a family health survey among the *Muthuvans* of Edamalakudy. Based on this report, few politicians and activists took this issue to the authorities and to the public and due to their pressure, the Health Department initiated intensive awareness programmes against the extensive usage of oral contraceptives.

Acceptance to Modern Medicine: Not much Changes

Even though modern medicine has gradually come to stay among the tribes and it is now accepted along with ethno-medicine, the latter is still strong in the *Muthuvan* world of illness and cure. In the present age of modernity the common man may be tempted to presume that modern medicine has taken over ethno-medicine and is the sole agent of health care of the *Muthuvan* world too. But such an assumption would be far from reality. The acceptance of modern medicine does not mean that the *Muthuvans* have lost all their faith in their own ethno-medical system. The *Muthuvans* are not ready to give up their beliefs and practices regarding the causes and cure of diseases in its pure form. However the activities of the government and private agencies have brought changes in the modes of treatment in the *Muthuvan* world of rigid customs and tradition.

The *Muthuvans* believe in super natural causes for certain diseases. To them some diseases originated from supernatural reasons like, evil eyes, sorcery, breach of taboo, anger of ancestral spirits and wrath of God. For such diseases, they still depend on ethno - medicines mixed with magical rituals. While for

³⁴ Field Notes.

certain other epidemics like chickenpox, measles and cholera they do not take any medicine at all because of the belief that these diseases are causes of the wrath of Mariyamma. Therefore no material medicine is efficacious to check them. If somebody dares to consume a medicine, it will aggravate the anger of the goddesses and the patient's condition will become worse. Only some magical rituals are performed after the seven days of secluded life for these diseases.

The preventive medicines are also doubtful efficacy to the majority of *Muthuvans*. Many mothers hide their children in the houses when the health workers came to the settlement as part of Pulse Polio Programmes. They are not aware of the Polio vaccines and their benefits. After experiencing modern medicine the *Muthuvans* reached a conclusion that there is no miracle in its treatment and that it is not capable of healing most illness effectively. They have also found that for the cure of certain illness their own ethno medicine is more efficient than the modern one. So gradually they have started selecting the type of medicine according to the nature of illness. Without blindly following a new mode of treatment, they have utilized the abilities of that medical treatment which is found efficacious for a particular illness. They have considered their own previous experiences while selecting one mode of medical treatment. As Gould opined on traditional societies, "A kind of folk pragmatism acts as a selective principle to help determine which method of treatment is to be chosen".³⁵

Progress in Education

An important aspect of modernity is education. Indian constitution has specifically identified the tribes among the weaker sections of society and has made special provisions to check their exploitation and further their upliftment. Education has been accepted as one of the main means of achieving this objective. Special educational incentives such as opening of separate schools, reservation of seats in educational institutions, provision of students mid special scholarships,

³⁵ H A Gould, *The Implication of Technological Change for Folk and Scientific Medicines*, New York, 1957, p.56.

etc., have been introduced for the benefit of tribes. In spite of all these measures, education has made little progress among the *Muthuvans*.

According to the report of Tribal Development Department published in 2011, the literacy rate of tribes in Idukki district is 68% while the literacy rate of *Muthuvan* is 52%.³⁶ The literacy rate of *Muthuvan* men are 65% and women are 39%. In fact, among these literate persons, most of them got only primary education. Among the *Muthuvan* population only fifteen students reportedly passed the S.S.L.C. examination. Only three *Muthuvans* acquired higher secondary education. We could not find any *Muthuvan* who had got any professional degree.

These data show that education is in a pitiable state among *Muthuvans* beset with many problems. Our educational system is structured on a world - view which is diametrically opposed to the *Muthuvan* world - view. Education, nowadays, does not emphasize on the need to maintain harmony, the centre stone of *Muthuvan* society. Education now is used to produce the necessary human resources for the creation of material resources and unlimited profit. This is facilitated by professional courses in the IT, engineering and medical sectors. Values like competition, individualism and hierarchy are juxtaposed against the values of co - operation, collectivism and equality, held dear by the *Muthuvans*. This philosophy upheld by modernity alienates the *Muthuvans* from the present school system and its educational institutions.

The present school system does not impart *Muthuvan* culture and does not develop in the student, both tribal and non-tribal a love for the languages and culture of the tribes in Kerala. Little or no education is imparted through tribal mother tongue even at the schools in tribal areas. Even in the Lower Primary school and the single teacher schools in Edamalakudy panchayat, inhabited only by *Muthuvans*, the medium of instruction is in Malayalam or Tamil because the teachers are from the outside society and they are not familiar with the *Muthuvan* language. Hardly any attention is given by the authorities to the development of

³⁶ Pattikavarga Samudayangalude Adisthana Vivara Sekharanam, - 2008, op. cit., p. 68.

Muthuvan languages. *Muthuvan* language is different from the dominant non-tribal language in the state, Malayalam. *Muthuvan* children find it extremely difficult to learn an alien language right from the beginning of their school days. Our education system neglected the contributions of the *Muthuvans* to the oral tradition and culture of our society. Their rich oral traditions are branded as primitive and savage. The existing social science text books have been written from the dominant non-tribal high caste cultural point of view. In text books, there are very few references to the tribes, mostly negative and treated them as uncivilized and sub-humans.

There is hardly any concordance between our schools and *Muthuvan* culture. Schooling conflicts with the basic education that *Muthuvan* children gain from participation in their own culture. *Muthuvan* culture and tradition generally require mastery of an elaborate and highly specialized knowledge of their natural environment, special training in folklore, religion, agriculture, technology and other skills. *Muthuvan* children are required to spend years studying the ‘dominant cultures’. The textbooks are in direct competition with the normal enculturation process. This is one of the main reasons why the *Muthuvan* parents are not interested in sending their children to school regularly.

Further they fear that schooling deprives the *Muthuvan* community of the important contribution that children often make to their subsistent economy. The great disparity between what the *Muthuvan* children learn in schools and what they learn from other educative agents within their society leads to negative educational and societal consequences. The parents believe that the dominant culture based schools communicate negative attitudes to the tribal children about their culture. As a result, they become demonstrably alienated from their own culture, in such a situation, children become outcasts- not fully accepted by the dominant society and no longer fully able to play a part in their own endogamous, de - integrated *Muthuvan* culture.

Transition from Oral Tradition to Written Culture: A Painful Process

The transition from oral tradition to written culture is very critical for the *Muthuvans*. There is a notion, propagated by the dominant society, that what is written is more authentic than what is orally transmitted. The history of the *Muthuvans* is replete with cases where they were deceitfully deprived of their ancestral lands due to lack of written documents. They have to retreat from their home lands which were inhabited by them for centuries, without any hesitation during the time of plantation process and the migration of outsiders to the high-ranges during the colonial times and post-independent period as well. They had no written evidences to show them as documents of their ownership of lands. These bitter experiences have gradually forced them to believe that what is written is more true and strong than what is orally transmitted. They began to look down upon their rich oral tradition and started blindly accepting the dominant culture based written materials. Through a manipulative use of literacy, the dominant classes have been able to create a superior - inferior ranking between the written - oral knowledge systems. The present system of education has made the transition from pre-literate to literate stage, a painful process for the *Muthuvans*, possible. Instead of being gradual and smooth, it was sudden and abrupt and does not build upon the traditions and practices of the *Muthuvans*.

Oral and written cultures differently condition the thought processes of their people. *Muthuvans* because of their oral culture, think, learn and remember differently. Due to the abrupt and painful transition to the literate stage and lack of scope to read and write in their mother tongue, a negative attitude towards education in the minds of *Muthuvan* children was generated. The present day text books, teaching methods and teacher training programmes do not take into account these problems and do not consider the entirely different learning style and ability of a *Muthuvan* child.

Educational programmes in Kerala are institutional, full time and sequential with one-point entry. There is no flexibility in the choice, content and duration of

the courses and it is difficult to adjust the curriculum and textual materials to the needs and interests of the *Muthuvans*. The *Muthuvans* who are poor do not have easy access to the educational institutions and cannot afford a full time programme. The number of never enrolled out of school children are high in the *Muthuvan* settlements in Chinnar region and in the remote settlements of Edamalakudy panchayat. Even if the parents sent their children to school, they become drop-outs or push-outs from the system within one to four years. It shows that education had not created much impact on them. The fixed school hours are not compatible with the needs of the *Muthuvan* society.

Many of the *Muthuvan* settlements are in the remote forest areas. Even if a parent of a child is interested in the education of his child, the lack of educational facilities or the long distance of the educational institutions prevent them from sending their children to the schools. For example there is only one Lower Primary School in Edamalakudy panchayat for the schooling of children from 38 settlements in the panchayat. The school is situated in the Societykudi. The settlements in the panchayat are located at a distance of 500metres to 18kms from Societykudi. The geographical location and distance of the settlements from the school make the schooling in-accessible to the children. It is very difficult for the small children to reach the school every day by crossing hillocks, thick forests, rivers and streams. The schools also face serious problems which also affect the education of the children. Teacher absenteeism is a serious issue in single teacher schools in various settlements in Idukki. The acceptance of teachers by the community as one among them appeared to be important to increase the schooling participation in *Muthuvan* settlements, says Sathish who is working as a teacher in a single teacher school in Edaliparakudi.³⁷ An understanding and respect for *Muthuvan* culture and tradition is important for teachers to gain the acceptance of the children, he continues.

³⁷In an interview with Sathish, Master, Single teacher School, Edaliparakudi.

The content of the text books and the curriculum also serves as a constraint in popularizing the education among the *Muthuvans*. *Muthuvans* fear that it will alienate their children from their tradition and customs. According to *Muthuvans*, the curriculum of the schools separates the students from manual work and does not invoke dignity of manual labour. It is not production oriented and does not develop occupational skills. Often it is totally irrelevant to the needs of the *Muthuvan* community. The curriculum and instructional materials do not invoke any respect to the rich cultural identity of the *Muthuvans* as also of their enormous creative talent.

By imposing on the *Muthuvans*, the values and culture of the dominant society, it perpetuates the existing unjust and in-egalitarian social structure. The syllabuses and text books used in the schools are based on the life and culture of the dominant society. They contain ideas, concepts and beliefs alien to the *Muthuvans* and create not only problems in learning but also a negative attitude among the *Muthuvans* towards their own culture. The use of Malayalam as medium of instruction and the non - tribal teachers who consider the *Muthuvans* and other tribes as inferior to them also create serious problems for the *Muthuvan* children. Language is the main cementing factor that expresses the identity of a given community. There is a non - declared policy to suppress the tribal languages and to impose on them the dominant language of the area. Thus education in the present day schools has become a process of acculturation of the *Muthuvans*.

In the context of high school education, the *Muthuvan* children have to rely on the schools away from their settlements. Here the schools with hostel facilities acquire significance. The following institutions are functioning for tribes in the district under ITDP Idukki.

Institution	No.
Model Residential Schools	2
Pre-metric Hostels	12
Industrial Training Centre	2

These institutions are built to facilitate the education of tribal children from distant region providing free boarding and lodging. But the numbers of *Muthuvan* students in these institutions are very low. Most of the *Muthuvans* are not ready to send their children to the schools which are outside their world. The *Muthuvans* fear that a contact with the outside world will pollute the children and will destroy their values and traditions. A victim of such a fear is Sivan from Puthukudi who got education up to seventh standard in Vinobha Niketan, Vellanad. His parents were willing to continue his education but he had to stop his schooling because of the opposition from the elders of the settlement. At present, the situation is slightly changing and parents are ready to send their children to the boarding schools. The degree of opposition of the elders in sending children to the outside schools also shows a decrease.

Transitions in Physical Appearance, Dress Code, Ornaments, etc.

Muthuvans are moderately short, long headed and their complexion varies from very light to dark brown. Both men and women wear ear rings, women wear ear-rings on the Pinna and Earlobes. Over the centuries, distinctive hairstyles have been another hallmark of the *Muthuvans*. It is true that the *Muthuvans* seem as an exceptionally hairy people. Both sexes let their hair grow long and often knot it at the back. The men grew bushy moustache and beard. *Muthuvan* legends suggest that at one time the community dressed in clothing made both of tree barks and animal skins; but woven cloaks have also been worn by them for centuries. A careful observer wrote on *Muthuvans* more than a century ago that the men wear the *languti* and leg cloth of the Tamil style. A turban is also worn and a blanket is invariably carried and put on when it rains.³⁸ But a century later, we can notice the change in their physical appearance. Now it is common for young and even middle aged men to have cropped hair; clean-shaven face and without any turban on their head. But the old men and women of over sixty years of age continue, by and

³⁸ Edgar Thurston, *op.cit.*, p.87.

large, to spot the traditional hairstyles and clothes. Hair oils (especially coconut oil) have begun to be used as grooming aids. We can see the *Muthuvan* with modern umbrellas instead of that made using palm leaves in earlier days.

Muthuvan women in Thurston's time wore the cloth after being wrapped round the waist and tucked in there, it is then carried over the body and two corners are knotted on the right shoulder. AAD Luiz also reports on *Muthuvan* women wearing *mundu* knotted over the right shoulder.³⁹ Today, women wear *saree* instead of *mundu* and have also started wearing blouse. While men traditionally wore *langutis* (cotton breechclout held in place by a string), women wore a strip of old cloth or nothing.⁴⁰ Now Western - style under shorts, pants and brassieres are becoming popular among the younger generation. Children, who reportedly wore a plain cloth around themselves in earlier times, now almost always wear South Indian or Western style clothing: shirts and shorts for the boys, little frocks or blouses with long skirts for the girls. Infants are dressed in cotton shirts or blouses and seldom have any lower clothing, being swaddled in strips of old clothes.

Muthuvans do not weave their own cloth, not so far as we can tell have they ever done so. The blankets for their cloaks come from the handlooms of weavers in the lowlands, but now they also purchase machine made blankets in the market. The garment that seemed to set traditional *Muthuvan* apart is a thick woolen blanket, identical for both sexes but worn in a slightly different manner by men and women. The blanket is worn around the back like a large stole, with the striped end thrown over the left shoulder; men drape it so that it reaches just below the waist and women wear it in full length, covering the whole body from neck to ankles, with the stripes running vertically down the front of the body. The blanket is worn especially at ceremonial occasions and in public places.

³⁹ A A D Luiz, *Tribes of Kerala*, New Delhi, 1962, p. 205

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

Given that adult *Muthuvan* today are wearing the same apparel - the large blanket sheet- that they wore more than hundred years ago, it would seem that they are quite conservative in matters of dress code. Yet sartorial innovations are nothing new among these people. For example in recent times virtually all *Muthuvan* men have taken to wearing Western-style shirts with or without the blankets and some have even adopted *chappals* and shoes. Yet the basic conservatism of the *Muthuvans* reveals itself in restriction on the wearing of modern clothing at certain times and places. A person has to remove his/her shoes or foot wears before approaching a sacred place and he has to cover himself with blankets on ritual occasions and foot wears were always removed before entering a house.

Changes in the institution of Marriage

The system of marriage among the *Muthuvans* has changed during this decade. They have adopted many customs from few other people. Though *Muthuvans* have only limited interaction with the outside world, many changes gradually have come into the *kudis*. In Andavankudi there was a marriage, where the boy was from Marayoor. The practices related to marriage in the *Muthuvan* settlements in Marayoor have slightly changed from that to Edamalakudy due to their interaction with the outsiders. Most of the traditional practices associated with marriage have been eroded or diluted among *Muthuvans* of Marayoor. In Edamalakudy the bride's friends were getting ready to play hide and seek, as part of traditional practices. But, the groom said to the bride's friends, "I cannot go and find the girl, if you want me to marry her come out with her". In the past, a special comb named *pukari* made by the groom was gifted to the bride, which was supposed to be worn in the hair as a lifelong gift. These days the boys do not know how to make this comb. It used to be considered as a sign of marriage. Widows do not wear this comb. However, the new generations do not follow this custom.

Westermarck in his *Short History of Human Marriage* tried to show that polygamy, that is, having more than one wife at a time gives status to a group.⁴¹ Here, it is important to note Thurston's report that polygamy and polyandry exist among *Muthuvans* in the first decade of 20th century.⁴² Hundred years ago there was practice of both polyandry and polygamy. Polygamy was practiced among the *Muthuvans* as a social custom at a time when it was a symbol of their status. Polygamous marriages are reported as a common custom among the *Muthuvans* in the work of A A D Luiz also.⁴³

Polygamy was not difficult for the *Muthuvans* in the earlier days since they were not restricted in their settlements and there was enough forest land for cultivation and the vast areas of land required large number of hands to work on the fields. *Muthuvan* women constitute the major work force in the agriculture sector. So in the old days polygamy was practiced as a common custom of marriage. There are a lot of folk songs which vividly narrate the wide spread practice of polygamy among *Muthuvans*. A A D Luiz recalls that in the field studies which he conducted in 1960-1962, he came across a large number of *Muthuvan* men of 55-75 years of age group who had as many as four wives at a time.⁴⁴ According to Elizabeth Marshall Thomas there were two distinct benefits from polygamy: one was the elevation of status and second was additional number of hands for cultivation.⁴⁵ Polygamy has been a part of the deep rooted traditional beliefs of the *Muthuvans* in the earlier times both as a symbol of status and as a supportive factor of production.

What is the status of prevalence of polygamy among the *Muthuvans* today? The field studies conducted as part of this research work could not find evidence of the prevalence of polygamy as a common practice among the *Muthuvans*. There

⁴¹ Edward Westermarck, *Short History of Human Marriage*, London, 1926, p. 54.

⁴² Thurston, *op.cit*, p. 85

⁴³ A A D Luiz, *op.cit*, p. 205

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 206

⁴⁵ Elizabeth Marshall Thomas, *The Harmless People*, New York, 1959, p.22.

was one polygamous family in Kurathikudi in Adimali panchayat. Enquiries revealed that the head of the polygamous family, Karuppu Kunji, now 78 years of age, married three women when he was in his youth. He feels ashamed of it, when asked about it.⁴⁶ At this stage of life, he is leading a peaceful life with his three wives and the children from them. The present old generation is more monogamous but few men who belong to the age group of 40 to 50 years show a trend of following polygamy or multiple relationship. But many people from 25-40 years age group have a negative feeling towards those who have multiple partners or the ones who have abandoned his wife and children and gone along with some other woman. They have a moral to live with their own wife and family and it is observed that some of the abandoned wives and children have stigma attached with the father's/husband's extra marital relationship. Some cases have led to suicide. This “stigma” and notion of “morality” is a new encroachment to their world from outside. We can observe such feelings among the *Muthuvans* who have more interactions with outside world.

It is clear that their marriage system is undergoing transition. On that trajectory one can see a transformation of polygamy to monogamy in the present generation and few from the younger generation are showing a tendency towards the polygamy which has roots in their culture itself. Further, the attached stigma and morality shows an external influence on the institution of marriage. Now the idea has entered into the *Muthuvans* that polygamy leads to increased population in the family, larger family size, high family tensions and need of more land divisions. As *Muthuvans* became victims of the increased plantation process and encroachments, they were forced to practice settled agriculture instead of shifting cultivation. This resulted in the demarcation of personnel lands and properties. The polygamy and the increased number of children would lead to more land divisions. For these reasons, the centuries-old polygamy has now been rejected in favor of the monogamy, which is the popular view of marriage in the outside society. Education, contact with the outside world and the self - developed

⁴⁶ Interview with Karuppu Kunji, 78 years old *Muthuvan* at Kurathikudi in June, 2012.

rationality and reasoning also played their part in abandoning of polygamy, practice which was a part of the deep rooted tradition of the *Muthuvans*. But the strict guidelines associated with the matters of reproductive life like freedom restrictions, taboos and separation continue to exist. Both exogamy and also marriage outside *Muthuvan* community is still considered to be big offenses. *Muthuvans* are not yet affected by 'modernity' to that extent because of their geographical seclusion, less access to education and lack of excessive exposure to the outside world.

Early Marriage of *Muthuvans*: Slight Changes Occurred

Various texts and government records mention about the early marriage that occur among the *Muthuvans*. Many works on *Muthuvans* report that the marriages took place among *Muthuvans* immediately after the attainment of puberty of a girl. Normally the girls got married at an age between 12-14 and the boys between 15-17.⁴⁷ The spread of education, contact with outside world, the awareness programmes of the health department, etc., constrained the *Muthuvan* to think in a rational way regarding the age of marriage. Gradually the age of marriage was marginally modified. During interviews and field studies conducted as part of the research work, we did not find a single case of *Muthuvan* marriage below the age of 18 years for males and 15-16 years for females. It is still below the governmental norms of 21 years of age for male and 18 years for the female. The changes that have occurred in recent times is a positive sign of a tradition modified and if the authorities and health department continue the attempt definitely the age of marriage will reach up to the governmental norms.

The Practice of Dowry System: A New Modernity

The *Muthuvans* as a tribal group did not have the custom of dowry which in all respects is a practice of 'dominant culture' in Kerala. Obviously, dowry is a high caste Hindu practice, which was adopted by the Christians and Muslims in

⁴⁷ Thurston, *op.cit*, p. 85; *Vide* also, A A D Luiz, *op. cit.*, p. 206.

the course of time.⁴⁸ The field notes show that dowry had made inroads into the *Muthuvan* world recently. We cannot find any description of dowry as a custom of marriage in the early works which mention about *Muthuvans*. It proves that the dowry system is a recently implemented social custom which was adopted by the *Muthuvans* from the outside world. They could not pay large sums of money as dowry, so they gave a share of the property to the bridegroom and allowed him to cultivate that land. After marriage the couples start a new life in a new house built for them which is now considered as the duty of the girl's family. *Muthuvans* have thus taken to the evil customs of dowry practiced by the dominant external culture in which the impact of modernity in terms of education has not worked well.

Crisis in Married Life

Crisis in marriage have quadrupled among the *Muthuvans* with the influence of outside agencies at various levels. Nowadays, the number of girls going outside the *kudi* for various purposes, viz., modern education, training programmes organized for *Mahilasamakya*, *ASHAs* and *anganwadi* helpers, etc., have increased. All such programmes provide exposure to the external world. Most of these training programmes educate the tribal women on different aspects of women empowerment. Once they come back to the *kudi* and share their experiences with other *kudi* women, they also get a picture of the world outside and get motivation for change. These experiences and sharing have helped to boost confidence among *Muthuvan* women. One common reason for recent rise in the marriage crisis is the result of arranged marriages between an educated girl and non literate boy or an elderly man. When an educated and empowered woman marries an uneducated man, the mismatch may eventually lead to marital discords. *Muthuvan* settlements in Edamalakudy panchayath, Chinnar Marayoor and Adimali have quite a number of families with separated couples.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Gail Omvedt, "Kerala is Part of India: The Kerala Model of Development, Dalits and Globalization", in Joseph Tharamangalam (ed.), *Kerala: The Paradox of Public Action & Development*, New Delhi, 2006, p.201.

⁴⁹ Field Notes.

Muthuvans generally say that there is no question of extra marital relationships in their tribal community. '*Vechal vechidathu irikkum*' (joined for lifelong), is what their conviction is. But one can observe increasing marital discords and increasing number of separations. In case of separated couple they may not have any valid reasons to justify it. It is the *orumura* that rules over cases of divorce, but there are enough evidences and arguments to assume that 'modernity' has greatly influenced the drastic changes in marriages and separation among *Muthuvans*. *Muthuvans* are now exposed to media, especially Tamil commercial movies through easily available VCDs. They are the 'windows to the world' for the *Muthuvans*, prompting them to fancy the 'wonderful' life in the world out there. Their children are now named after film stars. The already existing ambiguity regarding relationships among them is amplified with the influence of the external world through media. There are women who have begun to talk back to men, asserting their dignity and freedom. They do it when their men come home drunk and are hopeless. But such responses are not accepted by men who learned and practiced through their custom that the wives should not question their men resulting in physical assaults and separation.

Excessive Use of Drugs and Intoxicants

Before coming into contact with the external forces of modernity like market economy, open market system, etc., the usage of intoxicants taken from the palm trees were popular among the *Muthuvans*. They traditionally used the liquor taken from wild toddy palms which grow on the western slopes and after allowing it to become fermented, drink it freely. No marriage function took place without partaking a drink of this toddy. Occasionally there were bouts of heavy drinking. But with the coming of forces of open market economy, there has been a modification in their drinking habits. When the youths went out of the settlements for wage labour and their contact with the open market made them familiar with the Indian made foreign liquor. Admittedly the new generation indulges in heavy drinking of foreign liquors. They cannot afford the high price of these foreign

liquors which has led to an economic crisis and indebtedness in the *Muthuvan* world. The remote settlements had no access to the foreign liquor shops in Munnar, Marayoor or Adimali and thus they do not prefer foreign liquor and are satisfied with the native drink.

Role of Women in *Muthuvan* Society: Not Much Changes

The issue of gender in tribal studies about large tribal population has yet to gain adequate attention because of the stereotype idea that tribal societies are free from gender discrimination - a perception that is rooted in the romanticized view of the so-called primitive and small scale societies documented in the earlier anthropological and ethnographic literatures. From Engels⁵⁰ to Boserup⁵¹ and backed by some feminists - there is a tacit assumption that there is freedom, dignity and mutual respect between men and women in primitive hunting and horticultural societies.⁵² Sex based inequality, where it is acknowledged is seen primarily as a consequence of the unalterable fact of long childcare and the exigencies of primitive technology rather than culturally constituted.⁵³ The same perception seems to pervade in the studies of tribal societies in India. The relative autonomy that women enjoy in economic and personal matters and the seemingly egalitarian ethos of pre - literate, small - scale societies led ethnographers to glorify the status of tribal women.⁵⁴ It cannot be disputed that these tribal women are not absolutely subordinated and possess greater economic independence and freedom of movement than their counterparts in various non - tribal societies in India. But it would be naive to regard this as a sufficient indicator of their superior social status. Evidence suggests that even in hunting-gathering societies women

⁵⁰ Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, London, 1972, pp. 123-125.

⁵¹ Ester Boserup, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, New York, 1970, p. 97

⁵² Kathleen Gough, *Marriage and the Family*, New York, 1971, p.76.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Such perceptions are seen particularly in, Varrier Elwin, *The Tribal World of Varrier Elwin: An Autobiography*, London, 1964.

were mostly treated as the second 'sex' with greater or lesser subordination to men.⁵⁵

The apparent equality between the sexes seen within tribes is a compulsion of their subsistence level of production which is clear from the widening gender gap that accompanies economic differentiation and modernization. A closer look would show that gender inequality is not alien to tribal societies and is largely obscured by their poverty, which compels men and women to closely co-operate and share in joint economic activities. Planners, however, seem to have failed to appreciate this fact and thus make tribal policies more gender sensitive. As a result, despite the paradigmatic shifts in mainstream development strategies tribal women continue to be marginalized.

It needs to be noted that gender is not a fixed unchanging entity that is naturally derived but is intimately linked to particular social and historical contexts. Although generally disadvantaged, a woman's position is dependent on the interplay of a variety of social factors such as age, caste, class, ethnicity and race and her capacity to negotiate with the system. Whenever these factors, singly or jointly, mediate unequal gender relations, women's subordination gets sharply accelerated.

Here, an attempt is made to position the institutionalized nature of gender biases in *Muthuvan* social structure by broadly focusing on the customary laws and practices, their social and political ideology and woman's role in economic and public affairs because it is through these social indicators that we get to see how the subjugation of women is legitimized and reinforced in *Muthuvan* society. Notwithstanding the internal variation which characterized the *Muthuvans*, in terms of their ethnic origin, socio-economic development, degree of integration or proximity to the general society, no one can deny the fact that there is very little

⁵⁵ Kathleen Gough, *op.cit.*, p.27

gender difference between men and women. However, by and large women are held subordinate to men in several areas of social life. In such a paradoxical situation, we should examine the problems both at the levels of the traditional and at the modern socio-political structures and processes.

To place things in their proper historical and sociological perspective, it would be instructive to proceed with our analysis by examining the nature of rights the *Muthuvan* customary laws accorded to women. This is important because like most traditional societies, among *Muthuvans*, women's lives are governed by the tribal personal laws and customs. A quick perusal would show that the *Muthuvan* customary laws which include people's beliefs, customs, social mores, precepts, rites and usages practiced since time immemorial are not always conducive to the interests of women. Indeed, apart from a few exceptions, most of the customary or personal laws, particularly those relating to property and marriage, are highly oppressive to women.

Although women shoulder heavy economic responsibilities, commensurate with men, the *Muthuvan* customary laws like those of non-tribal societies deny them equal rights to property. The system of inheritance among *Muthuvans* is matrilineal which is in favor of women only in theory. In general practice, women are entitled only to maintenance rights while men control land and all other movable and immovable properties. It shows that even though *Muthuvans* follow the matrilineal principle of descent and inheritance, where the woman is the focal point of the household organization, when it comes to the allocation of rights over land, a sharp distinction is maintained between 'ownership' and 'control'. While ownership of land is transmitted through women, control invariably lies with men. The existing pattern of land management is adverse to poor *Muthuvan* women. Even today it is vital to note that *Muthuvan* women who spend long hours in the forests in their struggle to meet the survival needs of their family, have little say in

the administration of their land or in the management of their natural productive resources.

While matriliney gives woman the right of descent, the authority over family lies in the hands of man. Significantly, to consolidate and occupy their position, men debar women from social participation. The *Muthuvan* women enjoy less freedom in public places and are not allowed to talk with other men especially outside of their community. The men folk have an eye on the movements of women. The women are not allowed to go outside the settlement alone, so the husband or father accompanies a woman while going outside the settlement or to town. The women are also prohibited from expressing their opinion in public meetings, ceremonies, etc. They are also not allowed to speak loudly in public places. During the feasts and festivals, women are denied major roles and are not allowed to occupy seats reserved for persons of honour. On such occasions they are relegated to the mundane tasks of cooking and serving. Even after the wide ranging changes taking place in the political sphere of the state or the declaration of Edamalakudy, which is solely inhabited by *Muthuvans*, as a separate Panchayat decisive and conspicuous changes in these long held views and traditions have not materialized.

The *Muthuvans* recognize that women are vital to the stability of their economy and ethnic identity. They are taking regressive steps to protect their social and material interests through imposing strict normative codes to regulate their conduct. As a result, a woman's marriage with a non-*Muthuvan* is highly disfavored, as it is not only deemed to be economically injurious to the community but also perceived as a threat to their culture and ethnic identity.⁵⁶ Indeed, in recent years, ideas about reproduction and sex have become more stringent and explicit among *Muthuvans*. The reason is that in *Muthuvan kudis* near to Adimali,

⁵⁶ C R Rao, *Tribal Women in an Age of Change*, Calcutta, 1997, p.9.

there are reported cases of unwed mothers who bear children fathered by non-tribals. Ironically, most of these women are lured into liaison with the non-tribal men by the prospect of marriage and economic security. However, to add insult to injury, they more often than not end up as mere objects of (sexual) exploitation, as they are unceremoniously rejected by their suitors who in a majority of cases are married men from the plains, who leave their family temporarily behind and migrate to the hills in search of land and work. Many *Muthuvans* expressed the view that a blank recognition of such fatherless children would not only erode their cultural identity, but also provide outsiders easy access to their social and material resources through illicit unions with tribal women. Such incidents prompted *Muthuvan* men to look at women as a source and a factor responsible for their cultural erosion. Gradually as a preventive measure to these problems, they began to treat female sexuality as the property of the community, a woman's marriage with an outsider now is seen as a gross - violation of the regulative norms of the society and as such invites strong repressive actions. The women are nowadays not only strongly discouraged from having any contact with non - tribal men, but also conservatively restricted in the matter of clothes and fashion, they are expected to conform strictly to tradition.

Even though women are marginalized from the mainstream social life and social activities, when it comes to the household and production, *Muthuvan* men and women work on an egalitarian basis and contribute to the domestic production and income. Some recent literatures discuss women's role in economy in relation to her rights in property, her access to work and the ideological constraints which determine them. Marxist writings on this, clearly assume the importance of women's economic contribution to the society as an important and sufficient indicator of her status. Some have gone beyond that; Kelkar and Nathan in their work on simpler tribal groups shows that even in the absence of control over the immovable property (e.g. land) we can position women in better position with

respect to decision making and participation in the production process of a household.⁵⁷

In this respect, the *Muthuvan* women are in a far better position when compared with their tribal counterparts like *Mannan* and *Urali*. *Muthuvan* women have a leading role in the agricultural and household work which are led and controlled by them and the *Muthuvan* society allow them a say in the economic activities of the household. There is a substantial presence of women in the *Muthuvan* agricultural labor force. According to the survey report published by the Government of India based on the census conducted in 2001, about 82 percent of *Muthuvan* women were actively engaged as agricultural laborers.⁵⁸ Observations made during the field visit and studies also substantiate the above statement. *Muthuvans* still follow the traditional methods in agriculture which need much human labour in which women plays a decisive role. Besides working hard in the fields, women are also found to engage in animal husbandry, fire wood collection, gathering of forest produces, etc. Household chore and childcare are also predominantly a woman's duty.

The *Muthuvan* men started going to the town areas and the tea plantations in search of wage labour which uprooted the tradition and cultural base of their behavior. Outside contacts have led to the consumption of factory made liquor, practice of gambling with money, etc., which adversely affected the household economy and led to increased atrocities and violence against women in the houses such as wife beating and abandoning of wife. The division of labour on gender lines which was considered to be equal in tribal societies is deteriorating with migration of the men for plantation works and their practice of alcohol consumption has disturbed the sober equilibrium of *Muthuvan* society.

⁵⁷ G Kelkar & D Nathan, *Gender & Tribe: Kali for Women*, New Delhi, 1991, p, 54.

⁵⁸ *Census of India, Kerala, Data Highlights, The Scheduled Tribes, 2001*, p.4

A change in the law of inheritance also stands against women. Some *Muthuvan* families even went to the extent of making a drastic change in their kinship system. Perceiving that matrilineal descent is detrimental to their ethnic and economic interests, attempts have been made in some quarters to redefine kinship roles and bring change in their customary law of inheritance. Efforts were made by some men to mobilize public opinion to change the inheritance pattern from matrilineal to patriarchal. As a result, in recent years, the move to change the inheritance law and suspend rights of women has been intensified.

Slight Regional Variations in the Behavior of Women

In Marayoor, the *Muthuvan* girls easily interact with people and sing the songs like *ashapattu* during their works without any interruptions even when confronted by a man especially a stranger, whereas in Edamalakudy girls shy away from singing the very same songs like *ashapattu* in front of strangers. Obviously, *Muthuvan* people at Marayoor have more exposure to the outside world. People from outside community like teachers, health workers, etc., come and interact with them regularly as part of government programmes and commercial traders come for buying the sugarcane, jaggary and lemon grass oil. Moreover, the *Muthuvan kudi* in Marayoor is just five kilometers from Marayoor town and has a motor able road up to the *kudi*. During the field visit to Marayoor, it was discerned that several men from outside come daily to the *kudi* premises to cut the eucalyptus trees for which they had taken contract from the Forest Department. They cut and upload some ten to twenty loads of wood every day. While the skilled laborers like drivers and cutters come from outside, the people in the *kudi* including women assist them as casual laborers. This gave them ample opportunity to interact with outsiders. On most of the Sundays they go to markets, even if they do not have anything to buy, the women accompany the men. Sunday is the market day in Marayoor town. These Sunday visits expose them to other tribes and non tribes, which force them to reflect on their life patterns and outlook.

To sum up, it is a very hazardous task to understand the complex web of social customs, purity in cultural life, tradition, modes of life, etc., around which *Muthuvan* people have woven their comparatively simple tasks of life. Although some modern *Muthuvan* youths neither know the origin, nor care about the symbolism of some rites, they continue to observe the rigidly prescribed minutiae of rituals for they all accept these practices as necessary to maintain their houses and hamlets in a state of high ritual purity. This purity is the pre-requisite to an approach to the supernatural forces which are believed to control the cosmos. The chapter has attempted to show how the *Muthuvans* faced with the present world situation have abandoned, improvised, synthesized and re-ordered their ritual rites, traditional beliefs, attires, customs, manners, mode of production, consumption, *et al.*, in the dynamics of struggle and survival in a world increasingly swamped by the dominant forces of modernity.

CHAPTER-VI

CONCLUSION

Edward Said's observation on 'Orientalism' is very illuminating and evocative in comprehending the Politics behind the meaning of Tribalism.¹ It was the consciousness of the ruling elite, native and colonial, out of whose unchallenged cultural and political centrality a 'Tribal' image emerged. This picture emerged out of a plethora of desires, ambitions and future projections rather than on the foundations of empirical reality. The western rationale in the construction of the 'tribe', the pre - colonial, colonial, and post - colonial notion of tribe, its organizations and habitat, cultural particularities, etc., have been subjected to scholarly review. Historians have often uncritically accepted the substance and language of colonial administrative records, missionary and anthropological writings that perceived tribal communities as homogeneous units, united in an opposition to alien and unacceptable elements that had entered their lands.² This homogenizing dominant perception has been deconstructed in the course of this study.

An attempt has been made to re - read the domain of the *Muthuvan* tribe in all its historical ramifications. Questions on its historical provenance and evolution leading to its contemporary existence have been addressed. The hypothesis on the 'value laden and not always factual historiography' on the tribes have been validated and rectified. Readings of the tribe in question about himself have been incorporated. In the backdrop of this knowledge an attempt has been made to generate new knowledge on the *Muthuvan* tribe that inhabits the Western Ghats region of Idukki. An empirical examination of the historical processes that led to

¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London, 1985, pp. 5-8.

² Sangeetha Das Gupta, *Re - ordering of Tribal Worlds: Tana Bhagats, Missionaries and the Raj*, PhD dissertation, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, 1998, p. 29.

external infiltrations into the *Muthuvan* world order in continuum from the colonial period has been attempted in the study. The *Muthuvan* reaction to the external pulls and pressures and reactions to the forces of modernity, *et al.* are analyzed.

Tribes as groups or communities have been constructed and re - constructed in times by 'mainstream' society. The etic and emic perspectives assume significance. The absence of emic perspectives by way of empirical evidences adds to the condescension with which oral narratives are looked upon, bordering to 'myth making'. Knowledge of people who do not have written records is generally relegated to an unauthentic status. In the words of Jacques Derrida, "*Il n'y a pas d'hors texte*" - There is nothing outside the text. The deficiency of empirical evidence constrains oral history to a diminutive status. Understanding a Tribe, the identity and nomenclature of 'Tribe' is itself problematic. The term Tribe and Primitive were the construction of the western idea of civilization. They used the terms tribe, aborigine, savage, barbarian, etc., to denote the traditional societies which still try to preserve their ancient culture, tradition and modes of existence. The terms Tribe and Primitive gradually developed into a discipline of Sociology or Social Anthropology by the second half of 19th century.

During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, there existed a stereotyping of the primitive as barbarians. During the 18th century, this racism had reached up to the extent of not considering the Black people especially in Africa as human and comparing the groups to Great Apes. The aboriginals evoked curiosity and dismay among the Europeans. These perceptions of the Western society made it clear that the primitive were conceived as barbaric or the 'other' in history. Such contrasts marked the 'dominant society' or the western civilization as positive and the 'other' as negative.

Gradually a new group among the western scholars emerged who tried to appropriate the 'other' and branded the primitive as the 'noble savage'. In this portrayal of the poor victim who is noble in suffering, the actors as well as the

audience are the white people. This categorization evoked the debates on the abolition of slavery. Lively observes that, the abolitionists in a twist characteristic of evangelical Christianity - exalted victimhood to a state of 'masochistic nobility'. There is another important way in which the savage has been portrayed as 'noble'. It does not deal with the victimization of the 'aborigine' at all. Instead the 'savage' is seen as more noble than the 'civilized'. The primitive in this view is conceived as inhabiting a pure space before corrupt civilization happened. This portrayal is apparently positive, compared to either the barbaric, primitive or the victimized aborigine. But there are criticisms on the concept of 'noble savage' that the proponents of the idea itself did not live up to it and in many cases, they themselves were the advocates of civilization.

In the twentieth century, proponents of certain schools of ecology have resurrected the 'ecologically noble savage'. These sentiments are seen in the construction of tribes as living in close harmony with nature and knowing the best ways to preserve nature. The conservationists who critiqued the idea of the ecologically noble savage, complains that in all these arguments, these groups can never fulfill the responsibility that is vested on them. The tribes are burdened with keeping up an imaginary pre - modern lifestyle. The examination of the history of this category proves beyond doubt that the desires and anxieties of the already 'modern' are pegged on the figure of the savage. Moreover, these groups are not seen as the people with histories. All these discussions made in the introduction chapter show that it is not easy to define the term tribe or a tribal society conclusively and any standardization in this regard is very difficult to obtain.

Our observations on the Tribe and tribal situation in Indian history is mainly based on the fact that the construction of the Tribe in pre - colonial and colonial India finally led to the post - colonial administrative category, named the Scheduled Tribes. Looking into the pre - colonial state system in India, we observe that the social life and practices of forest dwellers, shifting cultivators, pastoralists, etc., which constitute the ancient Indian Tribe who were outside the

Varnashramadharma, were crucially affected by the way they were seen by state and society. The social organizations and groups which were not based on *Varnasramadharma* were considered to be outside civilization. Even Buddhism and Jainism which seemed to be the religions that questioned the *Varna* social structure had pejorative terms to describe the tribes. Jain monks and nuns were warned to avoid the areas of 'unlearned' and 'barbaric' people. A quote from *Arthashastra* proved that the jungle tribes were treated as equals with wild animals, all of who were unnecessary in an ideal *Janapada*. The *Aranyakars* and *Atavikas* were the jungle tribes who were considered to be lower than the people inhabiting *Janapadas*. The *Atavikas* had connotations of a wild and savage tribe well entrenched in the jungle fastness who were ostensibly a nuisance to the state. The *Aranyakaras* on the other hand were tribes who were entering into some kind of negotiations with the centralized State.

All these evidences prove that indigenous tribes in different parts of India had to face many difficulties and challenges from the mainstream dominant social order. During the medieval period Mohammedan rulers unleashed a reign of terror on the indigenous social groups like *Oraon*, *Munda* and *Ho* tribes in Chotanagpur. The *Bhils* of Western India too suffered a lot from the Muslim invasion. Many tribal groups were forced to adopt Islam. Some of the social groups like *Siddhi* Muslims of Gujarat who although converted to Islam, continued to retain their tribal characteristics.

The colonial period saw large scale re-molding of the Indian society. All social systems and categories were re-molded to suit colonial modernity including the category 'tribe'. Western writers on India, especially Orientalists, followed by some anthropologists and sociologists at first used the term tribe to denote a race of people within a given territory. The colonial mercantile interests of the British paved the way for serious planned efforts to penetrate into the tribal hinterlands. The 'tribes' could not tolerate any encroachments on their traditional habitats and at times it resulted even in armed resistance. The British had to use force to deal

with the tribal rebellions in the 19th century. However, they soon realized their folly and made re - conciliatory efforts by declaring tribal regions as non - regulatory areas and recognizing their traditional system of administration. However, they cleverly encouraged the missionaries who had already succeeded in entering the tribal areas, apparently with a helping hand and a message of love and humanity but with the ultimate aim of conversion.

The Census that was conducted during the British period was primarily responsible for constructing the category 'tribe' officially in the Indian subcontinent. They remolded the various social groups and communities into castes and tribes. That is why some historians claim that the term 'tribe' is a colonial category. The census officials as well as other British officers in India felt that the cardinal and inextricable character of Hindu religion was Caste. The ease with which the British excluded the 'tribes' from Hindu was because they were conceived of as outside 'caste' and therefore as outside 'Hindu'.

In the post - independent period, the term tribe has undergone further change from its traditional definition. Under the Constitution of India, Tribes have been specified as Scheduled Tribes. Only those ethnic groups who have been included in the Union list are eligible for the status of Scheduled Tribe. The Constitution neither defines nor lays down any criteria for specifying the Scheduled Tribes. The famous Article 342 of the Indian Constitution state that the President may specify the tribes or tribal communities, or parts of or groups within any tribe which shall for purposes of this constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes and the Parliament has the right to include or exclude names from the list of Scheduled Tribes. In this way the definition of the tribe was avoided in the constitution and left for theoretical dispute by academicians. This means that the problem of defining and enlisting of Scheduled Tribes had become an academic problem with large political implications. Such an administrative and political flexibility paved the way for a numerous controversies, both academic as well as political of communities that are included and excluded from the Scheduled Tribes

list. The Commissioner of Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes in India in his report published in 1952 provided eight common features in explaining how to identify the Scheduled Tribes. However it should be noted that not even one fifth of the notified Scheduled Tribes possess these characteristics. The fact is that the list includes groups and communities strikingly different from each other in respect of not only size of the population but also the level of technology and other characteristics.

The social, cultural and material life of *Muthuvans* is a complex system to understand. They recognize themselves only through consanguineous kinship, which means all the kins related through blood. The *Muthuvan* culture preserved an uninterrupted and living tradition, from a remote past, which is reflected in *Muthuvan* mythology: a re-telling of the *Muthuvan* version of a golden age. The *Muthuvans* re-tell their story as part of their migration to the Western Ghats along with 'Kannaki', who is worshipped as goddess and settle in the hills. The legend covers an extra - ordinarily long epoch of *Muthuvan* history in terms of their cultural and ethnographic relation with Madurai.

A person, who to an outsider is simply an unlettered tribal, is among the *Muthuvans* a member of several different social organizations with complex functions. He belongs first to one of the six matrilineal clans known as *Koottams*; *Mela koottam*, *Kayanu koottam*, *Puthani koottam*, *Kanna koottam*, *Thushani koottam* and *Elli koottam*. An oligarchic form of power structure is visible in the political organization of the *Muthuvans*. The headman of the whole *Muthuvan* tribe is called *Mel Vakka*, *Palithara Vakka*, and *Valathara Vakka*. This political organization of the *Muthuvans* is unique and a closed system. The headman of a single settlement (*kudi*) is known as *Mooppan* who is assisted by officials known as *Thalayari*, *Kularanan* and *Sundarapandi* in official matters.

Like most other primitive tribal population, the *Muthuvan* also lacks a system codified laws. Yet the community possesses well defined procedures for ensuring that its members observe caste norms as well as for settling disputes

between individuals or factions and for deciding upon united action. At the settlements, the adult members of the tribe constitute themselves into a hamlet council known as *Orumura* to perform judicial functions. Social boycott, ex-communication, caning, fines, etc., were the commonly imposed punishments on the culprits based on the nature of the crime committed. Every meeting of *Orumura* tends to elucidate, reiterate, and interpret the unwritten laws and social norms of the tribe.

The *Muthuvans* have a clustered hamlet life. Usually the close kin, like brothers' families or parents live in adjoining houses in the same settlement. The houses in a settlement (*kudi*) are built in parallel rows facing each other or built one above the other in tiers if the houses are on steep mountain slopes.

Muthuvans passage through life is intertwined with rituals and practices that mark major events of his existence. Most of these involve the participation of the entire settlement as a single social unit. A notable feature of the social life of the *Muthuvans* is their dormitory system. Men's dormitories are known as *Chavadi* or *Satram* while that of women came to be known as *Thinnaveedu*. The dormitory system has deep socio- cultural and educative motives. The dormitories serve as an educative institution for training young men and women in social and familial duties according to the *Muthuvan* culture. It also serves as an effective economic conduit for satisfying the food quest besides functioning as a place for the performance of magico - religious ceremonies designed to augment the procreative powers of young men. The dormitory system facilitates the formation of a collective mentality in the *Muthuvan* society.

Unlike the other caste groups and communities in Kerala, the *Muthuvans* display great flexibility in tradition and customs and are seldom fanatical about its rigid practice. In inter - personal relations, in spite of customary regulations and taboos a great amount of humanistic spirit and accommodativeness is visible, a trait progressively vanishing in modern societies. Marriage is not a religious sacrament among *Muthuvans*. Hence divorce or dissolution of marriage on the

demand of both sexes is possible and practiced widely. No personal adamancy or ego wars were visible during the field studies. Even in the case of 'avoidance in relationship' practiced by the *Muthuvans* and dilated upon extensively in the preceding chapters the custom obviously had a rational psychological explanation. One has only to revisit Freud's psycho - analytical explanation based on sexual attraction and the need to prevent sexual intimacy between various kinds of relatives. This can be accepted as a possible reason for such customs of avoidance among *Muthuvans*.

Religion is said to be the human response to the apprehension of something, or any power, which is supernatural and supra - sensory. *Muthuvans* have their own version of religious order different from the so called modern society. They have a traditional pantheon of Gods and Goddesses who are called by the general name *Mala Daivangal* meaning the Gods of the Mountain. They worship *Palaniandavar, Madurai Meenakshi, Kottamala Swami, Chanthiattu Bhagawathy, Neriamangalam Sasta, Muthi, Muniandi*, etc. They also worship the powers of nature like sun, fire, mountains, trees, rivers, sky, moon, etc. *Muthuvans* believe in the conversion of soul of the deceased into a potential spiritual force. It is believed that these souls continue to remain in contact with the intimate relatives. Ancestor worship among them seems to be the logical result of such belief. *Muthuvan* invoke ancestors through special ceremonies. Nature worship also ensures the preservation of the environment and prevents its degradation.

Among the important mechanisms of control and adjustment in *Muthuvan* tribe are the mystical beliefs of various kinds. To approach the Gods and spirits *Muthuvans* rely on priests and ritual experts known as *Poosari* and the seer or diviner known as *Vathy/Manthrakaran*. They believe that by constant appeasing rites and offerings one can obtain the favor of super natural elements. Such a belief is the base of mixing of the ethno - medicinal practices with rituals. The causality concepts regarding the occurrence of diseases among *Muthuvans* include both supernatural and natural causes.

Rituals were an inextricable part of *Muthuvan* life and Culture. Rituals gave them an identity and culture which glued them together in a physical and spiritual mould generating unity, harmony and solidarity along with a vision of the past and future. Rituals were the generalized medium of social interaction that became a vehicle for constructing messages through iconic symbols which included words, gestures, prayers, chants, songs, sacrifices and other concomitants performed in a defined place, situation, or context. When it comes to ritual healing of the *Muthuvans*, it is necessary to understand how the meaning of ritual symbols are interpreted and how ideas are ordered and organized into an ethno - medicinal system within their cultural frame. The traditional healer called *Vathy* or *Manthrakaran* perform the divination rituals called *Olippu*, *Kuriveppu*, etc., only after he diagnoses the causes of illness. The *Muthuvans* possessed deep knowledge of the medicinal value of different plants that grow in the hills and forests and the technique of increasing the efficiency of a medicine by mixing the right ingredients (plants) in the correct proportion. This hereditary treasure of knowledge is gradually disappearing with the intervention of modern medicine and its institutions of dispensation.

Muthuvans follow the matrilineal system with regard to lineage. However, these practices are associated with custom and tradition that define gender space and restrictive taboos. The *Muthuvan* community in spite of its advertised gender altruism maintains deep rooted dominant attitudes, power relations, and restrictions to the disadvantage of women. Women, their movements and behavior are defined and culturally sequestered. Rules and practices favour men and perpetuate male domination amounting to the negation of the identity and autonomy of women. The movement of a woman is monitored and her contacts with others are regulated by persons concerned. Women are interdicted from communicating with other men even of the same settlement except in the presence of her father and after marriage her husband. All these indicate the presence of gender disparity resulting in discrimination against women. The menstrual hut and seclusion of women during the time of menstruation are also instances of social

discrimination of women. However, in spite of these forbidding restrictions *Muthuvan* women are creating a vibrant space for themselves culturally and politically impacted by Modernity and its political economy. This has been validated by extensive field studies.

The distinctive *Muthuvan* identity is also buttressed by their culture and language. They possess their own language quite distinct from the dominant regional languages like Malayalam and Tamil. The dialect of *Muthuvan* is called by linguistic experts as *Muthuva bhasha* which is an intermixture of Tamil and Malayalam. However, there are lots of words exclusively used only by the *Muthuvans* which indicate the development of a distinctive language. Their lives and various life cycle rituals are never devoid of rendering of songs on occasions such as at the time of marriage functions, puberty celebrations, death ceremonies, etc. Among the folk songs of *Muthuvans*, *Asaipattu* (Love Song) which is in the form of dialogues between the bride and bridegroom plays a vital role. Other genre of folk songs is known as *Talattu* or Lullaby. *Kummipattu* songs are sung at the time of work at workplaces and at the time of harvest. *Oppari* is the song sung at the occasion of death. We could observe that most of the songs of *Muthuvans* are related to their real life situations. The songs are distinguished by the use of images, metaphors, similes and other poetic devices. Illustration of nature especially animals, birds, vegetation, mountains, and natural phenomena are part of their songs. The oral traditions of *Muthuvans* are rich with riddles and proverbs.

Muthuvans agricultural practices and cuisine are in many ways distinct and dissimilar with that of other tribes. A traditional way of shifting agriculture that is successfully conducted by the interference of supernatural forces, which can be attained only through the performance of complex rites which interlink closely with the practical side of raising of crops. The staple food of the *Muthuvans* consist of *Kurumpullu* or *Keppa* (ragi/millet), various types of wild yams, locally available pulses and vegetables, maize, sweet potato, other wild roots and tubers, etc. There is no uniform pattern of consumption as they eat according to the

availability of food produce either from their fields or garnered from forests. They depend on springs, streams, rivers and rivulets for drinking water. A specific form of Neolithic production technique is practiced even today by the *Muthuvans* known as 'slash and burn'. It is a seasonally regulated sequence of procedures designed to open up and bring under cultivation, a patch of forest land. There are some rituals performed in relation with these agricultural activities like *kumbidal*, a kind of ritual to evoke the blessings of gods and ancestral spirits for rain. Contemporary agriculture of the *Muthuvans* is a pragmatic synthesis of the traditional and modern as per the requirements of the objective situation.

Hunting and fishing is an important activity in the daily life of the *Muthuvans* performed mainly as a group activity that supplements their food requirements. They are also familiar with various techniques of hunting and fishing using a variety of baits, snares, traps and hooks. The *Muthuvans* do not kill or maim for sport and only indulge in such activities for food. A portion of the cooked meat is offered to the ancestral spirits.

Gathering of forest products are now, not done exclusively for direct consumption but also for the purpose of selling those collected materials in societies or in open markets. They collect wild cardamom, ginger, turmeric, *kunkiliam* (resin of *canarium strictum*), *ciyakka* (pod of *Acacia concinna*), honey, bees wax, etc. They are experts in distinguishing many varieties of honey according to the season and the flowers from which the bees had foraged.

Large scale and decisive interventions in *Muthuvan* life and society began with the colonial inroads into forest lands and interior high ranges of Kerala sanctioned by the native rulers. These foreign capitalist transgressions had also affected the urban native populations of the plains. The difference here was that the plains became centers of political administration and exploitation through colonial power while the forests were brutally plundered far away from the gaze of civil society. The city dwellers had the advantage of education and organization that restricted large scale oppression and exploitation, whereas the tribes lacked

both, making easy prey for the colonial and native exploiters who joined together in the unholy enterprise. The disadvantages of the tribal became the advantage of the native and foreign non tribal which led to their oppression and displacement for planned exploitation of their home lands that were converted into huge tea and coffee plantations.

The British colonialists also realized the importance of forests for their commercial, industrial and botanical wealth and extended their authority and control to these hitherto neglected parts of Travancore using their political clout and business acumen. Before the appearance of British the high ranges of present day Idukki, was a region of escarpments and tangled forests, traditionally inhabited only by tribes in its mountain sides and river valleys till the beginning of 19th century.

Colonial capital movement into the high ranges began with the appointment of a forest conservator in Travancore. This was followed by the establishment of a separate cardamom department in 1823 under the auspicious of British. Colonial officials and planters including Henry Baker, the son of an Anglican missionary who had arrived in Travancore low lands in 1819, had been working with tribes since 1843, occupied large areas of forest land from the Travancore government as waste or uncultivated hill lands. The plantation era began in the Idukki region in the 1860's. By 1893, roughly 40,000 acres of land in Travancore had been sold for the purpose of coffee cultivation. John Daniel Munro, grandson of first British Resident at the court of Travancore, was granted 227 square miles of land in Peerumade hills to start a coffee plantation. Munro formed the North Travancore Planting and Agricultural society in 1879. The land was later handed over to Finley & More Company in 1895. The Kannan Devan Hill Producing Company was formed in 1897.

The forests of Idukki region were inhabited and owned by aboriginal groups long before the coming of the British. The British who entered into a direct alliance with the Poonjar Raja and Travancore King to attain land, never

considered the tribes as the hereditary owners of land. It was a situation analogous to the one prevailing in north India on the eve of the first war of Indian Independence when the British declared the hereditary lands of the native rulers as null and void in the absence of written title deeds. This became a cause for the revolt against the British rule but nothing of this sort occurred when the unorganized tribals were unceremoniously thrown out of their lands for want of documents proving ownership. It is doubtful whether the British planters paid any compensation to the *Muthuvans* and other tribes while displacing them to other inhospitable sites. The Travancore king supported the British planters. The *Muthuvans* had to confront two oppressors, the native and the foreign.

The British soon cleared the forest areas for plantations and built a network of roads, rope ways and railways across the mountains, linking the new plantation estates with one another and with the plains, thus making the high plateau more accessible to exploiters. A railway known as Kundala Valley railway was built in 1902 and operated between Munnar and Top station in the Kannan Devan Hills of Kerala to transport tea and other goods. Light steam locomotives were used to pull trains to stations at Madupetty and Palaar. All these estates, roads, railways and rope ways were built through the hearts of the lands of *Muthuvans* and other native tribes setting the stage for foreign capital's exploitative network.

Several laws introduced by the Travancore rulers like the royal order to declare cardamom as state property led to the loss of the tribal rights over the forest produces. The widening of coffee and tea estates by clearing and destroying the forest resulted in the loss of traditional lands to *Muthuvans*. They also lost their traditional modes of existence like, gathering, cattle rearing, hunting, shifting cultivation, etc., which they engaged in for centuries. The official records kept in the tea Museum in Munnar gave evidence for the use of services of *Muthuvans* for preparing initial facilities for Plantation such as clearing of forest, construction of sheds for nurseries, fence work to guard the crops from wild animal, etc. The *Muthuvans* thus became mere laborers in their own home land. Construction of a

network of link roads also resulted in the encroachment of Muthuvan lands. All these developments resulted in the displacement and humiliation of the *Muthuvans*. Their status was that of helpless menial laborers, tantamount to agrestic slaves.

The machinations of the British colonists and their native collaborators in the displacement and degradation of the *Muthuvans* and other tribes is further borne out by empirical evidence. The Girijan Law passed in 1911 by the Travancore government to restrict tribal ownership of land and provide lands for British planters was the first strong administrative move from the Travancore government against the tribal people. The Law restricted the *Muthuvans* and other tribal groups to the area in which they were constrained to settle and imposed restriction on migration, resettlement and free movement in the forests. Their movements were to be monitored by the forest department. Even though the native State and the British claim that the Law was a means to protect reserve forests and forest lands, the real intention behind the law was the restriction and control of the vast forest land occupied by the tribes. This problem of state and foreign capital colliding to displace tribals is a phenomenon witnessed in contemporary India wherein foreign multinational corporations and the government displace tribals from their ancestral settlements which are rich in bauxite and other minerals. The tribals who have been reduced to inferior citizens have to bear the brunt of foreign and internal colonialism. The oppression and exploitation that had begun for botanical and forest wealth in the colonial era now demands the very soil in which they live in the neo colonial age.

The large scale migration of the low land people occurred during the 1940-1965 initiated by the state government for several purposes including the grow more food campaigns to overcome the food shortage and famines; the plans to encourage the settlement of Malayalis until the time of state re- organization; the colonization scheme started by Pattom Thanu Pillai, etc., led to large scale encroachments of forest lands in the high ranges of Idukki. Between 1931 and

1965 thousands of Syrian Christians had migrated from central Travancore to forest areas of the Western Ghats in Idukki. The High range colonization scheme planned to settle down 8000 families on 50000 acres of land in which Kallar Pattom Colony near Nedumkandam is the largest settlement and contains roughly 1300 migrant families.

The *Muthuvans* who lived in the forests had to suffer the consequences of these encroachments. The migrants and encroachers had occupied the fertile lands having irrigational facilities and water resources and started plantations of areca nut, sugarcane, cardamom, coffee, cocoa, tea, etc. Many *Muthuvans* displaced from their fertile lands had migrated and settled down in the wet regions of Chinnar. They were driven out by the forest officials and they were forced to migrate to the dry lands of Marayoor and Chinnar having very little rainfall. The impact of external interventions and deforestation on *Muthuvans* was as follows:

- (a) Destruction of traditional life support systems and the consequent socio - cultural alienation.
- (b) The conflict between the *Muthuvans* and the outsiders leading ultimately to the displacement and alienation of the former from their land.
- (c) Physical deterioration by a change in the food habit.

Exploitation by money lenders is another form of oppression to which the *Muthuvans* are still subjected. Studies conducted in various settlements bear testimony to the fact that in most instances indebtedness led to several kinds of bondedness. Indebtedness resulted in the loss of freedom of cultivation and marketing of the produce in open markets. It also led to alienation of the land as they were handed over to the money lenders on lease. The pathos of the *Muthuvans*, point to the apathy of the government, semi - government credit agencies and banks to wean away the *Muthuvans* from their traditional exploiters, the usurious moneylenders. The Report of the study team of the State Planning Commission on Tribal Development states, "No programme of economic

development is likely to have any impact on the tribal economy unless rigorous measures are taken to rescue tribes from the clutches of money lenders.”

The forest policies enacted after the independence of India were also against the tribes. The Forest Law of 1952 had shattered and disturbed the tribal lives depriving them even of the privileges and mobility granted by the British. The forest law had created powerful officials headed by the chief conservator of Forests at the top and the forest guards at the bottom. Extensive powers given to these officials and its misuse have made the life of the tribes difficult in the forest.

It should be noted that the forest laws and forest department seem to have overlooked the fact that human communities have lived in the forest for innumerable centuries. Legislations overlooking history and the natural human rights of the tribal citizens have been detrimental to the interests of these humble folks. The forest department, as a branch of government, should consider itself responsible for the welfare of the tribes as well as the forests. The antagonism of the officials *vis a vis* the tribals is only a reflection of the ingrained prejudices of the ruling elite and city dwellers against the subalterns.

The Kerala government while providing all support to the planters and urban migrants to encroach and occupy the forest and tribal lands has prohibited the free movement and activities of the tribes by the enactment of the Girijan Law of 1964. Along with the restriction imposed through legislation, the government has gradually encroached on tribal lands in the name of various development projects including hydroelectric and irrigation projects. There are fifty two dams constructed in the Western Ghat region. Among them more than two dozen are in Idukki districts. Acquiring of the lands for the construction of dams and reservoir area has resulted in the loss of traditional habitations of *Muthuvans* and other tribes in Idukki. The fact is that, neither the electricity board nor the water irrigation department introduced any plans for the re - habilitation or resettlement of these poor tribes. Major hydro electric projects like Idamalayar, Chenkulam, Neriamangalam, Lower Periyar, Panniyar, Idukki, etc., have resulted in high rates

of land alienation of the *Muthuvans*. The *Muthuvans* who were driven out of the Chenkulam dam site had migrated to the Anakulam, Matapara, Kurathikudi, and Pinavurkudi settlements in Pooyamkutti region.

Several projects introduced by the central and state governments have alienated tribal lands with impunity. The declaring of the forest lands as wild life sanctuaries forced the *Muthuvans* and other tribes to leave that area and settle down in distant regions without any arguments regarding the ownership of their original land. One of the best examples for the attempts made by the state government to alienate the tribal lands is seen in the Chinnar Wild Life Sanctuary. Chinnar is the region where the state is implementing the Eco - development project with the help of World Bank. The World Bank considers the tribal people as the main impediment in the protection of bio - diversity and ecology of the region. For getting financial aid for the project, the tribes have to be shunted out of the project region. The forest department has initiated programmes to drive the tribes out of the Chinnar sanctuary where *Muthuvans* are the main inhabitants. As an initial measure, the forest department has closed down the Tribal Hostel and the Hospital in the Chinnar region.

The Kannan Devan Hills Resumption of Lands Act put forward in 1971 by the state government identified the excess land held by Tata Finley Group and decided to re - distribute it to the tribes who had lost their lands. The excess land of 70462.56 acres was acquired by the government on the strength of a Supreme Court order. However steps to re - distribute the lands were torpedoed by the government officials who were hand in glove with the company. The tribal questions on land was first addressed at the National level with the formation of the Dhebar Commission in 1960 by the central government on the basis of which Kerala passed "The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction of Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975". As per the Act, all land alienated from 1960 onwards should be restored to the tribes. However, this act also did not come into effect due to severe political pressures on the government.

The state government's failure at protecting tribal interests led to the formation of organizations like the 'Adivasi Dalit Samara Samiti' (ADSS) under C K Janu's leadership. The Adivasi struggle started on August 2001, in which ADSS demanded 5 acres of land for each tribal family in Kerala. On 16 October 2001, on the basis of agreement of state government with ADSS, it was decided to grant five acres of cultivable land to each tribal family. However the much celebrated land distribution of the government did not take off due to a court injunction moved by the forest department. The same problem occurred in the Kundala region. The government finally cut short the list and only twelve *Muthuvan* families were granted land in Kundala and seven families in Marayoor region. All these issues and problems related with the land distribution point to the lack of determination by the government in crucial matters concerning tribal welfare.

Before the coming of the concept of bio - diversity, a word put forward by Watter G Rossel in 1985, the colonialists and capitalists rated timber as the main resource from the forest. But the bio - diversity concept made the neo - colonial powers to re-think in terms of identify the vast treasures of bio - diversities and gene banks that exist in different parts of the world. The earth summit of 1992 found India as a hot spot of bio - diversity. The Western Ghats region is one of the main bio - diversity hot spots in India. The colonial powers that once build their capital wealth through exploiting our country still try to continue their exploitation through neo - colonial policies. The agreement known as Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD) was signed by India on 1994. What should be the impact of an international agreement like the CBD on a tribal group like *Muthuvan* who live in the deep interiors of forests of Western Ghats? India's bio - diversity is identified the most significant one in the world.

The World Bank adopted strategies of giving financial aid to the developing countries like India in the name of conservation of their bio - diversities. In return for the aid, they demanded facilities for studies and research programmes in bio - diversity under their control. The profit motive of neo -

colonial powers like USA realized the tribal people as the knowledge centers of bio-diversity and medicinal plants. They designed a new strategy of exploit the traditional knowledge of the tribes and then drive them out from their habitat in the Western Ghats of which is a treasure house of bio - diversity. Thus the neo - colonial interventions began to affect the *Muthuvan* life directly when the 67 million US dollars to development project was introduced in the Chinnar region. It was a World Bank project in which the Bank gave directions to the government to drive *Muthuvans* and other tribes out from the Chinnar region, which is a hot spot of bio-diversity.

The activities and programmes for exploitation of the traditional knowledge of the tribes in Kerala are recent. The neo - colonial powers were well aware of the great value of traditional knowledge of the tribes especially in the field of ethno - medicine and medicinal values of plants. These neo - colonial powers looted many of the traditional knowledge. The *Muthuvans* occupy great knowledge regarding the medicinal plants. They are familiar with hundreds of plants and their medicinal value. Several foreign pharmaceutical companies provide funds to their researchers to tap this knowledge. Observation and analysis show that for long periods of history, the *Muthuvans* stood against the intrusion of the outside world into their life and culture. In this long drawn battle, they withdrew and rooted themselves in the remote interiors of the forest. The changes that took place in the *Muthuvan* socio - cultural life are minimal and a very slow process when compared with some other tribal groups in the district like *Mannas* and *Malai Arayans*. The idea of modernity with which we are dealing or concerned with is a quite recent phenomenon in *Muthuvan* life.

Muthuvans with their complex network of social, cultural, religious, economic and ritual orders rigidly interwoven with tradition are also at certain points of life branching out into modernity. The *Muthuvan* society in the high ranges of Idukki remained comparatively static for long. It was primitive and traditional in nature. They came in contact with the British and low land people in

the first half of 19th century but remained insulated from western influence due mainly to the policy of isolation of the tribes followed by the British planters and limited extension of their administrative machinery in the area. After independence, the Government of India followed a policy of preserving the distinctive tribal culture intact. Although no exogenous force was allowed to exercise its influence on the *Muthuvans* of Idukki, a sort of ambivalence was created in the political sphere by the developmental and administrative activities of the Government. The elections conducted in the local self governments forcefully made *Muthuvans* to participate in the election process, which made them aware of modern administration and politics. The declaration of Edamalakudi region, which is solely, inhabited by *Muthuvans* in 35 settlements, as the first tribal Panchayat in Kerala in January 2010 gave an impetus to the process of modernity and assimilation into mainstream society. However these new mechanisms did not destroy the unity of the *Muthuvans* and the intra - factionalism in the name of political ideologies and practice is still absent among the *Muthuvan*. Our data collected from different regions of Idukki indicated that *Muthuvans* are unenthusiastic about the democratic political processes as they consider their oligarchic political structure better than the complicated mainstream political organization and democratic system.

Closely scrutinizing the culture and religious beliefs of the *Muthuvans* there has been no empirical evidence of a deviation from traditional beliefs or religious faith. Quantitative official data on conversion of *Muthuvans* from their conventional religious beliefs to any of the mainstream religions is totally absent. We can trace some qualitative changes that have occurred in individual perception of religion among the *Muthuvans* of Idukki. This has been the natural outcome of the exposure of an insulated tribal community to modernity with its multifarious religious pulls. The opening up has brought them in proximity to capitalism and the Market economy and the dominant religions that it espouses. Few and isolated cases of *Muthuvans* adopting the path of these mainstream religious beliefs and their ethico - moral principles can be discerned but it can in no way be described

as a mass trend. Among the younger generation of the impressionistic age and those attracted by the cynosure of town and city life there are deviation of faith but not among the older generation. Long and short periods of stay, away from the settlements as wage laborers, initiated them to the worship of upper caste Hindu Gods like *Vishnu*, *Siva*, etc. Even in the midst of these religious intrusions there are no fundamental changes and addition to an already existing belief system and gods. Assimilation and improvisations follow but the

The mainstay of the *Muthuvan* economy, before the interventions of the outside world was its primitive agriculture known as 'slash and burn'. The question of ownership of land by a particular family was not known as the land was commonly owned by the settlement as a whole. A family only enjoyed the operational rights over the plot allotted to it for cultivation. Under such collective ownership of land by the *Moopan* of the *kudi*, *Muthuvan* society had been characterized as an undifferentiated, homogenous community of primary producers. The interaction which developed between the *Muthuvans* and the outside system gradually introduced changes in the structure of the *Muthuvan* land ownership and economy. Restrictions began to be placed on shifting cultivation by the establishment of plantations by the British, which was fostered by the Travancore Girijan laws and forest laws introduced in the post independent period. The general tenor of all the laws in the pre colonial and post colonial period was its pro elitist nature which was obviously detrimental to *Muthuvan* interests.

These factors sowed the seeds of a differentiated *Muthuvan* economic structure which had significant regional variations. While the *Muthuvan* continued the slash and burn agriculture undisturbed in Edamalakudi region, where more land was available, in the settlements like Kurathikadi, Veliyampara, Elampillasserry, etc., in Adimali Panchayat, there occurred a replacement of shifting agriculture by the intensive mode of settled agriculture. As a result of this historical process of differentiation and settled agriculture as part of plantation process, migration of the outside people and the interference of the government,

the *Muthuvan* peasantry had divided into two categories, viz., the landed and landless. Thus among *Muthuvans* landlessness - a problem unknown to them in the past traditional society - became a grim reality. The extent of landlessness varied from one region to another.

Due to the penetration of various market forces, the traditional dietary habits and cuisine of the *Muthuvans* that consisted of coarse cereals such as *ragi*, *cholam* etc., were substituted by diversified agriculture with commercial crops claiming a very high weightage in the crop mix. Along with *ragi*, new crops like rice and tapioca which were not used by them in the past began to be cultivated at an increased rate. The grant of 22 kgs of rice free from the government rationing system made drastic changes in their food habit. Rice became common in their daily menu. The declaration of Chinnar area as Wild Life Sanctuary in 1984 made the *Muthuvan* of the area to abandon shifting cultivation and cultivate crops only in the limited area allotted to them. Thus *Muthuvan* also turned their attention to cultivation of high value crops such as cardamom, areca nut, pepper, lemon grass, etc. The economic compulsions arising out of the new situation in the region and contact with the market - conscious non-tribal planters and farmers played their part in the adoption of new cropping pattern, production of value crops, etc., which are the indicators of modernity among *Muthuvan* in terms of economy, food habit and land relations.

The societal institution of Health care and medicinal culture of *Muthuvans* based on ethno - medicines and rituals was greatly disrupted by the introduction of modern medicines by the initiatives of State Health Department. The Health Department played an important role in bringing *Muthuvans* into close proximity with modernity. They deconstructed one of the foundations on which *Muthuvan* society and life was anchored, viz., ritualistic medicine and treatment. The state provided sufficient funds to the district hospitals and community health centers for providing free treatments including medicines; laboratory tests, etc., to all tribal patients. Health camps were the major interventions into the *Muthuvan* life. Even

though modern medicine has gradually come to stay with the *Muthuvans*, ethno medicine still has influence in the *Muthuvan* world of illness and cure. In the present age of modernity, the common man may be tempted to presume that modern medicine has taken over ethno - medicine as the sole agent of health care of the *Muthuvan* world. Such an assumption would be far from reality. They still believe in super natural causes for certain diseases. For such diseases, they still depend on ethno - medicines mixed with magical rituals. Hence we see a comfortable mix and intermingling of the traditional with the modern but the latter gradually and strongly getting the upper hand. Lack of education and awareness has also brought the negative effects of modernity into play in the use of medicines as already delineated jeopardizing the future of the *Muthuvans* in terms of population growth.

Another important aspect of modernity analyzed in the study was education among the *Muthuvans*. Modern education in all its aspects is highly deficient among the *Muthuvans*. Their isolation and reluctance are largely due to their philosophy of life that keeps them away from the modern world. Recognizing the importance of education, the framers of the constitution had made specific provisions in Article 15(4) and 46 for promoting education among the Scheduled Tribes. Education has been widely accepted as one of the major means for the upliftment of the people. The Education, Tribal welfare and Social welfare Departments have jointly implemented educational programmes and started operating facilities for scholarship, hostels, schools, etc. In spite of all these measures taken by the authorities, tribal education is in a pitiable state beset with many problems. The *Muthuvans* show the lowest rate of school going children between the ages of 5-14 years as only 61.1 percent compared to the total ST rate of 75.2 in Kerala.

The main problem with the modern education system is that it is structured on a world - view that is diametrically opposed to the *Muthuvan* world view. Education nowadays does not emphasize the need to maintain harmony which is

the central concept and theme of *Muthuvan* existence but rather is now used to produce the necessary human resources for the continued pursuit of professionals in IT, engineering, medical and management sectors. Values like competition, individualism, and hierarchy are encouraged in the present school system as against the values like co-operation, collectivism and equality which are held dear by the *Muthuvans* and alienate them from the schools.

The *Muthuvan* parents fear that there is hardly any concordance between the schools and *Muthuvan* culture. *Muthuvan* culture and social formation generally require mastery of an elaborate and highly specialized knowledge of the environment, forest, folklore, religion, agriculture, technology and other skills. The years of schooling conflict directly with the basic education that *Muthuvan* children gain through participation in several social activities. This is a major dysfunction that alienates *Muthuvan* students and parents from the purported benefits of modern education. School education programme in Kerala has no flexibility in the choice, content and duration of the course and it is difficult to adjust the curriculum and text materials to the needs and aptitude of the tribal children. Additionally an understanding and respect for *Muthuvan* culture and tradition is important for teachers to gain acceptance from the children.

‘Dressage’ can be an important indicator of conservatism or transitions to modernity. ‘Dressage’ as a cultural symbol, *inter - alia* reveals a society and its modes of thought and production. The garment that seemed to set traditional *Muthuvans* apart from other tribes is a thick woolen blanket, identical for both sexes but worn in a slightly different manner by men and women. Given that adult *Muthuvans* today are wearing the same apparel that they wore more than hundred years ago would seem that they are quite conservative in the dress code and perceptions of life. Yet sartorial innovations are nothing new among these people. For example in recent times virtually all *Muthuvan* men have taken to wearing Western-style shirts with or without the blankets and some have even adopted slippers and shoes. Yet the basic desire and aspiration to glue on to their

traditional moorings is strong. They have taken to modern ways due to a variety of compulsions ranging largely from, scarcity of resources, job opportunities, disguised unemployment, shrinking farm lands, restrictions on making a living from the forests, *et al.* Left on their own they would still prefer their traditional ways in all its ramifications.

Looking at the *Muthuvan* family as a micro marker for transitions in life and traditions we can perceive the impact of modernity, slowly but surely, in all aspects of their life. Edvard Alexander Westermarck in his *A Short History of Human Marriage* tried to show that polygamy gave status to a group. Here, it is important to note Edgar Thurston's report (1909) on the existence of polygamy and polyandry among *Muthuvans*. Hundred years ago there was practice of both polyandry and polygamy. Polygamous marriages are reported as a common custom among the *Muthuvans* in the work of A A D Luiz also. Polygamy was not difficult for the *Muthuvans* and was necessitated by the huge expanse of forest land for cultivation requiring large number of hands to work on the fields. *Muthuvan* women constituted the major work force in the agriculture sector. There are a lot of folk songs which vividly narrate the wide spread practice of polygamy among *Muthuvans*. A A D Luiz recalls that in the field studies which he conducted in 1960-1962, he came across a large number of *Muthuvan* men of 55-75 years of age group who had as many as four wives at a time. Polygamy has been a part of the deep rooted traditional beliefs of the *Muthuvans* in the earlier times both as a symbol of status and as a supportive factor of production. However, today the situation has changed the extensive field studies conducted as part of this research work did not find the prevalence of polygamy as a practice among the *Muthuvans*. Modernity and its sociology have done its work impacting the constitution of the *Muthuvan* family. A very rare exception found of a polygamous family in Kurathikudi is in Adimali panchayat. Karuppu Kunji, now 78 years of age, the head of the polygamous family, now feels ashamed of it. The ethics and morality of modern capitalist culture has begun to influence tribal values and conduct determining what is and not permissible. The present generation is largely in favor

of monogamy. Deviations from this are not the norm but few men who belong to the age group of 40 to 50 years show a trend of accommodating multiple female relations. Field studies show that young *Muthuvans* of the age group of 25 - 40 have strong sentiments against the practice of adopting multiple partners or abandoning ones wife and children in favor of other woman. Wives and children deserted by their husbands have a stigma attached to them. This 'stigma' and notion of 'morality', *inter-alia* signifies the encroachment of the outside world. It is evident that the marriage system had undergone transition. On that trajectory one can see a transformation from conspicuous institutional polygamy to monogamy in the present generation.

The spread of education, contacts with the outside world, the awareness programmes of the health department, etc., have aided in the process of the rationalization of the marriage age among the *Muthuvans*. During interviews and field studies conducted as part of the research work, not a single case of *Muthuvan* marriage below the age of 18 years for males and 15-16 years for females was discovered. This change again is a positive sign of a tradition undergoing benign transitions for the welfare of its people impelled by modernity.

The dowry system is in all respects a practice of 'dominant culture' in Kerala. Obviously, dowry is a high caste Hindu practice, which later on was adopted by the Christians and Muslims. The field notes show that dowry had made inroads into the *Muthuvan* world recently. We cannot find any description of dowry as a custom of marriage in the early works on the *Muthuvans*. It proves that the dowry system was a recently transferred practice adopted by the *Muthuvans* from the outside world. A share of the property of the bride is allotted to the bridegroom to cultivate and harvest. Many other inimitable traditions that gave the *Muthuvan* life a novelty and originality like the '*Pukari*' gifted to the bride by the bridegroom have disappeared depriving *Muthuvan* life of its romance and vitality. The venality of modernity has thus extended its tentacles into *Muthuvan* culture and social life.

Muthuvans emphatically aver that extra marital relationships in their tribal community are unheard of. '*Vechal vechidathu irikkum*' (Once joined - it is lifelong), is their assertion and conviction. However marital discords and separations are no longer rare and the villain seems to be 'modernity' and its concomitant adjuncts.

Interestingly, the number of girls going outside the *Muthuvan* *kudi* for various purposes, viz., school education, training programmes organized for ASHAs, *anganwadi* helpers, etc., have increased. All such programmes provide exposure to women to the external world. Most of these training programmes educate the tribal women on different aspects of women empowerment. Once they come back to the *kudi* and share their experiences with other women, they also get a picture of the world outside and get motivation for change. These experiences and sharing have helped to boost the confidence of *Muthuvan* women. Women conscious of their rights and educated were unwilling to tolerate the misbehavior and high-handedness on the part of their husbands and the mismatches had eventually led to marital discords. *Muthuvan* settlements in Edamalakudi Panchayat, Chinnar, Marayoor and Adimali have quite a number of families with separated couples. Women asserting themselves in the face of male chauvinism, drunkenness and oppression were a natural corollary to modernist interventions.

The issue of gender in tribal studies has yet to gain adequate attention because of the stereotyped idea that tribal societies are free from gender discrimination - a perception that is rooted in the romanticized view of the so-called primitive and small scale societies documented in received anthropological and ethnographic literatures. From Engels to Ester Boserup - there is a tacit assumption that there is freedom, dignity and mutual respect between men and women in primitive hunting and horticultural societies. The same perception seems to pervade in the studies of tribal societies in India. The relative autonomy that women enjoy in economic and personal matters and the seemingly egalitarian ethos of pre-literate small - scale societies led ethnographers, to glorify the status

of tribal women. It cannot be disputed that these tribal women are not absolutely subordinated and possess greater economic independence and freedom of movement than their counterparts in various non - tribal societies in India. However, it would be naive to regard this as a sufficient indicator of their superior social status. Evidence suggests that even in hunting-gathering societies women were mostly treated as the 'second sex' with greater or lesser subordination to men.

The apparent equality between the sexes seen within tribes is a compulsion of their subsistence level of production which is clear from the widening gender gap that accompanies economic differentiation and modernization. A closer look would show that gender inequality is not alien to tribal societies rather it is largely obscured by their poverty, which compels men and women to closely co-operate and share in joint economic activities. Women's contributions, both domestic and in the paid workforce, irrespective of the nature of the economic site - tribal or urban, contributed to economics of the society.³ Planners, however, seem to have failed to appreciate this fact and thus make tribal policies more gender sensitive. As a result, despite the paradigmatic shifts in mainstream development strategies tribal women continue to be marginalized. It needs to be underscored that gender discrimination is not a fixed unchanging entity that is naturally provenanced, but is intimately linked to particular social and historical contexts.

It is clear from our observations that *Muthuvans* today are confronted with two major but conflicting problems, (i) a keen desire to retain their separate identity, culture and tradition and (ii) a certain measure of willingness to incorporate with the mainstream. Many other diverse tribal groups in Kerala like *Ulladans*, *Uralis*, *Cholanaikan*, etc., like the *Muthuvans* also wish to retain and maintain their distinct identity, and structural features of their society. These opposing attitudes have resulted in a good deal of conflict within the minds of *Muthuvans*.

³ Ester Boserup, *Woman's Role in Economic Development*, London, 2007, p.97.

The *Muthuvans* have no influence over the ruling establishment nor are they capable of lobbying for themselves taking into consideration their timid, reclusive, solitary and sequestered way of life. Confronted by the onslaughts of the intruders they developed the tendency to withdraw deeper into the forests rather than confront and assimilate the culture and civilization of their tormentors. Perhaps it was common sense that instructed them of the futility of opposition and the prize they would have to pay for it in civilizational and human terms. Abject surrender instead of withdrawal would only make them slaves and semi-slaves in the existing social fabric of the times. Their illiteracy and lack of skills required to survive in the modern scenario gave them no choice. Tribal cohesion and solidarity being strong in the initial periods of the interface with modernity they could retain their identity and withdraw from its venal influence as far as they desired. However, the persistence of modernity's intrusions in myriad ways gradually broke through their insulated way of life. This was facilitated by their growing penury and the degradation of their forest habitat made additionally miserable by the interventions of state and central laws that were determined to undermine the tribals leading to their displacement and ultimate annihilation by absorption into the socio- cultural and politico- economic structure of modernity. Mercantilism, Capitalism and Post capitalism have in their own historical roles oppressed, exploited and swamped them. Their place in such a hierarchical dispensation was bound to be in the category of Paul Collier's Bottom *Billion*.

The theories of Frantz Omar Fanon are untenable in the Indian context and attempts to integrate it in the Kerala context are inappropriate. The *Muthuvans*, if we subscribe to Fanon's model are today in the first phase of their transformation. They have to graduate to the second stage, though there are stray incidents which indicate the tribal's love for his culture. If Fanon's third phase of militant tribal revolution is to be circumvented reforms addressing the tribal question have to be expedited. The data collected by us show a varied trend of transformation. The government policies and models have not yielded the goals that it contemplated.

In fact, the models and plans prepared and pursued for the tribal social change has shown utter disregard for the *Muthuvan* social structure. So far we had tailored the model without taking into consideration the affairs of each tribe and their tribal structure. The important thing was first to analyze the special features of each tribal social structure and tailor the model accordingly. The policy should centre round tribal social institutions which have strength to lead the society ahead. It would be erroneous to assume that the tribal society has no strength and therefore has to be wholly criticized. In fact, there are strengths in the tribal social structure and also some weaknesses. The strengths of the tribal social structure need to be reinforced. In spite of this our overall approach towards *Muthuvans* and other tribes should be from the angle of the tribes. It would be naive and untutored to presume that the *Muthuvans* are familiar with concepts like 'self determination', 'sovereignty', 'autonomy', 'homeland', etc. They are ignorant of such concepts and only desire to be left alone free from any external domination or subjugation.

The study takes the position that juxtapositioning the tribal people with the dominant religion and culture had only helped in reducing them to the level of sub - religious groups and animism. The defect in received tribal literature is the 'integrationist approach'. In the course of the research work we have noticed the heavy dependence of the tribal studies on Censuses. "Censuses are not ethnographical studies that unravel the implicit meanings of the life and culture of the people. They are mere enumerations based on survey and questionnaire. In such Censuses the tribal belief systems and life modes are not acknowledged and recognized as distinct. They are related to that of the dominant culture and reduced to the position of sub - groups of Hinduism or any other dominant religion. This *modus - operandi* is followed in the studies of major Tribal entities of India including the *Muthuvans*. Generalizations on the life, customs and practices of the *Muthuvans* would be unscientific and improper tool of analysis because it is typical of the Positivist approach used in the findings of economically and politically advanced sections of society which when applied to autochthonous societies will bring in a serious setback to the same societies as is evidenced from

received literature. In the study of *Muthuvans* the researcher found diversity and heterogeneity of prime importance. Generalizations become possible only in areas where the *Muthuvans* are very close to modern civilization and their occupations and culture have glued with that of the plainspeople.

The cruelest betrayal of the *Muthuvans* comes not from the alienation from the development process but from their own habitats. Mainstream development process creates spaces for inequality; tribal communities face marginalization virtually in every walk of life. There are no representational voices to speak for them and they seldom speak for themselves. Their small population gives them smaller spaces in mainstream life and politics and marginalization becomes inevitable. There is no effective instrument of political articulation and mobilization as far as they are concerned. A political consciousness or identity consciousness is urgently required. This comes from education, indoctrination and concomitant ingredients that are unfortunately not visible. The researcher finds that the *Adivasis* led by Janu have been using the power of the media and the expanded circuits of communication but over and above the interest and penchant for reporting the bizarre and sensational, the Media dictated by its class proclivities, is disinterested in pursuing the cause of *Adivasi* liberation as was witnessed during the 'Muthanga' episode.

Over and above the Land questions raised by C K Janu, there is urgency for greater socio - cultural consciousness and unity generating *Adivasi* solidarity on studied common grounds of unity, cohesion and action. Though marginalization is conceptually inherent in the term 'identity politics' it is also self generating in as much as it co ordinates and strengths the cause of the *Adivasis* at multi layers of understanding. *Adivasi* strength must come from within and not depend on the feudal protective umbrella which could be deceptive as the *Muthuvans* of Chinnar discovered on the land question. Kerala though it has done much for the *Adivasis* in terms of peripheral services rendered, on core issues and necessities it has bypassed them and shied away from addressing the problem in

any decisive manner. To conclude we can aver that if the problems of *Adivasis* are not redressed Kerala would be reduced to a land with a 'Fractured Social Capital' and 'Culturally Famished Civil Society' that bolsters hegemony. All talk of the Kerala model and its exemplary achievements in the social sector would be reduced to a chicanery. Kerala would be confronted with an *Adivasi* society that questions and challenges the hegemony of the state, its discriminatory policies and exclusionary tendencies.

PUBLICATIONS AND SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

The Candidate has the following Publications and Seminar Presentations to his credit related to the Ph.D Research topic titled “History at the Margins of Modernity: The Muthuvan Tribe of Idukki”.

1. A paper titled, “External Interventions – Tribal Land Relations and Modes of Production: The Muthuvan Experience” was published in *The Journal of Kerala Studies*, Vol. XXXX, ISSN-0377-0443, 2013.
2. Presented a paper titled, “Colonial Interventions Permeating Tribal Land Relations and Modes of Production: The Experience of Muthuvan Tribe in Idukki District of Kerala”, in Indian History Congress (75th Session), JNU, New Delhi, 2014.
3. Presented a paper titled “Situating Tribal Women in the Social Scenario of Kerala” in South Indian History Congress (33rd Annual Session), Kerala University, Trivandrum, 2013.
4. Presented a paper titled “Tribal Disease Theories and Medicinal Practices: A Study of Muthuvans of Kerala” in South Indian History Congress (32nd Annual Session), Madras University, Chennai, 2012.
5. Presented a paper titled “Problems of Tribal Development: A Study of Muthuvan Tribe in Idukki” in South Indian History Congress (29th Annual Session), Madurai Kamaraj University, Madurai, 2009.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX - I

*THE KERALA HILLMEN RULES, 1964

[Section 76 (a)]

In exercise of the powers conferred by clause (a) of Section 76 of the Kerala Forest Act, 1961 (Act 4 of 1962) and in supersession of the existing rules on the subject the Government of Kerala hereby make the following rules for the protection, advancement, treatment and management of Hill Tribes, namely:—

RULES

1. These rules may be called the Kerala Hillmen Rules, 1964.

2. **Definitions.**— (a) "Hillmen" means and includes members of those tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within tribes or tribal communities specified as Scheduled Tribes in relation to the State of Kerala by notification issued under Article 342 of the Constitution of India;

(b) "Low country" means plain lands outside the reserve forests and not at the disposal of Government;

(c) "Minor Forest produce" means forest produce other than timber, bamboos, reeds, rattan, and ivory;

(d) "Reserved trees" means trees notified as reserved by Government from time to time;

(e) "Settlement" means an approved area inside the Reserve Forests set apart and used for housing members of Hillmen and their families, constituting a small village.

3. The Hillmen residing within the limits of the lands at the disposal of Government and Reserved forests shall be subject to such restrictions as may be imposed by the Forest Department in the interests of preserving the forests, as well as those deemed necessary for the protection and advancement of the Hillmen.

4. Each Settlement shall have a headman who has attained the position either by hereditary right or by selection or election by the members of the Settlement in conformity with the existing practice:

Provided that when a headman fails to carry out any of the duties as hereinafter stated, the Divisional Forest Officer may call upon the adult members of the Settlement to remove him and elect another competent man to take his place.

5. The Range Officer shall maintain a register showing the name and strength of each Settlement and names and other particulars of the members constituting the same.

* Issued under Notification No. G.O. MS 545/64/AD dt. 19/08/1964, published in K.G. Ext. No. 34 dt. 01/09/1964 as SRO. No. 265/64.

N.B.— Rules were declared null and void by Hon'ble High Court of Kerala vide Judgment report in 1970 KLT 1069.

The headman of each Settlement shall report to the Range Officer, once in a year or whenever called upon to do so by the Range Officer the name of his Settlement, the number of adult males and females, composing it, number of children above 3 years of age (male and female) not included as adults and those below 3 years of age.

6. (1) No Hillman shall leave his Settlement or migrate to another Settlement or to the Low country without the permission of the headman.

(2) The Hillmen who migrate outside a Settlement after taking the permission under sub-rule (1) to avail of the concessions granted by the Harijan Welfare Department, will however have the option of returning to their Settlement if they wish to do so within five years. The option shall however be exercised by one family only once during the life time of its head of the family.

7. The location, extent and boundaries of a Settlement shall be permanently fixed, and the hillmen shall not be permitted to shift from place to place, except temporarily with special written permission of the Divisional Forest Officer, in cases of small pox, out break of other epidemics, or scarcity of water.

8. It shall be the duty of the headman to see that these rules are adhered to strictly and to report violations if there are any, to the Range Officer in charge of the area.

9. The Hillmen shall enjoy the concession of cultivating land free of tax in the lands at the disposal of Government and Reserved Forest in which they live, to the extent of one acre, each, to a member subject to a minimum area of 3 acres and a maximum of fifteen acres, for a family consisting of the husband, wife and their unmarried children.

10. A compact block of land comprising all the land necessary for the cultivation of the members of Settlement shall be demarcated by the Forest Department. A register showing the name of the Settlement, the number of members, the extent of each plot and a surveyed sketch of the block set apart for each Settlement showing the exact limits and location of the plot allotted to each family or member, as the case may be, shall be prepared and kept in the Range Office concerned.

11. In cases of trespass or encroachment within a Settlement, the headman shall decide such disputes subject to an appeal to the Divisional Forest Officer whose decision shall be final.

12. Masonry houses may be put in a Settlement but the status of the land will continue as lands at the disposal of Government or Reserved Forest, as the case may be. No compensation will be paid for the building or for any other improvement when the Hillmen leave the settlement of their own accord or are made to leave for breach of any of the rules or on any other ground.

13. (1) No Hillman shall be entitled to the grant of patta or for any claim to any land cultivated in lands at the disposal of Government or Reserved Forest however long his occupation may be.

(2) The Hillmen may however be granted licence for cultivating the land. Land so occupied shall not be alienable but heritable provided the inheritants are the descendants of true hillmen settled in the forest and not the descendants of a marriage contracted with a low country man or woman.

(3) Any Hillman enjoying any concession under these rules shall forfeit the right to

such concessions if he or she marries a low country woman or man. The descendants of such union shall not have any right to the concession enjoyed by their parent inside the forest or in the Settlement; nor shall they be allowed to stay in the Settlement.

14. All produce of the land cultivated by Hillmen in accordance with the foregoing rules shall be the property of the Hillmen concerned and may be disposed of as they think fit, except foodgrains and tobacco which shall not be sold or taken out of the lands at the disposal of Government or Reserve Forest without the written permission of the Range Officer.

15. The Hillmen may fell and use any timber other than the timber of reserved trees as well as firewood, bamboos, reeds and canes free of charge for their own bona fide domestic and agricultural purposes. Bamboo, reeds and canes may be used by them for the manufacture of petty articles for sale, provided however that Government may at any time restrict or prohibit the trade or charge a fee on the produce.

16. The Hillmen may collect and use for their own consumption or for sale or for both any forest produce not collected by Government or leased by Government to contractors or lessees; but the sale of forest produce for which seigniorage has been or may hereafter be fixed by the Government shall not be permitted.

17.(1) Hillmen may shoot game in wet weather from the 15th Vykasi (Edavam) to 30th Karthika (Vrishchikom) (28th May to 14th December) except such animals and birds as may be prohibited by Government from time to time and they may catch fish, provided that the poisoning of water or the use of dynamite or gun powder for the purpose shall not be done.

(2) For the purpose of this rule and for the protection of person and property, each Settlement may keep one gun in the custody of the headman. In exceptional circumstances Government may authorise in writing more than one gun being kept in a Settlement.

18. The Hillmen shall deal only with dealers licensed by the Government to trade with them. The Hillmen shall not borrow money or sell or buy anything on credit from these licensed dealers.

19.(1) Licences to trade with Hillmen will be granted by Divisional Forest Officers to suitable traders, who undertake to supply articles of daily use to them at reasonable rates, provided they bind themselves to the following terms and conditions by executing formal written agreement with the Government.

- (a) Not to enter into any credit transaction with Hillmen or to lend them money;
- (b) Not to sell any intoxicating liquors or drugs to them;
- (c) Not to quarrel with or illtreat the Hillmen;
- (d) Not to buy grain or other articles the sale or removal of which is prohibited by the preceding rules or by the Forest Act, already in force;
- (e) to keep proper accounts of all their transactions with Hillmen, which shall be kept open for inspection by respective Range Officer or the Divisional Forest Officer.

(2) Licences shall be liable to be revoked, withdrawn or cancelled for breach of any of the terms and conditions of the agreement besides the penalties prescribed therein.

(3) The licensed traders shall not acquire any title whatever to any lands occupied or cultivated by the Hillmen under these rules under any circumstances.

20. Able bodied adult males alone may be required to work for the forest department at prescribed rates of wages, such rates being fixed by the Divisional Forest Officer with the previous sanction of the Conservator of Forests, for three years at a time, calculated with reference to the wages paid during the preceding three years and the current rates.

21. Hillmen shall not set fire to the forest and they shall take all possible care and precaution to prevent fires occurring in the lands at the disposal of Government and Reserved forests. They shall assist the forest officers in preventing commission of offences, the occurrence of fires and extinguishing such fires.

22. Hillmen shall assist the Police, Revenue and other Officers of Government in preventing crimes or in deducting offenders who may have sought shelter or refuge in the lands at the disposal of Government or Reserved forests.

23. Hillmen shall not harbour or allow to remain in their Settlements any Low country criminals or persons likely to commit any breaches of the forest or other laws of the country nor shall they take into partnership any outsiders in their cultivations within the lands at the disposal of Government or Reserved forests or in their hunting or shooting excursions.

24. Hillmen shall not cultivate ganja plants (*Cannabis Sativa*) in any of these Settlements and shall root out and destroy all such plants wherever they find them in the lands at the disposal of Government and Reserved Forests.

25. The Hillmen shall be bound to deliver to the Forest Department any ivory, elephant teeth, cardamoms, wax, dammar and lac collected by them as well as honey or any other forest produce which they may be called upon to collect and deliver to the Forest Department in return for which they will be paid at the rates fixed in the following schedule.

Sl. No.	Produce	Rates	Rate to be paid
1	Ivory I class	(Weighing above 9 kilograms per tusk)	Rs. 4 per kilogram
2	Do. II "	(Weighing above 6 kilograms but below 9 kilograms per tusk)	Rs. 3 do.
3	Do. III "	(Weighing below 6 kilograms per tusk but above 3 kilograms per tusk)	Rs. 2 do.
4	Do. IV "	(Weighing below 3 kilograms per tusk)	Rs. 2 do.
5	Cardamom with husk	per kilograms	Re. 1 do.
6	Do. Seeds	do.	Rs. 2 do.
7	Wax big bees	do.	Re. 1 do.
8	Honey	per litre	Rs. 5 per litre.

APPENDIX - II

ACT 31 OF 1975

THE KERALA SCHEDULED TRIBES (RESTRICTION ON TRANSFER OF LANDS AND RESTORATION OF ALIENATED LANDS) ACT, 1975

An Act to provide for restricting the transfer of lands by members of Scheduled Tribes in the State of Kerala and for the restoration of possession of lands alienated by such members and for matters connected therewith.

Preamble.—WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for restricting the transfer of lands by members of Scheduled Tribes in the State of Kerala and for the restoration of possession of lands alienated by such members and for matters connected therewith

BE it enacted in the Twenty-sixth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. *Short title, extent and commencement.*—(1) This Act may be called the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Kerala.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Government may, by notification in the Gazette, appoint.

2. *Definitions.*—In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) "competent authority", with reference to any land means the District Collector of the district in which the land is situate or any other officer appointed by the Government to be the competent authority for the purposes of this Act for the area in which that land is situate;

(b) "immovable property" includes standing crops and trees but does not include growing grass;

(c) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

(d) "Revenue Divisional Officer", with reference to any land means the Revenue Divisional Officer having jurisdiction over the area in which that land is situate or any other officer appointed by the Government to perform the functions of the Revenue Divisional Officer under this Act, in the area in which that land is situate;

(e) "Scheduled Tribe" means any of the Scheduled Tribes in relation to the State as specified in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950;

(f) "State" means the State of Kerala;

(g) "transfer", in relation to immovable property, means an act by which immovable property is conveyed by any documentary or oral transaction, whether by way of mortgage with or without possession, lease, sale, gift or exchange, or in any other manner, not being a testamentary disposition; and includes charge, 'vilapanayam', 'unduruthi', contract relating to immovable property, mortgage, pledge or hypothecation of crops or standing trees on payment of consideration or otherwise, voluntary surrender and abandonment.

Explanation.—For the purposes of this clause,—

(i) "vilapanayam" means hypothecation of crops on payment of consideration or otherwise;

(ii) "unduruthi" means an assignment of the right to collect the usufructs available or anticipated to be available on any land during a specified term for a specified price.

transfer effected by a member of a Scheduled Tribe, of immovable property possessed, enjoyed or owned by him, on or after the commencement of this Act to a person other than a member of a Scheduled Tribe, without the previous consent in writing of the competent authority, shall be invalid.

5. *Certain transfers to be invalid.*—Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law for the time being in force, or in any contract, custom or usage, or in any judgment, decree or order of any court, any transfer of immovable property possessed, enjoyed or owned by a member of a Scheduled Tribe to a person other than a member of a Scheduled Tribe, effected on or after the 1st day of January, 1960, and before the commencement of this Act shall be deemed to be invalid.

6. *Reconveyance of property.*—(1) Where by reason of a transfer of immovable property which is invalid under section 4 or section 5, a member of a Scheduled Tribe has ceased or ceases to be in possession or enjoyment thereof, he shall be entitled to the restoration of possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of such property.

(2) Any person entitled to be restored to the possession or enjoyment of any immovable property under sub-section (1) or any other person on his behalf may make an application, either orally or in writing, to the Revenue Divisional Officer within a period of one year from the date of commencement of this Act or such further period as may be specified by Government by notification in the Gazette,—

(a) for restoration of possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of such property, if such transfer had been made before the date of commencement of this Act; or

(b) for restoration of possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of such property and for the prosecution of the person who has procured such transfer, if such transfer was made on or after the date of commencement of this Act.

(3) On receipt of an application under sub-section (2), the Revenue Divisional Officer shall make or cause to be made necessary inquiries in respect of such application and, if he is satisfied that the applicant or the person on whose behalf the application has been made is entitled to restoration of possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of the immovable property mentioned in the application, he shall, by order, direct the person in possession or enjoyment of such property to deliver possession thereof to the applicant or to the person on whose behalf the application has

3. *Exemptions.*—Nothing contained in this Act shall apply to—

(a) the lease of any land or building or both granted by the Administrator General, Official Trustee or Official Receiver; or

(b) the mortgage, pledge or hypothecation of any immovable property by a member of a Scheduled Tribe in favour of the Government as security for the purpose of obtaining any loan or other assistance from the Government; or

(c) the mortgage, pledge or hypothecation of any immovable property by a member of a Scheduled Tribe in favour of a co-operative society registered or deemed to be registered under the Kerala Co-operative Societies Act, 1969 (21 of 1969), or a corporation or a nationalised bank or any other financing agency, not being a private agency or a money-lender, as security for any loan advanced by such society, corporation, bank or other agency.

4. *Restriction on transfer.*—Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law, or in any contract, custom or usage, or in any judgment, decree or order of any court, any

been made, or, as the case may be, to allow him to enjoy such property, within a period of thirty days from the date of service of the order and also specify the amount payable under section 11:

Provided that no order under this sub-section shall be made unless the person in possession or enjoyment of the property has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in the matter.

(4) Every order made under sub-section (3) shall be served on the person for whom it is intended,—

(a) by delivering or tendering it to that person; or

(b) if it cannot be delivered or tendered to that person, by delivering or tendering it to any officer of such person or any adult member of the family of such person or by affixing a copy thereof on the outer-door or some conspicuous part of the premises in which that person is known to have last resided or carried on business or personally worked for gain; or

(c) failing service by any of these means, by registered post.

(5) Any person aggrieved by an order of the Revenue Divisional Officer under sub-section (3) may, within a period of thirty days from the date of service of the order, prefer an appeal to the competent authority, and the decision of the competent authority on such appeal shall be final and shall not be called in question in any court of law.

(6) Where an order under sub-section (3) has not been complied with, and

(a) an appeal has not been preferred within the time allowed for such appeal; or

(b) an appeal having been preferred has been dismissed, the Revenue Divisional Officer shall cause the immovable property to which the order relates to be delivered to the transferor by putting him in possession or enjoyment of that property, if need be, by removing any person who refuses to vacate the same.

7. *Suo motu action by Government.*—(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in section 6, the Government may, of their own motion, by order, direct the person in possession or enjoyment of any immovable property to deliver possession thereof to a member of a Scheduled Tribe or allow such a member to enjoy such property, if they are satisfied after necessary inquiries that such member was deprived of the possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of that immovable property by reason of a transfer which is invalid under section 4 or section 5:

Provided that no order under this sub-section shall be made unless the person in possession or enjoyment of the property has been given a reasonable opportunity of being heard in the matter.

(2) Every order under sub-section (1) shall be served on the person for whom it is intended in the manner specified in sub-section (4) of section 6.

(3) An order under sub-section (1) shall be final and shall not be questioned in any court.

8. *Burden of proof.*—Where, in any proceedings under this Act or in the trial of an offence punishable under section 13, the validity of any transfer of immovable property is called in question, the burden of proof of the validity shall, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, lie on the person who claims such transfer to be valid.

9. *Inadmissibility of deeds for purposes of registration.*—Notwithstanding anything contained in the Registration Act, 1908 (Central Act 16 of 1908), no deed of transfer of any immovable property executed in contravention of or contrary to the provisions of this Act shall be accepted in registration.

10. *Prohibition to attachment of immovable properties.*—For the execution of a money decree against a member of a Scheduled Tribe, no right or interest held by him in any immovable property shall be liable to be attached or sold except to the extent and in the manner prescribed.

11. *Liability to pay amount.*—(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, where the possession or enjoyment of any immovable property is restored to a member of a Scheduled Tribe under this Act, an amount equal to the aggregate of the actual amount of consideration received by such member at the time of the transfer and an amount determined by the competent authority for improvements, if any made after the transfer and before such restoration shall be paid by him to the person from whom possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, was restored, in accordance with the rules made under this Act:

Provided that no amount shall be payable if the transfer was effected on or after the commencement of this Act.

(2) The amount determined by the competent authority under sub-section (1) shall be final and shall not be called in question in any court.

(3) The amount payable under sub-section (1) shall be recoverable in such manner as may be prescribed.

12. *Government to advance loan for payment of amount.*—(1) The Government may, subject to such rules as may be made in this behalf, advance loans to the members of Scheduled Tribes who are unable to pay amounts under section 11.

(2) Loans advanced under sub-section (1) shall be repaid in twenty equal annual instalments in accordance with such rules as may be made in this behalf.

(3) If any default is made in the repayment of a loan advanced under sub-section (2), the amount in default shall be recoverable under the Kerala Revenue Recovery Act as if it were arrear of public revenue due on land.

13. *Offences and penalties.*—Any person who on or after the commencement of this Act procures transfer of any immovable property in contravention of the provisions of section 4, shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to two thousand rupees, or with both.

14. *Cognizance of offences.*—(1) No court inferior to that of a Magistrate of the First Class shall try any offence punishable under this Act:

Provided that the Government may constitute one or more than one special court exclusively for the trial of the offences under this Act.

(2) In a case where transfer of immovable property in contravention of section 4 has been made on or after the commencement of this Act, the Revenue Divisional Officer shall file a complaint to the Magistrate having jurisdiction or to the special court, as the case may be, for the trial of the offences under this Act.

(3) Any person aggrieved by a transfer in contravention of section 4 or any other person on his behalf shall also be entitled to file a complaint before a Magistrate having jurisdiction or to the special court, as the case may be, for the trial of the offence under this Act.

15. *Bar on proceedings against Scheduled Tribes under Chapter of the Code of Criminal Procedure.*—Where a person claiming to be a member of a Scheduled Tribe or any other person on his behalf applies to the Revenue Divisional Officer for the restoration of possession or enjoyment of any land under the provisions

of this Act, or where the Government take suo motu action under section 7 for the restoration of the possession or enjoyment of any immovable property to any person, then, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, no Magistrate shall have jurisdiction under Chapter X of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (Central Act 2 of 1974), in respect of any dispute between that person and any other person claiming to be in possession or enjoyment of the said land.

16. Legal practitioner not to appear in proceedings under the Act.—No legal practitioner shall appear, plead or act on behalf of any party in any proceedings before the Revenue Divisional Officer or the competent authority or the Government, except with the written permission of such officer or authority or the Government, as the case may be.

17. Powers of competent authority and Revenue Divisional Officer.—(1) The competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer while making inquiries under this Act shall have all the powers of a civil court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Central Act 5 of 1908), in respect of the following matters, namely:—

(a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;

(b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;

(c) any other matter which may be prescribed.

(2) The decisions of the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer under this Act shall have the force of a decree of a civil court.

18. Power to remove difficulties.—If any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Government may, as occasion requires, by order, do anything not inconsistent with the provisions of this Act which appears to them necessary for the purpose of removing the difficulty.

19. Protection of action taken in good faith.—No suit, prosecution or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person for anything done or purporting to be done in good faith under this Act or the rules made thereunder.

20. Saving of other laws.—The provisions of this Act shall be in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being in force regulating any of the matters dealt with in this Act, except to the extent provided in this Act.

21. Bar of jurisdiction of civil courts.—No civil court shall have jurisdiction to settle, decide or deal with any question or to determine any matter which is, by or under this Act, required to be settled, decided or dealt with or to be determined by the competent authority or the Revenue Divisional Officer.

22. Power to make rules.—(1) The Government may, by notification in the Gazette, make rules to carry out the purposes of this Act.

(2) Every rule made under this act shall be laid, as soon as may be after it is made, before the Legislative Assembly while it is in session for a total period of fourteen days which may be comprised in one session or in two successive sessions, and if, before the expiry of the session in which it is so laid or the session immediately following, the Legislative Assembly makes any modification in the rule or decides that the rule should not be made, the rule shall thereafter have effect only in such modified form or be of no effect, as the case may be; so however that any such modification or annulment shall be without prejudice to the validity of anything previously done under that rule.

APPENDIX - III

Kerala State planning Board - Report on the Assistance to Co-operative Societies

In addition to providing financial assistance to individuals, the Corporation extended loans of varying magnitudes to six scheduled caste/scheduled tribe co-operative societies mainly engaged in the promotion of the traditional activities of these communities. The names of the societies, the total amount provided by way of loans by the Corporation and the date on which the assistance was first given in respect of each society are given below.

<u>Name of society</u>	<u>Amount of loan</u>	<u>Date</u>
1. Devicolam Girijan Service Co-operative Society Ltd.No.I(12) Edamalakudy, Munnar (P.O.)	Rs.33.20 lakhs	13-7-1976
2. H.W.No.7 Chelakkara Harijan Co-operative Society Ltd. Chelakkara (P.O.) Trichur Dt.	Rs. 3.50 lakhs	7-10-1977
3. Nadathara Bamboo Handicrafts Co-operative Society Ltd.No.4156, Nadathara (P.O.) Trichur-5.	Rs.5,000	30-12-1978
4. Nidumpoil Girijan Co-operative Society Ltd., L.207, Nidumpoil, Cannanore Dist.	Rs.25,000	9-7-1979
5. Varkala Rattan Reed Vyavsaya (Production and Sale)Co-operative Society No.C IND(T)4, Palachira (P.O.) Varkala.	Rs.50,000	1-4-1980
6. Parakodu Block Rattan Reed Workers' Industrial Co-operative Society No.IND.(Q)270, Parakodu (P.O.), Adoor.	Rs.13,000	2-5-1980

As on 30-11-1982 the three societies listed as Sl. Nos.3,5 and 6 above have not made any remittance to the Corporation

by way of repayment. The loan amounts taken by these societies have now to be repaid with penal interest. A brief write up on the activities of the other three societies is given below.

I. Devicolam Girijan Co-operative Society

5.2. The Muthuvas, a tribal community of Edamalakudy are traditionally engaged in cardamom cultivation in reserve forest areas. The cardamom traders were exploiting them for a long time and was paying only a nominal price to these tribal people for their produce. The State Government prohibited the private traders from entering the reserve forest areas for the purchase of cardamom from tribals and promoted the Devicolam Girijan Co-operative Society with the object of helping the tribals for the cultivation and sale of cardamom.

5.3. The society was registered on 23-2-1976. It had 654 members all belonging to the scheduled tribe. The share capital contributed by the members amounted to Rs.1,52,960 in January 1983. Besides this, the society had received a share capital contribution of Rs.20,000 from the Kerala Government and Rs.10,000 from N.C.D.C. The Board of Directors of the Society consists of seven members, all nominated by the State Government. The President of the Society is the Divisional Forest Officer, Munnar. There is a full time Secretary for the Society who is an Officer on deputation from the Co-operative Department. The jurisdiction of the society consists of four panchayats, viz., Munnar, Marayur, Vattavada and Kanthallur. But the main activity of the society is concentrated in the Edamalakudy tribal settlement of Munnar panchayat.

APPENDIX - IV
Kerala Forest (Amendment) Bill, 1986

ഏഴാം കേരള നിയമസഭ

ബിൽ നമ്പർ 216

കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ബിൽ, 1986

1961-ലെ കേരള വനം ആക്ട് വീണ്ടും ഭേദഗതി ചെയ്യുന്നതിനുള്ള
 ഒരു
 ബിൽ

പീഠിക.—ഇതിനുശേഷം കാണുന്ന ആവശ്യത്തിനായി 1961-ലെ കേരള ആക്ട് വീണ്ടും ഭേദഗതി ചെയ്യുന്നത് യുക്തമായിരിക്കുകയോ; ഇൻഡ്യൻ റിപ്പബ്ലിക്കിന്റെ മൂപ്പത്തേഴാം സംവത്സരത്തിൽ താഴെപ്പറയും നിയമമുണ്ടാകുന്നു:—

ചുരുക്കപ്പേരും പ്രാരംഭവും.—(1) ഈ ആക്റ്റിന് 1986-ലെ കേരള (ഭേദഗതി) ആക്ട്, എന്ന് പേർ പറയാം.

(2) ഇത് 1984 സെപ്റ്റംബർ 1-ാം തീയതി പ്രാബല്യത്തിൽ തരമായി കരുതപ്പെടുന്നതാണ്.

2. X എ. എന്ന പുതിയ അദ്ധ്യായം ചേർക്കൽ.—1961-ലെ കേരള ആക്റ്റിൽ (1962-ലെ 4) (ഇതിനുശേഷം പ്രാധാന ആക്ട് എന്നാണ് അറിയപ്പെടുക) X-ാം അദ്ധ്യായത്തിനുശേഷം താഴെപ്പറയുന്ന അദ്ധ്യായം ചേർക്കേണ്ടതാണ്, അതായത്:—

“അദ്ധ്യായം X എ
വനവികസന നികുതി

75 എ. വനവികസന നികുതി ചുമത്തൽ.—(1) ഈ ആക്റ്റിൽ എന്തു ന്ന അടങ്ങിയിരുന്നാലും, സർക്കാർ വിവരപ്പെടുത്തുന്ന വനോല്പന്നത്തെ ബന്ധിച്ച് അവയ്ക്കുവേണ്ടി നൽകപ്പെടുന്ന വിലയുടെ അഞ്ചുശതമാനം നിരക്കിൽ നികുതി ചുമത്തുകയും പിരിച്ചെടുക്കുകയും ചെയ്യേണ്ടതാണെന്നു.

വിശദീകരണം.—ഈ ഉപവകുപ്പിൽ “വിലപന” എന്ന പദത്തിന് 1963-ലെ കേരള പൊതുവിലപന നികുതി ആക്റ്റിൽ (1963-ലെ 15) ന്നൽകിയിട്ടുള്ള അർത്ഥം ഉണ്ടായിരിക്കുന്നതാണ്.

(2) (1)-ാം ഉപവകുപ്പിൻകീഴിൽ ഏതെങ്കിലും വനോല്പന്നത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ച് നൽകേണ്ട നികുതി അതിന് നൽകുന്ന വിലയോടൊപ്പം പിരിച്ചെടുക്കേണ്ടതാണ്.

(3) ഏതെങ്കിലും വനോല്പന്നത്തെ സംബന്ധിച്ച് (1)-ാം ഉപവകുപ്പിൻകീഴിൽ ചുമത്തപ്പെടുന്ന നികുതി, അങ്ങനെയുള്ള വനോല്പന്നത്തെ ബന്ധിച്ച് 1963-ലെ കേരള പൊതു വിലപന നികുതി ആക്റ്റിൻ 15-ലെ 15) കീഴിലോ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ തൽസമയം പ്രാബല്യത്തിലുള്ള മറ്റേ നിയമത്തിൻകീഴിലോ കൊടുക്കേണ്ട ഏതെങ്കിലും നികുതിക്കുള്ളതും അതിനു പകരമുള്ളതല്ലാത്തതുകൊണ്ടു.

76 ബി. കേരള വനവികസന ഫണ്ടിന്റെ രൂപീകരണം.—(1) ഇതിനുശേഷം, കേരള വനവികസന ഫണ്ട് (ഇതിനുശേഷം ഈ വകുപ്പിൽ എന്ന് അറിയപ്പെടുക) എന്ന പേരിൽ പരാമർശിക്കപ്പെടുക) എന്ന് പറയുന്ന ഒരു ഫണ്ട് സ്ഥാപിക്കേണ്ടതാകുന്നു.

363/E

APPENDIX - V

***The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Rules, 1986**

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 22 of the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 (31 of 1975), the Government of Kerala hereby make the following rules, namely:-

Rules

- 1. Short title and commencement.-**
 - (1) These rules may be called the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Rules, 1986.
 - (2) They shall come into force at once.
- 2. Definitions.-** In these rules, unless the context otherwise requires,-
 - (a) "Act" means the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 (31 of 1975);
 - (b) "Application" includes an interlocutory application;
 - (c) "Form" means a form appended to these rules;
 - (d) "Section" means a section of the Act.
- 3. Application for restoration of possession or enjoyment.-**
 - (1) (a) An application under sub-section (2) of section 6 made in writing, shall be in Form I.
(b) Where such application is made orally, the Revenue Divisional Officer shall elicit the required details from the applicant and fill up himself the applications, in Form I.
 - (2) If the application made in writing does not contain the required information or the information furnished in the application is incomplete, or where the application is made orally and the applicant is not able to furnish any required information to the Revenue Divisional Officer or the information furnished is incomplete, the Revenue Divisional Officer shall collect the required information through his subordinates. No application whether made in writing or orally shall be rejected on the ground that the application does not contain any required information or the applicant has not furnished any required information, as the case may be, or the information furnished in the application or given orally is incomplete.
 - (3) The Revenue Divisional Officer shall maintain a register of applications in Form 2 containing the details of applications, whether made in writing or orally received and disposed of by him.
- 4. Enquiry by Revenue Divisional Officer in respect of applications.-**
 - (1) As soon as may be after the receipt of an application referred to in Rule 3, the Revenue Divisional Officer shall issue a notice in Form 3 together with a copy of the application to the person or persons to whom possession or enjoyment of the immovable property was transferred and also to the occupant thereof, if the transferee is not the occupant of such property, whose particulars are furnished in the applications referred to in Rule 3 requiring him or them to appear before the Revenue Divisional Officer at such place and on such date and time as may be specified in the notice for being heard in respect of the application.
 - (2) The Revenue Divisional Officer may also make such local inquiries as he may consider necessary in respect of the application.
 - (3) Any objection or claim as regards any right over the land sought to be restored shall be adjudicated by the Revenue Divisional Officer and he shall pass such orders relating to the rights and specifying the person entitled to restoration of possession of the property and shall fix the compensation payable, if any, to the person from whom the land was restored. The proceedings of the Revenue Divisional Officer shall be summary.
 - (4) The Revenue Divisional Officer may direct any of his subordinates to put the applicant in possession or enjoyment of the property, where an order of the Revenue Divisional Officer to deliver possession of a property to the applicant or to allow the applicant to enjoy the property has not been completed with.

(2) 75എ വകുപ്പിൻകീഴിൽ ചുമത്തുന്നതും പിരിച്ചെടുക്കുന്നതുമായി നികുതിത്തുക ആദ്യമായി സംസ്ഥാനത്തിന്റെ സഞ്ചിതനിധിയിലേക്ക് വ്യവയ്ക്കേണ്ടതും സർക്കാർ തീർപ്പാക്കുന്ന പ്രകാരം, തുക പിരിച്ചെടുക്കുന്നതിനുള്ള ചെലവുകൾ കിഴിച്ചശേഷം ബാക്കിയുള്ള തുക ഇതിലേക്ക് നിയമപ്രകാരം യഥാവിധി നടത്തപ്പെടുന്ന ധനവിനിയോഗം മുഖേന വികസന ഫണ്ടിൽ ചേർക്കുകയും കൈമാറുകയും ചെയ്യേണ്ടതുമാകുന്നു.

(3) വികസന ഫണ്ടിലേക്ക് കൈമാറാൻ ചെയ്യപ്പെടുന്ന ഏതെങ്കിലും തുക സംസ്ഥാന സഞ്ചിത നിധിയിൻമേൽ ചാർജ്ജ് ചെയ്യപ്പെടേണ്ടതാണ്.

(4) (5)-ാം ഉപവകുപ്പിൽ വ്യവസ്ഥ ചെയ്തിട്ടുള്ള പ്രകാരം മൊഴികെ, വികസന ഫണ്ടിൽനിന്നും യാതൊരു തുകയും നൽകുകയോ വിനിയോഗിക്കുകയോ ചെയ്യാൻ പാടുള്ളതല്ല.

(5) വികസന ഫണ്ടിലെ വരവിൽ നിലകുന്ന തുക, ഈ ആക്ട് കീഴിൽ ഇക്കാര്യത്തിനായി ഉണ്ടാക്കുന്ന ചട്ടങ്ങളാൽ നിർണ്ണയിക്കപ്പെടാവുന്ന വിധിലും അങ്ങനെയുള്ള ഉപാധികൾക്ക് വിധേയമായും താഴെ വിനിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്ന ആവശ്യങ്ങൾക്കും വിനിർദ്ദേശിക്കുന്നിടത്തോളവും ചെലവ് ചെയ്യാതാകുന്നു.

(എ) അറുപത്തൊരും മൂന്നിൽ രണ്ട് ശതമാനം, വ്യവസായങ്ങൾക്കും ആവശ്യമുള്ള അസംസ്കൃത സാധനങ്ങളായിത്തീരുന്ന കടുപ്പം കുറഞ്ഞ തടി വൃക്ഷങ്ങളും അതുപോലുള്ള മറ്റുതരം വൃക്ഷങ്ങളും നട്ടുപിടിപ്പിക്കുന്ന വേണ്ടിയും;

(ബി) മൂപ്പത്തികുന്നും മൂന്നിൽ ഒന്ന് ശതമാനം, വന ഗവേഷണത്തിനുവേണ്ടിയും.

(6) വികസന ഫണ്ട്, ഫാറസ്റ്റർ ചീഫ് കൺസർവേറ്ററുടെ വിക്ക് താഴെയല്ലാത്ത ഒരു ഉദ്യോഗസ്ഥൻ സർക്കാരിനുവേണ്ടി സർക്കാർ പ്ലോറ നൽകാവുന്ന പൊതുവോ പ്രത്യേകമോ ആയ നിർദ്ദേശങ്ങൾക്ക് വ്യവസ്ഥാപരമായി കൈവശം വയ്ക്കേണ്ടതും കൈമാറും ചെയ്യേണ്ടതുമാകുന്നു."

3. റദ്ദാക്കലും ഒഴിവാക്കലും.—(1) 1985-ലെ കേരള വനം ഗതി) ഓർഡിനൻസ് (1986-ലെ 57) ഇതിനാൽ റദ്ദാക്കിയിരിക്കുന്നു.

(2) അങ്ങനെ റദ്ദാക്കിയിരുന്നാലും, പ്രസ്തുത ഓർഡിനൻസിലും മൂലം ഭേദഗതി ചെയ്തപ്രകാരമുള്ള പ്രധാന ആക്റ്റിൻകീഴിൽ ചെയ്ത ചെയ്തതായി കരുതപ്പെടുന്നതോ ആയ ഏതെങ്കിലും കാര്യമോ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ എടുത്തതോ എടുത്തതായി കരുതപ്പെടുന്നതോ ആയ ഏതെങ്കിലും നടപടി ഈ ആക്റ്റുമൂലം ഭേദഗതി ചെയ്ത പ്രകാരമുള്ള പ്രധാന ആക്റ്റിൻകീഴിൽ ചെയ്തതോ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ എടുത്തതോ ആയി കരുതപ്പെടുന്നതാണ്.

ഉദ്ദേശ കാരണങ്ങളുടെ വിവരണം

വ്യവസായത്തിനും വനഗവേഷണത്തിനും അസംസ്കൃതസാധനമായി യോഗിക്കുന്ന കടുപ്പം കുറഞ്ഞ തടിയുള്ള വൃക്ഷങ്ങളും മറ്റു വൃക്ഷങ്ങളും പിടിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി, മതിയായ ഫണ്ടുകൾ കണ്ടെത്തുന്നതിന് സർവ്വവളരെയധികം ക്ലേശങ്ങൾ അനുഭവിച്ചുവരികയാണ്. ഈ ക്ലേശം തരണം ചെയ്യുന്നതിനായി വനോല്പന്നങ്ങൾ വിനിയോഗിക്കുന്നതിൻമേൽ വിലപറ്റുവില അഞ്ചുശതമാനം തിരക്കിൽ ഒരു നികുതി ചുമത്താനുള്ള നിർദ്ദേശമുണ്ട്. ഈ നികുതി 1963-ലെ കേരളാ പൊതുവിലപന നികുതി ആക്ട് കീഴിലോ അല്ലെങ്കിൽ തത്സമയം പ്രാബല്യത്തിലുള്ള മറ്റേതെങ്കിലും നിയമത്തിൻകീഴിലോ നല്കേണ്ട നികുതികൾ പുറമേ ചുമത്താനാണു ചെയ്യേണ്ടതെന്ന് കരുതുന്നത്.

2. വ്യവസായങ്ങൾക്കും വനഗവേഷണത്തിനും ആവശ്യമുള്ള അസംസ്കൃത സാധനമായുപയോഗിക്കുന്ന കടുപ്പംകുറഞ്ഞ തടിയുള്ള വൃക്ഷങ്ങളും മറ്റിനം വൃക്ഷങ്ങളും നട്ടുവളർത്തുന്ന ആവശ്യത്തിലേക്ക് പ്രയോജനപ്പെടുത്തുന്നതിനായി കേരള വനവികസനഫണ്ട് എന്നുപേരുള്ള ഒരു ഫണ്ടുണ്ടാക്കുന്നതിനു ഖേദി വ്യവസ്ഥ ചെയ്യുന്നതിനും തീരുമാനിച്ചു.

3. മേല്പറഞ്ഞ ആവശ്യത്തിനായി 1961-ലെ കേരള വനം ആക്ട് ടേബിൾ ചെയ്യുന്നതിന് 1983-ലെ കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ബിൽ ഏഴാം കേരള നിയമസഭയുടെ 9-ാം നമ്പർ ബില്ലായി പ്രസിദ്ധപ്പെടുത്തി. പ്രസ്തുത ബിൽ നിയമസഭയിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും പാസ്സാക്കുന്നതിനും നിയമസഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിയാതിരുന്നതിനാലും ഭേദഗതിക്ക് ഉടൻടി പ്രാബല്യം നൽകേണ്ടിയിരുന്നതിനാലും 1984 ആഗസ്റ്റ് 31-ാം തീയതി ഗവർണ്ണർ 1984-ലെ കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ഓർഡിനൻസ് (1984-ലെ 65) വിളംബരപ്പെടുത്തി. 1984 ഒക്ടോബർ 22-ാം തീയതി ആരംഭിച്ച 1984 നവംബർ 5-ാം തീയതി അവസാനിച്ച നിയമസഭയുടെ സമ്മേളനക്കാലത്ത് പ്രസ്തുത ഓർഡിനൻസിനു പകരം നിയമസഭയുടെ ഒരു ആക്ട് കൊണ്ടുവരാനുള്ള ഒരു ബിൽ നിയമസഭയിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും പാസ്സാക്കുന്നതിനും നിയമസഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. 1984-ലെ 65-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ നിലനിറുത്തുന്നതിനായി 1984-ലെ കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ഓർഡിനൻസ് (1984-ലെ 78) 1984 നവംബർ 28-ാം തീയതി ഗവർണ്ണർ വിളംബരപ്പെടുത്തി. 1985 മാർച്ച് 6-ാം തീയതി ആരംഭിച്ച 1985 ഏപ്രിൽ 11-ാം തീയതി അവസാനിച്ച നിയമസഭയുടെ സമ്മേളനക്കാലത്ത് 1984-ലെ 78-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിനുപകരം നിയമസഭയുടെ ഒരു ആക്ട് കൊണ്ടുവരുന്നതിനുള്ള ഒരു ബിൽ നിയമസഭയിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും പാസ്സാക്കുന്നതിനും നിയമസഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. 1984-ലെ 78-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ നിലനിറുത്തുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി 1985-ലെ കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ഓർഡിനൻസ് (1985-ലെ 35) 1985 ഏപ്രിൽ 17-ാം തീയതി ഗവർണ്ണർ വിളംബരപ്പെടുത്തി. 1985 ജൂലായ് 1-ാം തീയതി ആരംഭിച്ച 1985 ജൂലായ് 31-ാം തീയതി അവസാനിച്ച നിയമസഭാസമ്മേളനക്കാലത്ത് 1985-ലെ 35-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിനു പകരം നിയമസഭയുടെ ഒരു ആക്ട് കൊണ്ടുവരാനുള്ള ഒരു ബിൽ നിയമസഭയിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും പാസ്സാക്കുന്നതിനും നിയമസഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. 1985-ലെ 35-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ നിലനിറുത്തുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി 1985-ലെ കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ഓർഡിനൻസ് (1985-ലെ 44) 1985 ആഗസ്റ്റ് 7-ാം തീയതി ഗവർണ്ണർ വിളംബരപ്പെടുത്തി. 1985 സെപ്റ്റംബർ 3-ാം തീയതി ആരംഭിച്ച 1985 സെപ്റ്റംബർ 26-ാം തീയതി അവസാനിച്ച നിയമസഭാസമ്മേളനക്കാലത്ത് 1985-ലെ 44-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിനു പകരം നിയമസഭയുടെ ഒരു ആക്ട് കൊണ്ടുവരാനുള്ള ഒരു ബിൽ നിയമസഭയിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും പാസ്സാക്കുന്നതിനും നിയമസഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. 1985-ലെ 44-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ നിലനിറുത്തുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി 1985-ലെ കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ഓർഡിനൻസ് (1985-ലെ 75) 1985 ഒക്ടോബർ 14-ാം തീയതി ഗവർണ്ണർ വിളംബരപ്പെടുത്തി. 1986 മാർച്ച് 14-ാം തീയതി ആരംഭിച്ച 1986 മാർച്ച് 31-ാം തീയതി അവസാനിച്ച നിയമസഭാ സമ്മേളനക്കാലത്ത് 1985-ലെ 75-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിനുപകരം നിയമസഭയുടെ ഒരു ആക്ട് കൊണ്ടുവരാനുള്ള ഒരു ബിൽ നിയമസഭയിൽ അവതരിപ്പിക്കുന്നതിനും പാസ്സാക്കുന്നതിനും നിയമസഭയ്ക്ക് കഴിഞ്ഞില്ല. 1985-ലെ 75-ാം ഓർഡിനൻസിലെ വ്യവസ്ഥകൾ നിലനിറുത്തുന്നതിനുവേണ്ടി 1986-ലെ കേരള വനം (ഭേദഗതി) ഓർഡിനൻസ് (1986-ലെ 19) 1986 ഏപ്രിൽ 19-ാം തീയതി ഗവർണ്ണർ വിളംബരപ്പെടുത്തി.

- 5. Prohibition to attachment of immovable properties.-** For the execution of a money decree against a member of Scheduled Tribe, no right or interest held by him in any immovable property shall be liable to be attached or sold:
- Provided that nothing contained in the above rule shall prohibit the attachment or sale of the right or interest held by any member of the Scheduled Tribe in any immovable property for the execution of a money decree for the realisation of maintenance or alimony:
- Provided further that the immovable property so attached shall not be sold to any person other than a member belonging to the Scheduled Tribe.
- 6. Advance of loan for payment of amount.-**
- (1) The authority competent to sanction the loan under sub-section (1) of Section 12 of the Act shall be the District Collector.
 - (2) The application for loan shall be in Form 4.
 - (3) The application for loan shall be sent to the District Collector through the Revenue Divisional Officer who by order determined the amount of compensation to be paid.
- 7. Payment of amount.-**
- (1) The amount payable under sub-section (1) of Section 11 shall be recoverable in lump either from the loan advanced under sub-section (1) of Section 12 or otherwise from the member of the Scheduled Tribe and shall be paid to the person from whom possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of the immovable property was restored.
 - (1A) The value of improvements payable under sub-section (1) of Section 11 of the Act shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Kerala Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act, 1958.
 - (2) A Register of Compensation paid and recoverable shall be maintained in Form 7.
- 8. Powers of competent authority and Revenue Divisional Officer.-**
- (1) The competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer shall be competent to call for any particulars from any person or persons for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Act and the party when called upon shall be bound to furnish the same.
 - (2) For the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Act and these rules, the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer shall have power-
 - (a) to make local inspections to issue commissions, to grant injunctions to appoint agents and to make during the pendency of proceedings such other interlocutory Orders as may appear to the competent authority or the Revenue Divisional Officer to be just and necessary to meet the ends of justice;
- 9. Appeals.-**
- (1) Appeal under sub-section (5) of Section 6 of the Act shall be in Form 8.
 - (2) The competent authority shall maintain a Register in Form 9 containing the details of the appeal preferred to him.
- 10. Headquarters of the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer.-** The headquarters of the competent authority shall be the headquarters of the district if he is the District Collector or any other place as may be fixed by the Government if he is an officer appointed under clause (a) of Section 2 of the Act and the headquarters of the Revenue Divisional Officer shall be headquarters of the Revenue Division if he is the Revenue Divisional Officer having jurisdiction over the area or any other place as may be fixed by the Government if he is an Officer appointed under clause (d) of Section 2 of the Act.
- 11. Form of complaint under sub-section (2) of section 14.-** The complaint to be filed before the Magistrate under sub-section (2) of Section 14 shall be in Form 10.
- 12. Sittings to be open.-** The sittings of the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer shall be held openly.
- 13. Posting book.-**
- (1) There shall be a 'Posting Book' in Form 11 in the Office of every competent authority and every Revenue Divisional Officer.
 - (2) The details of postings of all enquiries and appeals which come up before the Revenue Divisional Officer or the competent authority shall be entered in the posting book on each day after the enquiry or the appeal as the case may be, fixed for the day.

- 5. Prohibition to attachment of immovable properties.-** For the execution of a money decree against a member of Scheduled Tribe, no right or interest held by him in any immovable property shall be liable to be attached or sold:
- Provided that nothing contained in the above rule shall prohibit the attachment or sale of the right or interest held by any member of the Scheduled Tribe in any immovable property for the execution of a money decree for the realisation of maintenance or alimony:
- Provided further that the immovable property so attached shall not be sold to any person other than a member belonging to the Scheduled Tribe.
- 6. Advance of loan for payment of amount.-**
- (1) The authority competent to sanction the loan under sub-section (1) of Section 12 of the Act shall be the District Collector.
 - (2) The application for loan shall be in Form 4.
 - (3) The application for loan shall be sent to the District Collector through the Revenue Divisional Officer who by order determined the amount of compensation to be paid.
- 7. Payment of amount.-**
- (1) The amount payable under sub-section (1) of Section 11 shall be recoverable in lump either from the loan advanced under sub-section (1) of Section 12 or otherwise from the member of the Scheduled Tribe and shall be paid to the person from whom possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of the immovable property was restored.
 - (1A) The value of improvements payable under sub-section (1) of Section 11 of the Act shall be determined in accordance with the provisions of the Kerala Compensation for Tenants Improvements Act, 1958.
 - (2) A Register of Compensation paid and recoverable shall be maintained in Form 7.
- 8. Powers of competent authority and Revenue Divisional Officer.-**
- (1) The competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer shall be competent to call for any particulars from any person or persons for the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Act and the party when called upon shall be bound to furnish the same.
 - (2) For the purpose of implementing the provisions of the Act and these rules, the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer shall have power-
 - (a) to make local inspections to issue commissions, to grant injunctions to appoint agents and to make during the pendency of proceedings such other interlocutory Orders as may appear to the competent authority or the Revenue Divisional Officer to be just and necessary to meet the ends of justice;
- 9. Appeals.-**
- (1) Appeal under sub-section (5) of Section 6 of the Act shall be in Form 8.
 - (2) The competent authority shall maintain a Register in Form 9 containing the details of the appeal preferred to him.
- 10. Headquarters of the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer.-** The headquarters of the competent authority shall be the headquarters of the district if he is the District Collector or any other place as may be fixed by the Government if he is an officer appointed under clause (a) of Section 2 of the Act and the headquarters of the Revenue Divisional Officer shall be headquarters of the Revenue Division if he is the Revenue Divisional Officer having jurisdiction over the area or any other place as may be fixed by the Government if he is an Officer appointed under clause (d) of Section 2 of the Act.
- 11. Form of complaint under sub-section (2) of section 14.-** The complaint to be filed before the Magistrate under sub-section (2) of Section 14 shall be in Form 10.
- 12. Sittings to be open.-** The sittings of the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer shall be held openly.
- 13. Posting book.-**
- (1) There shall be a 'Posting Book' in Form 11 in the Office of every competent authority and every Revenue Divisional Officer.
 - (2) The details of postings of all enquiries and appeals which come up before the Revenue Divisional Officer or the competent authority shall be entered in the posting book on each day after the enquiry or the appeal as the case may be, fixed for the day is made or heard.

14. Roll Call of cases.- The 'Posting Book' shall be made available to the competent authority or the Revenue Divisional Officer as the case may be, and the case posted for each day shall be called out as soon as the sitting commences.

15. Diary Register.-

(1) A Diary Register shall be maintained in Form 12 by the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer and separate pages shall be allotted in the register for each case.

(2) The diary register shall contain concise and correct entries relating to every proceedings and the stage of the application or appeals as the case may be, beginning from its institution and ending with its final disposal.

(3) Whenever the records of a case before the Revenue Divisional Officer are called for by the competent authority under the Act the Revenue Divisional Officer shall, along with the records, furnish an authenticated true extract from the diary register relating to that case.

16. Order sheet.-

(1) There shall be an order sheet for every case written under the hand of the Revenue Divisional Officer or the competent authority hearing the proceedings.

(2) Entries shall be made in the order sheet on each day of the posting of the case noting the date, purpose of the posting, the work transacted on the day and the date and purpose of the succeeding posting if any.

17. Fair copies of orders.- Final orders issued by the competent authority or the Revenue Divisional Officer on an application or appeal as the case may be, heard by him, shall be fair copied, duly compared with the original and then signed by the officer who passed them or by his, or their successor (s) in office, the originals of such orders being permanently preserved.

18. Register of final orders.-

(1) There shall be a Register of final orders in Form 13 in the office of the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer.

(2) Entries in the Register of final orders shall be made promptly and date-wise and at the end of the register an index of its contents shall be entered.

19. Return of documents.-

(1) Any document produced for evidence in any case, other than a document which has become void or made invalid by the order finally disposing of the case, shall be returned to the party producing the same on his application made within a period of one year from the date of such order:

Provided that a document constituting the deeds shall be returned to the party producing the same on his application made within the period, notwithstanding the fact that such document has become void or made invalid by force of such order.

(2) Where any document has become partially void or partly invalid by the order finally disposing of a case such document shall be returned with an endorsement thereon, in red ink, duly attested by the competent authority or the Revenue Divisional Officer, as the case may be indicating the extent to which such document has become void or useless.

(3) If the application for the return of a document is not made within the periods specified in sub-rule (1), the party shall not be entitled to claim the document back:

Provided that the competent authority or the Revenue divisional Officer, as the case may be, may return the document after the expiration of the specified period, if it is satisfied that the applicant had sufficient reason for not making the application within that period.

Explanation.- For the purpose of this rule, a case shall be deemed to be finally disposed of only after the appeal to the competent authority is finally decided.

20. Arrangements of records after disposal of cases.-

(1) Soon after the final disposal of a case, the records relating to it shall be completed, arranged, and indexed and handed over to the records.

(2) The records shall be arranged year-wise and in the order of their numbers and indices of the records shall be prepared for reference.

APPENDIX - VI

Tenth Kerala Legislative Assembly

Bill No. 163

THE KERALA RESTRICTION ON TRANSFER BY AND RESTORATION OF LANDS TO SCHEDULED TRIBES BILL, 1999

A

BILL

to provide for restricting the transfer of lands by members of Scheduled Tribes in the State of Kerala and for the Restoration of possession of lands alienated by such members and for matters connected therewith.

Preamble.—WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for restricting the transfer of lands by members of Scheduled Tribes in the State of Kerala and for the restoration of possession of lands alienated by such members and for matters connected therewith;

BE it enacted in the Forty-ninth Year of the Republic of India as follows:—

1. *Short title, extent and commencement.*—(1) This Act may be called the Kerala Restriction on Transfer by and Restoration of Lands to Scheduled Tribes Act, 1999.

(2) It extends to the whole of the State of Kerala.

(3) It shall be deemed to have come into force on the 24th day of January, 1986.

2. *Definitions.*—In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,—

(a) “competent authority”, with reference to any land means the District Collector of the district in which the land is situate or any other officer appointed by the Government to be the competent authority for the purpose of this Act, for the areas in which the land is situate;

(b) “land” means any agricultural land;

(c) “prescribed” means prescribed by rules made under this Act;

(d) “Revenue Divisional Officer” with reference to any land means the Revenue Divisional Officer having jurisdiction over the area in which

2/531/99/MC.

3. *Exemptions.*—Nothing contained in this Act shall apply to,—

(a) the lease of any land granted by the Administrator General, Official Trustee or Official Receiver; or

(b) the mortgage, pledge or hypothecation of any land by a member of a Scheduled Tribe in favour of the Government as security for the purpose of obtaining any loan or other assistance from the Government; or

(c) the mortgage, pledge or hypothecation of any land by a member of a Scheduled Tribe in favour of a Co-operative Society registered or deemed to be registered under the Kerala Co-operative Societies Act, 1969 (21 of 1969), or a corporation or a nationalised bank or any other financing agency, not being a private agency or a money lender, as security for any loan advanced by such society, corporation, bank or other agency.

4. *Restriction on transfer.*—Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law, or in any contract, custom or usage, or in any judgment, decree, or order of any court, any transfer effected by a member of the Scheduled Tribe, of land possessed, enjoyed or owned by him on or after the

Commencement of this Act, to a person other than a member of a Scheduled Tribe, without the previous consent in writing of the competent authority, shall be invalid.

5. *Certain transfers to be invalid.*—(1) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in any other law for the time being in force, or in any contract, custom or usage, or in any judgment, decree or order of any court, any transfer of land possessed, enjoyed or owned by a member of a Scheduled Tribe to a person other than a member of a Scheduled Tribe, effected on or after the 1st day of January, 1960, and before the commencement of this Act shall be deemed to be invalid:

Provided that nothing in this section shall render invalid any transfer of land possessed, enjoyed or owned by a member of a Scheduled Tribe to a person other than a member of a Scheduled Tribe effected during the aforesaid period and the extent of which does not exceed two hectares.

(2) Notwithstanding anything contained in sub-section (1) or in any judgment, decree or order of any court or other authority, in cases where the land involved in such transfer is used for agricultural purposes, the transferee thereof shall be entitled to retain in his possession the said land upto an extent of two hectares which shall be demarcated by the Revenue Divisional Officer by order and in the manner as may be prescribed.

6. *Allotment of lands.*—Notwithstanding anything contained in section 5 or in any judgment, decree or order of any court or other authority, a member of a Scheduled Tribe who had effected any transfer of land, possessed, enjoyed or owned by him, to a person other than a member of a Scheduled Tribe, between the 1st day of January, 1960 and the 24th day of January, 1986 and where an application for restoration under section 6 of the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 (31 of 1975) has been filed before publication of this Act in the Gazette, but the possession or enjoyment thereof, has not been restored to him and such transfer has been validated by the proviso to sub-section (1) of section 5 or the transferee thereof has been made eligible for the retention of such land under sub-section (2) of section 5, shall be entitled to restoration of equal extent of land by way of allotment from the Government.

7. *Reconveyance of property.*—(1) Where by reason of a transfer of land, which is invalid under section 4 or section 5, a member of a Scheduled Tribe has ceased or ceases to be in possession or enjoyment thereof, he shall be entitled to the restoration of possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, of such land;

8. *Liability to pay amount.*—(1) Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, where the possession or enjoyment of any land is restored to a member of a Scheduled Tribe under this Act, an amount equal to the aggregate of the actual amount of consideration received by such member at the time of the transfer and an amount determined by the competent authority for improvements, if any, made after the transfer and before such restoration shall be paid by him to the person from whom possession or enjoyment, as the case may be, was restored, in accordance with the rules made under this Act:

Provided that no amount shall be payable if the transfer was effected on or after the commencement of this Act.

(2) The amount determined by the competent authority under sub-section (1) shall be final and shall not be called in question in any court.

(3) The amount payable under sub-section (1) shall be recoverable in such manner as may be prescribed.

9. *Government to provide grants for the payment.*—The Government shall, subject to such conditions as may be prescribed provide grants to the eligible members of Scheduled Tribes who are liable to pay amounts under section 8.

10. *Assignment of land.*—Notwithstanding anything contained in section 6 or in the Kerala Government Land Assignment Act, 1960 (30 of 1960) and the rules issued thereunder, the Government shall assign land to the landless families of the members of the Scheduled Tribes in the State, an extent not exceeding forty ares of land in the district they reside within a period of two years from the date of publication of this Act in the Gazette, or such further period as may be specified by Government by notification in the Gazette and in the manner as may be prescribed.

11. *Constitution of Scheduled Tribe Rehabilitation and Welfare Fund and its utilisation.*—(1) A fund known as “Scheduled Tribe Rehabilitation and Welfare Fund” may be constituted by the Government and administered in such manner as may be prescribed.

(2) The Fund shall be utilised by the Government for construction of houses for the Tribal families and for other welfare measures as may be prescribed in the rules or in any schemes framed thereunder.

12. *Offences and penalties.*—Any person who, on or after the date of publication of this Act in the Gazette procures transfer of any land in contravention of the provisions of section 4, shall be punishable with rigorous imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year, or with fine which may extend to five thousand rupees.

13. *Cognizance of offences.*—(1) No court inferior to that of a Magistrate of the First Class shall try any offence punishable under this Act:

Provided that the Government may constitute one or more than one special court exclusively for the trial of the offences under this Act.

(2) In a case where transfer of land in contravention of section 4 has been made on or after the publication of this Act in the Gazette the Revenue Divisional Officer shall file a complaint to the Magistrate having jurisdiction or to the Special Court, as the case may be, for the trial of the offences under this Act.

(3) Any person aggrieved by a transfer in contravention of section 4 or any other person on his behalf shall also be entitled to file a complaint before a Magistrate having jurisdiction or to the special court, as the case may be, for the trial of the offences under this Act.

14. *Bar on proceedings against Scheduled Tribes under Chapter X of the Code of Criminal Procedure.*—Where a person claiming to be a member of a Scheduled Tribe or any other person on his behalf applies to the Revenue Divisional Officer for the restoration of possession or enjoyment of any land under the provisions of this Act, then, notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force, no Magistrate shall have jurisdiction under Chapter X of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 (Central Act 2 of 1974), in respect of any dispute between that person and any other person claiming to be in possession or enjoyment of the said land.

15. *Power of competent authority and Revenue Divisional Officer.*—(1) The competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer while making inquiries under this Act shall have all the powers of a civil court while trying a suit under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908 (Central Act 5 of 1908), in respect of the following matters, namely:—

- (a) summoning and enforcing the attendance of any person and examining him on oath;
- (b) requiring the discovery and production of any document;
- (c) any other matter which may be prescribed.

(2) The decisions of the competent authority and the Revenue Divisional Officer under this Act shall have the force of a decree of a civil court and shall be executed through the civil court having jurisdiction over the area in which the land is situate.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975 (31 of 1975) was brought into force on the 1st day of January, 1982 as per notification G.O. (Ms.) No. 51/86/RD dated 20th January, 1986 published as S.R.O. No. 130/86 in Kerala Gazette Extraordinary No. 89 dated 24th January, 1986. Consequent to the enforcement of the Act numerous proceedings are pending before the Revenue Divisional Officers for restoration of possession of tribal lands from non-tribal alienees and the eviction of the present occupants of tribal lands amounted to serious social problems having many dimensions. If the present occupants of such lands are evicted majority of them would become landless and would pose a law and order problem to the State. To safeguard the interests of the members of the Scheduled Tribes as well as the transferees thereof, a Bill called the Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Amendment Bill, 1996 was passed by the Kerala Legislative Assembly on the 23rd September, 1996 and sent for assent of the President. But the President has returned the Bill with holding assent thereof. Hence the necessity of evolving an amicable settlement to the issue has arisen once more.

Problems faced by the tribals are not related only to the problem of lands alienated between 1-1-1960 to 24-1-1986. There are over 11000 tribal families who are landless. Discussions with Tribal representatives brought out the fact of the reality that majority of them do not want to impact the present social dynamics and aggravate the social tensions and wanted the issues to be amicably resolved out by accepting alternate lands. It is also intended to provide land not exceeding 40 ares to each of the landless tribal families in the district they reside. There is an urgent need to protect the small and marginal non-tribal transferees and recover the extent of land in excess of two hectares back to the tribal transferors. Apart from providing alternate land to the tribal transferors there is also an urgent need to provide houses and other welfare measures to them.

The Bill is intended to achieve the above objects.

FINANCIAL MEMORANDUM

Clause 11 of the Bill provides for constituting a Fund called "The Scheduled Tribes Rehabilitation and Welfare Fund" to be utilised for the construction of houses and other welfare measures to the members of Scheduled Tribes. Section 9 provides for giving grant to the Tribal transferors for making payment to the non-tribal transferees on reconveyance of land in excess of two hectares of land involved in the transaction. Clause 10 of the Bill authorises the Government to assign to the landless families of the members of Scheduled Tribes in the State an extent not exceeding 40 ares of land in the district they reside. These may entail expenditure in some cases. The said provisions warrant expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of the State. For giving effect to the above proposal, it is expected that a non-recurring expenditure of Rs. 32 crores is likely to be incurred from the Consolidated Fund of the State. However, the actual amount of expenditure that may be incurred from the Consolidated Fund of the State by way of other financial assistance to the tribals cannot be estimated with reasonable degree of accuracy at this stage.

MEMORANDUM REGARDING DELEGATED LEGISLATION

1. Clause 17 of the Bill seeks to empower the Government to issue orders to remove any difficulty in giving effect to the provisions of the Act.
2. Clause 21 of the Bill seeks to empower the Government to make rules to carry out the purposes of the Act.
3. The matters in respect of which the orders and rules may be made are of a routine and administrative character. The delegation of legislative power is therefore, of a normal character only.

K. E. ISMAIL

(True Translation)

S. DALILAH SOJAH,

Additional Law Secretary.

2/531/99/MC.

APPENDIX - VII

***The Kerala Assignment of Government Land to the Scheduled Tribes Rules, 2001**

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 7 of the Kerala Land Assignment Act, 1960 (30 of 1960), the Government of Kerala hereby make the following rules for assignment of Government land to the Scheduled Tribes, namely:-

Rules

- 1. Short title and commencement.-**
 - (1) These rules may be called the Kerala Assignment of Government land to the Scheduled Tribes Rules, 2001.
 - (2) It shall come into force at once.
- 2. Definitions.-** In these rules unless the context otherwise requires,
 - (a) "Act" means the Kerala Land Assignment Act, 1960 (30 of 1960).
 - (b) "alienation" includes sale, gift, lease or licence, but does not include a bequest under a will in favour of the legal heirs or mortgage of land to nationalised banks or co-operative societies or Government owned or approved agencies for securing loan for agricultural purposes.
 - (c) "assignee" means a Scheduled Tribe to whom land is assigned under these rules and includes his legal heirs or successors-in-interest.
 - (d) "assign" means transfer of land by way of registry and includes a lease and a grant of licence for the use of the land.
 - (e) "beneficial enjoyment" means the enjoyment of land for purposes like providing road to the assignee's registered holdings and protection of his water-course, standing crops, or building.
 - (f) "Government land" shall for the purpose of these rules, consist of land belonging to Government and set apart for assignment to Scheduled Tribes.
 - (g) "Scheduled Tribe" means the Scheduled Tribes referred to in clause (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution of India and shall include converts to other religions from Scheduled Tribes.
 - (h) "State" means State of Kerala.
- 3. Purpose for which land may be assigned to Scheduled Tribes.-** Government land may be assigned under these rules to Scheduled Tribes in the State for the purpose of house sites, personal cultivation and beneficial enjoyment.
- 4. Assigning Authority.-** The assigning authority for the purpose of these rules shall be the Tahsildar having jurisdiction over the area where the land is situated or any other officer authorised for the purpose by the Government.
- 5. Extent of land to be assigned.-**
 - (1) The extent of land to be assigned under these rules shall be determined by Government, from time to time, taking into account the availability of land in a particular area, nature of land, number of members of the family and other similar factors.
 - (2) On such determination under sub-rule (1) above, the Tahsildar having jurisdiction over the area where the land is situated or any other officer authorised by the Government in this behalf, shall publish the notification referred to in Section 4 of the Act, in the notice board of his office.
- 6. Conditions of assignment on registry.-**
 - (1) Government land granted on registry shall be heritable but not alienable.
 - (2) The assignee or a member or his family or his successor-in-interest shall occupy and commence residence in the land assigned within a period of two months from the date of assignment on registry or issue of patta, whichever is earlier and shall not transfer possession to any other persons.
 - (3) The assignee shall not cut any tree standing in the land assigned, provided that this restriction shall not be applicable for cutting small timber for the construction or maintenance of small residential buildings or for making agricultural implements, with prior permission of the village officer having jurisdiction over the area where the land is situated.

Explanation.- Small timber does not include sandal wood, rosewood, ebony and teak.

- (4) If the Government consider that any trees standing in the land assigned is to be cut and removed for the proper utilisation of the land for cultivation, such trees may be cut and removed by the Government.
 - (5) The assignee shall become a member of an "Oorukuttam" if it exists or as and when it is formed in the locality.
 - (6) The assignee shall not cultivate or use the land assigned, in violation of the restrictions or instructions issued by the concerned authorities for ecological protection or for plant quarantine reasons.
 - (7) The assignee shall not do intensive tillage practice.
- 7. Form of Order granting assignment on registry.-** The order granting assignment on registry shall be in Form A in the Appendix to these rules.
- 8. Issue of Patta.-**
- (1) In cases where registry is made, patta shall be issued in Form B in the Appendix to these rules. Where such patta is issued pending survey and demarcation, a note to the effect that the area noted in the patta is subject to revision after finalisation of the survey and demarcation, shall be made in the patta. In such cases, when survey and demarcation is completed, necessary modification, if found necessary, shall be noted in the patta by the assigning authority.
 - (2) The liability for land revenue or any tax shall arise with effect from the year of issue of the patta and any difference in the tax consequent on the change in extent after survey and demarcation, shall be adjusted to the future land revenue or any tax due from the assignee, if it is in excess of the land revenue or any tax due from the assignee, or be collected in lump, if it is less than the land revenue or any tax due from the assignee.
 - (3) The land revenue or any tax shall be liable to revision.
 - (4) The land shall also be subject to all general taxes and rates payable under any law or custom.
- 9. Trees.-** The trees as described in the patta issued to the assignee shall be accounted for and preserved by the Revenue Department. The assignee shall afford all facilities to the officers of the Department for inspecting the land periodically for checking the trees and for removing them if necessary or for any other purpose.
- 10. Land Value etc. not payable by the Assignee.-** No land value or survey and demarcation charges shall be payable by the assignee in respect of the land assigned to him.
- 11. Cancellation of Registry.-**
- (1) The registry shall be liable to be cancelled for contravention of the provisions of these rules or for the reason that assignment of land was given under a mistake or obtained by wilful misrepresentation of facts by the assignee before the assigning authority.
 - (2) The authority competent to order such cancellation shall be the authority, which granted the registry or any other authority superior to it.
- 12. Appeal.-**
- (1) An appeal against an order under Rule 11 shall be to the immediate superior authority who cancelled the registry.
 - (2) Appeal shall be presented within 3 months, from the date of receipt of the order appealed against by the aggrieved party.
 - (3) The appellate authority may, in its discretion, admit an appeal not submitted within time, if sufficient ground exists for condoning the delay.
 - (4) The appellate authority may confirm, vary or cancel the decision or order appealed against.
 - (5) No decision or order interfering with the original order shall be made in appeal, without giving the parties interested, a reasonable opportunity of being heard.
 - (6) Government may suo moto or on application of any party, revise, cancel or alter any order passed by the subordinate authorities:
 Provided that no such decision or order shall be revised, cancelled or altered without giving the party affected thereby, a reasonable opportunity of being heard.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

I. PRIMARY SOURCES

(a) Government/Official Records

1. *Census of India, Report*, 1881.
2. *Census of India, Report*, 1891.
3. *Census of India, vol. XXVI, Travancore*, 1901.
4. *Constitution of India*, Part III, Fundamental Rights - Article 15.
5. Government of India, G.O. No. 13-1/152-F, National Forest Policy, dated 12th May, 1952.
6. Government of India, *Report submitted to the Planning Commission*, New Delhi, 1968.
7. Government of India, *Report on an Enquiry into the Conditions of Labour in Plantations of India*, prepared by D V Rege, New Delhi, 1950.
8. Government of India, G.O. No. 13-1/152-F, National Forest Policy, dated 12th May, 1952.
9. Government of India, *Report of The Dhebar Commission 1960-1961*, New Delhi, 1961.
10. Government of India, *Report of the Planning Board on Tribal Sub-Plan*, New Delhi, 1980.
11. Government of Kerala, *Act No: 5, The Kannan Devan Hills (Resumption of Lands) Act*, 1971.
12. Government of Kerala, Department for Local Self Governance and Department for Tribal Welfare, *Pattika Varga Samudayangalude Adisthana Vivara Sekharanam - 2008, Idukki Jilla Report* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2011.
13. Government of Kerala, *District Handbook of Kerala; Idukki*, Trivandrum, Department of Information and Public Relations, 2004.
14. Government of Kerala, G.O.No: 40/2001, Trivandrum, 2001.
15. Government of Kerala, *Kerala Government Act: 5, The Kannan Devan Hills(Resumption of Lands) Act*, Trivandrum, 1971.
16. Government of Kerala, *Kumara Pillai Commission Report*, Trivandrum, 1968.
17. Government of Kerala, *Nettur Commission Report*, Trivandrum, 1970.

18. Government of Kerala, Public Relations Department, *Marunna Adivasikal*, Trivandrum, 1994.
19. Government of Kerala, *Report of a Benchmark Survey of Integrated Tribal Development Project in Kerala*, Govt. of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram, 1982.
20. Government of Kerala, *Report of the Evaluation Committee on the Welfare of the Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Communities of Kerala State*, Trivandrum, Kerala Government Publications, 1963.
21. Government of Kerala, *Report of the Legislative Assurance Committee appointed by the Kerala govt. to enquire about the non-implementation of The Kannan Devan Hills (Resumption of Lands) Act in 1971*, submitted in 2000.
22. Government of Kerala, *Report of the State planning Commission, 1981*, Chapter V., "Working of the Corporations: Assistance to Co – Operative Societies", Trivandrum, 1981.
23. Government of Kerala, *Report on Socio-economic Survey of Tribals in Kerala 1976-78*, Thiruvananthapuram, Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Govt, of Kerala, 1979.
24. Government of Kerala, *State Planning Commission Report on Tribal Development Programmes*, Trivandrum, 1999.
25. Government of Kerala, *Status Paper on Idukki District*, Idukki, District Planning Office, 1982.
26. Government of Kerala, The Kerala Money lenders Act-1958 (Act 35 of 1958), in *Manual of Kerala Laws*, Trivandrum, 1959.
27. Government of Kerala, *The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Land and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act 1975 (act 31 of 1975)*, in *Manual of Kerala Laws*, Vol. 14, Trivandrum, 2001.
28. Mehta, B H, "Gonds and the Gondwana Land" in *Report submitted to the Planning Commission, Government of India*, New Delhi, 1968.
29. Office of the Registrar General - India, *Census of India, Report, Kerala, Data Highlights on the Scheduled Tribes*, 2001.
30. Office of the Registrar General – India, *Census of India, Report*, 1991.
31. Office of the Registrar General – India, *Census of India, Report*, 2001.
32. Office of the Registrar General–India, *Census of India; Kerala, Data Highlights: The Scheduled Tribes*, 2011.
33. Rege, D V, *Report on an Enquiry into the Conditions of Labour in Plantations of India*, Government Press, Delhi, 1950.

34. State Central Archives, Trivandrum, *Cover Files, Bundle 28, File No: 112*, 1886.
35. State Central Archives, Trivandrum, *Cover Files, Bundle 36, File No: 45*, 1900.
36. State Central Archives, Trivandrum, *Cover Files, Bundle 52, File No: 86*, 1910.n
37. Supreme Court of India, *Judgment on the Petition of Kannan Devan Hills Company Ltd. against Kerala State Govt.*, dated 27/04/1972, New Delhi, 1972.
38. Supreme Court of India, *Judgment on the Petition of Kannan Devan Hills Company Ltd. against Kerala State Govt.* dated 27/04/1972, New Delhi, 1972.
39. *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, vol. I, London, 1909.
40. *The Report of Royal Commission on Labour in India (Whitley Commission)*, Chapter 19, Calcutta, 1931.
41. *The Report of Royal Commission on Labour in India (Whitley Commission)*, Calcutta, 1931.
42. Travancore Government, *Travancore Girijan Law - 1911*, Trivandrum, 1911.
43. World Bank, *India Eco - development Project (Credit: 2916 IN)*, May, 2000.

(b) Oral History-Interviews

1. Andiappan, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in May, 2011.
2. Anguthan, a *Muthuvan* at Edaliparakudi, in April, 2011.
3. Appannan, a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in May, 2011.
4. Chandran Kani, a *Muthuvan* at Thayannankudi, May, 2011.
5. Chellamuthu, a *Muthuvan* at Periyakudi, Marayur, in May, 2011.
6. Chinnaswami, a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in June, 2012.
7. Chinnaswami, a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, June, 2012.
8. Chinnaswami, a *Muthuvan* at Nadukudi, in April, 2012.
9. Easwaran P, a Moneylender from Marayur, in March, 2011.
10. Guruswami, Priest at Kavakkattukudi, in March, 2012.
11. Indran, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in April, 2011.
12. Iswaran, a *Muthuvan* at Kandathi Kudi, in May, 2011.
13. Kanni Ammal, a *Muthuvan* woman at Nadukudi, in April, 2011.
14. Karuppu Kunji, 78 years old *Muthuvan* at Kurathikudi, in June 2012.

15. Kolliyappan, a *Muthuvan* at Kammalakkudi in May, 2011.
16. Krishna Swami (*Manthrakkaran*), Andavankudi, in May, 2011
17. Krishnankutty (Employee in the Girijan Society of Edamalakudi for 23 years), in May, 2011.
18. Kurian Joseph, TEO, Adimali, in February, 2013.
19. Laxmanan, a *Muthuvan* at Meenkuthikudi, in May, 2011.
20. Laxmi, a *Muthuvan* woman at Irutalakudi, in May, 2011
21. Madanan (Panchayath Member), a *Muthuvan* at Kandathikudi, in May, 2012.
22. Madanan, a *Muthuvan* at Kammalakkudi, in April, 2011.
23. Malliappan, a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in May, 2012.
24. Manikkan, a *Muthuvan* at Plamalakkudi, in May, 2012.
25. Mathew K A, Public Information Officer, ITDP, Thodupuzha, in December, 2012.
26. Mayilswami, a *Muthuvan* at Ampalpadikudi, in May, 2012
27. Murugan, a Malapulaya tribe, Marayoor, in May, 2012.
28. Muthuswami, a *Muthuvan* at Puthukudi, in May, 2012.
29. Nallathampi, a *Muthuvan* at Ambalaparakkudi, in October, 2012.
30. Natarajan, *Thalaivar*, Sethkudi, in May, 2012.
31. Padmanabhan, Health Inspector, Adimali, in June, 2012.
32. Palanisami, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in May, 2012.
33. Ponnamma, a *Muthuvan* woman at Kandathikudi, in January, 2013.
34. Ponnusaami, a *Muthuvan* at Puthukudi, in March, 2012.
35. Ramani, a *Muthuvan* woman of Societykudi in May, 2012.
36. Rangaraj, a *Muthuvan* at Puthukudi, in April, 2012.
37. Ratnamma, a *Muthuvan* woman at Plamalakkudi, in May, 2012.
38. Ravichandran, Health Inspector, Munnar, in February, 2013.
39. Remani, Anganvadi Worker, Puthukudi, in May, 2012.
40. Sathish, Master, Single Teacher School, Idaliparakkudi, in May, 2012.
41. Subbav, a *Muthuvan* at Kandathikudi, in April, 2012.
42. Thanka Swami, *Vathi* of Andavankudi, in May, 2011.

43. Thevamma, a *Muthuvan* woman at Puthukudi, in April, 2011.
44. Veeramani, a *Muthuvan* at Andavankudi, in April, 2012.
45. Veeraswami, *Vathy*, Sethkudi, on May, 2011.
46. Vellachami, a *Muthuvan* at Kandathikudi, in March 2012
47. Vellayammal, a *Muthuvan* woman at Kurathikudi, in May, 2012.
48. Vellayappan, a *Muthuvan* at Sethkudi, in May, 2012.
49. Velu Sami, *Manthrakaran*, Oli Kudi, in April, 2012.
50. Vijaya, Anganwadi teacher working in Edaliparakudi, in March, 2012.
51. Vijayan A, Forest Guard, Edamalakudi, in May, 2011.

II. UNPUBLISHED WORKS

1. Balakrishnan, R P, *The Tribal Economy of Kerala: An Inter - community Analysis*, Unpublished M. Phil. dissertation submitted to University of Pondicherry, 2007.
2. Das Gupta, Sangeetha, *Re - ordering of Tribal Worlds: Tana Bhagats, Missionaries and the Raj*, Ph. D dissertation, Centre for Historical Studies, JNU, New Delhi 1998.
3. Mohandas, R V, *Impact of New Settlers in the Western Ghat Region on the Socio-economic Conditions of the Tribal Population: A Case Study of Wayanad district in Kerala*, Report of the Research Project Sponsored by Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, New Delhi, 1992.
4. Paul, C T, *Tribal Economy of the Hill Tribes in Kerala with Special Reference to Wayanad*, Un-Published PhD dissertation, University of Calicut, Tenhipalam, 1989.

III. MAGAZINES AND NEWS PAPERS

1. *Maadhyamam*, Weekly Magazine (Malayalam) Sept. 2000, Kozhikode, 2000.
2. *Madhyamam*, Daily News Paper (Malayalam), dated 28 October, 2001.
3. *The Pioneer*, Daily News Paper, dated 29 October, 2001.
4. *Rashtra Deepika*, Evening Daily (Malayalam), 20-25 September, 2010.

IV. JOURNALS AND ARTICLES

1. Ananthabhanu "Economic Organization of Cholanaikans" in, *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation*, New Delhi, 1992.
2. Anitha, V and P K Muraleedharan, "Joint Forest Management, Hope on the Horizon", in Kerala Forest Research Institute, *Evergreen*, No.5, Peechi, 2007.
3. Ayyappan, A, "Social and Physical Anthropology of Nayadis of Malabar", in *Bulletin of Madras government Museum*, General section No.2, Madras, 1937
4. Mehta, B H, "Gonds and the Gondwana Land", in *The Report submitted to the Planning Commission*, New Delhi, 1968.
5. Baby, K J, "Adiya Tribes and their Cultural Ethos", in District Tourism Promotion Council of Wayanad, *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise*, Kalpetta, 2000.
6. Bhagath, R B, "Role of Census in Racial and Ethnic Construction", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXVIII8, 2003.
7. Devan, P K, "Wayanatile Uralikurumar", in *Maadhyamam Weekly* (Mal.) Kozhikode, September 2000.
8. Devan, P K, "Uralikuruman Tribals", in District Tourism Promotion Council of Wayanad, *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise*, Kalpetta, 2000.
9. Kamat, Sangeeta, "Anthropology and Global Capital: Rediscovering the Noble Savage", in *Cultural Dynamics*, 13.1, 2001.
10. Krishnan, C, "Adivasimekhalayile Vikasana Prasnangalum Sadhyathakalum", in Forest Department Bimonthly, *Aranyam* (Mal.), 2003.
11. *Man in India: The Rebellion* (Special Edition), New Delhi, 1945.
12. Mishra, P K, "Tribal Economy in Southern Zone", in K S Singh (ed.) *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation*, New Delhi, 1992.
13. Misra; P K & Rajalakshmi Misra "Differential Response to change - A case study of Economy, Society and change among five tribal groups in Southern Zone", in *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation*, New Delhi, 1992.
14. Rajendran, S, "Oral History; Muthuvan and their Migration", in Chenna P Reddy and Sarath Babu (eds.), *Folklore in the New Millennium*, New Delhi, 1996.
15. Sivadas, P, "Land Hunger and De-Forestation: Case Study of Cardamom Hills in Kerala", in *Economic and Political Weekly (EPW)*, Vol.XXI, No. 13, 1986.
16. Skaria, Ajay, "Shades of Wilderness: Tribe, Caste, and Gender in Western India", in *The Journal of Asian studies*, 56.3, Irvine, 1997.

17. Srinivas, M N, "Development of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India", in *Sociological Bulletin*, 1973.
18. Sukumaran Nair, "Wayanad and her Tribal Sons", in District Tourism Promotion Council of Wayanad, *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise*, Kalpetta, 2000.
19. Tharakan, P K Michael, "Dimensions and Characteristics of the Migration of Farmers from Travancore to Malabar; 1930 - 1950", in *Journal of Kerala Studies*, 5 (8), Trivandrum, 1978.
20. Thurston, Edgar, "The Paniyans of Malabar", in *Madras Government Museum – Bulletin*, Vol. II., No. 1, Madras, 1907.
21. Wiercinski, Mateusz, "Some Problems in the Demography of the Tribal Populations in India", in *Mankind Quarterly*, 36.3-4, 1996.
22. Xaxa, Virginus, "Tribes as Indigenous People of India", in *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXIV.51, 1999.

V. DICTIONARIES AND ENCYCLOPEDIAS

1. *Encyclopedia of Dravidian Tribes*, 2 vols., Trivandrum, 2008.
2. *Oxford Dictionary - Large Print*, London, 2005.
3. *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*, New York, 1989.

VI. SECONDARY SOURCES

Published Works

1. Alexander, Jeffrey C, *The Modern Reconstruction of Classical thought: Talcott Parsons*, London, 1983.
2. Aloysius, G, *Religion as Emancipatory Identity: A Buddhist Movement among the Tamils under Colonialism*, New Delhi, 1998, p. 86.
3. Ayyappan A and S V Mahadevan, *Ecology, Economy, Matriline and Fertility of Kurichians*, New Delhi, 1990.
4. Ayyappan, A, *Report on Socio-economic Conditions of Aboriginal Tribes of the Province of Madras*, Madras, 1948.
5. Baby, K T, *Mavelimantram* (Malayalam Novel), Kottayam, 1991.
6. Barrett, Marques, *Writing Culture: The World until Yesterday*, London, 2006.
7. Bauman, Zygmunt, *Intimation of Post Modernity*, London, 1992.

8. Baviskar, Amita, *In the Belly of the River: Tribal Conflict over Development in the Narmada Valley*, Oxford, 2004.
9. Baviskar, Amita, *The Perspective Study of the Bhilalas*, New Delhi, 1995.
10. Beck, Ulrich, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*, New York, 1992.
11. Beteille, Andre, *Antinomies of Society: Essays on Ideologies and Institutions*, Oxford, 1999.
12. Beteille, Andre, *Caste, Class and Power*, London, 1965.
13. Bhadra, Gautam, *et.al.* (eds.) *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian History and Society X*, New Delhi, 1999.
14. Bhattacharya, Neeladri, *Labouring Histories: Agrarian Labour and Colonialism*, New Delhi, 2004, pp.17-18.
15. Blanning, Ritzer J, *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas: From Modern to Post Modern*, New York, 1998.
16. Bose, N K, *Anthropology and Some Indian Problems*, Calcutta, 1972.
17. Bose, N K, *Tribal Life in India*, New Delhi, 1971.
18. Boserup, Ester, *Women's Role in Economic Development*, New York, 1970.
19. Bourdillon, Thomas Fulton, *Report on the Forest of Travancore, Trivandrum*, 1892.
20. Brecks, Francis, *Sociology of Kinship: Ethnicity, Identity and Interaction*, London, 1998.
21. Brown, Radcliff, *Taboo*, London, 1959.
22. Chacko, A D, *Kuricharude Lokam* (Mal.), Thiruvananthapuram, 1994
23. Chandrasekharan, C, *Forest Resources of Kerala - A Qualitative Assessment*, Trivandrum, 1976.
24. Cleghorn, Hugh Francis Clarke, *The Forests and Gardens of India*, London, 1861.
25. Cohn, Bernard, *Colonialism and its Forms of Knowledge*, USA, 1996.
26. Conner, P E, *Description of Hill Tribes in Travancore*, Madras, 1917.
27. Crosby, Alfred W, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, London, 2004.
28. Darwin, Charles, *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, London, 1859.
29. District Tourism Promotion Council of Wayanad (pub.), *Discover Wayanad: The Green Paradise*, Kalpetta, 2000.

30. Dube, S C, *Tribal Heritage of India*, New Delhi, 1977.
31. Edward Said, *Orientalism*, Penguin Books, London, 1985.
32. Ehrenfels, U R, *Kadar of Cochin*, Madras, 1952.
33. Ellingson, Ter, *The Myth of the Noble Savage*, Berkeley, 2001.
34. Elwin, Varrier *The Tribal World of Varrier Elwin: An Autobiography*, London, 1964.
35. Elwin, Varrier, *The Agaria*, H. Milford, 1944.
36. Elwin, Varrier, *The Baiga*, H. Milford, 1942.
37. Engels, Friedrich, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, London, 1972.
38. Firth, R, *Elements of Social Organization*, London, 1962.
39. Ghurye, G S, *The Aborigines - So Called - and Their Future*, Bombay, 1959.
40. Ghurye, G S, *The Burning Caldron of North – East India*, New Delhi, 1980.
41. Giddens, Antony, *The Constitution of Society*, London, 1984
42. Gough, Kathleen, *Marriage and the Family*, New York, 1971.
43. Gould, H A, *The Implication of Technological Change for Folk and Scientific Medicines*, New York, 1957.
44. Guha, R, *Savaging the Civilized: Varrier Elwin, His Tribals in India*, New Delhi, 1999.
45. Guha, Sumit, *Environment and Ethnicity in India: 1200-1991*, Cambridge, 1999.
46. Gupta, Dipankar, *Mistaken Modernity: India between Worlds*, New Delhi, 2000.
47. Gupta, Kalyankumar Das, *Tribal Society of Ancient India*, Calcutta, 1974.
48. Hardiman, David, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*, Delhi, 1987.
49. Hasnain, Nadeem, *Tribal India Today*, New Delhi, 1983.
50. Heimendorf, Christoph Von Furer, *Tribes and Hindu Society*, New Delhi, 1971.
51. Helm H H, June(ed), *Essays on the Problem of Tribe*, University of Washington Press, 1968.
52. Huntingford, George Wynn Brereton, *The Nandi of Kenya*, London, 1953.

53. Iyer, L Anantha Krishnan, *Kerala and Her People*, Palaghat, 1951.
54. Iyer, L Anantha Krishnan, *The Travancore Tribes and Castes*, 3Vols., Madras, 1912.
55. Jaffrelot, Christophe, *Ambedkar and Untouchability: Fighting the Indian Caste System*, New York, 2005.
56. Jnaneswaran, Suresh, *The Naxalite Movement in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1991.
57. Johannes, Frenz, *Ethnography and Modernity*, New York, 2012.
58. Johny, K R, *Wayanadinte Samskarika Boomika* (Mal.), Calicut, 1983.
59. Karunakaran, C K, *Adivasikalude Lokam Vanavasikal* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 2007.
60. Kattakkayam, Jacob John, *Social Structure and Change among the Tribals: A Study among the Uralis of Idukki District in Kerala*, New Delhi, 1983.
61. Kelkar, G & D Nathan, *Gender & Tribe: Kali for Women*, New Delhi, 1991
62. Kosambi, D D, *Culture and Civilization of Ancient India in Historical Outline*, London, 1965.
63. Kumar, Alok, *The Naga Life: A Cultural Saga*, Calcutta, 1988.
64. Kunhaman, M, *Development of Tribal Economy*, New Delhi, 1989.
65. Kuper, Adam, *The Invention of the Primitive: Transformations of an Illusion*, London, 1988.
66. Kurup, K K N, *Land Alienation and Tribals of Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1988.
67. Lieban, Richard W, "Medical Anthropology", in John J Honigman (ed.), *Handbook of Social and Cultural Anthropology*, Chicago, 1973.
68. Linton, Ralph, *The Tanala: A Hill Tribe of Madagascar*, Chicago, 1933.
69. Lively, Adam, *Masks: Blackness, Race and Imagination*, London, 1999.
70. Logan, William, *Malabar Manual*, Vol.1, Madras, 1887.
71. Lovatt, Heather, *A Short History of the Peermade Vandiperiyar Plantation District*, London, 1970.
72. Luiz, A A D, *Tribes of Kerala*, New Delhi, 1962.
73. Mair, Lucy Philip, *Primitive Government*, London, 1962.
74. Majumdar, D N, *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Bombay, 1956.
75. Majumdar, D N, *The Fortunes of Primitive Culture*, New Delhi, 1987.
76. Majumdar, D N, *Races and Cultures of India*, Delhi, 1944.

77. Malinowski, Bronislaw, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea*, London, 1922.
78. Mathur, P R G, *Tribal Situation in Kerala*, Trivandrum, 1975.
79. Menon, A Sreedhara, *Keralacharithram* (Mal.), Trivandrum, 1967.
80. Mohandas, M, *Impact of New Settlers in the Western Ghats Region on the Socio-Economic Conditions of the Tribal Population*, Wayanad, 1992.
81. Mukherji, D P, *Diversities*, Peoples Publishing House, New Delhi, 1979
82. Nair, Somasekharan, *Paniyar*(Mal.), Kottayam, 1976
83. Panoor, K, *Keralathile Africa*(Mal.) Kottayam, 1963.
84. Panoor, K, *Keralathile America* (Mal.) Kottayam, 1989.
85. Panoor, K, *Malakal, Tazvarakal, Manushyar*(Mal.) Kottayam, 1971.
86. Panoor, K, *Sahyante Makkal* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1990.
87. Pathy, Jaganath, *Towards as Alternative Paradigm of Development of Tribes*, New Delhi, 1992.
88. Pickering, Michael, *Stereotyping: The Politics of Representation*, London, 2001.
89. Pitchard, Edward Evans, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande*, London, 1937.
90. Playne, S, *Southern India; its History, People, Commerce and Industrial Resources*, London, 1915.
91. Rajora, S C, *Social Structure and Tribal Elites*, New Delhi, 1987.
92. Rao, C R, *Tribal Women in an Age of Change*, Calcutta, 1997.
93. Ray, Niharanjan, *Idea and Image in Indian Art*, Calcutta, 1973.
94. Reddy, Chenna P and Sarath Babu (eds.), *Folklore in the New Millennium*, New Delhi, 1996.
95. Redford, Michael, *Beyond Society and Time: How Anthropology Make its Object*, Paris, 1996.
96. Robert, Ralph N, *Origin of Family, Private Property and Social Bond*, New York, 1978.
97. Rousseau, Jean Jaques, *The Social Contract and Discourses*, G D H Cole (tras.), New York, 1950.
98. Sahlins, Marshall d, *Tribesmen*, New Jersey, 1968.

99. Said, Edward W, *Orientalism*, New York, 1978.
100. Saunders, Lyle, *Cultural Differences and Medical Care*, New York, 1954.
101. Sen, Aloka Parasher, *Subordinate and Marginal Groups in Early India*, Oxford, 2004.
102. Shaxson, T F, *New Concepts and Approaches to Land Management in the Tropics with Emphasis on Steeplands*, Rome, 1999.
103. Singh, K S (ed.), *Economies of Tribals and their Transformation*, New Delhi, 1992.
104. Singh, K S, *People of India: An Introduction*, Vol.1, New Delhi, 1992.
105. Singh, K S, *Tribal Movement in India*, New Delhi, 1982.
106. Singh, Yogendra, *Modernization of Indian Tradition*, Jaipur, 1994
107. Sinha, M K, *Indian Tribes through the Ages of Social Stratification*, Calcutta, 2008.
108. Sinha, Surajith, *Tribes and Indian Civilization*, Calcutta, 1982.
109. Srinivas, M N, *Social Changes in Modern India*, Hyderabad, 1972.
110. Srivastava, S, *Indian Census in Perspective*, New Delhi, 1971.
111. Stephen, Fuchs, *The Aboriginal Tribes of India*, London, 1982.
112. Stocking, George W, *Victorian Anthropology*, New York, 1987.
113. Strachey, James (trans.), Sigmund Freud, *Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, London, 1972.
114. Strauss, Claude Levi, *Structural Anthropology*, USA, 1963.
115. Sundar, Nandini, *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar (1854 - 1996)*, Delhi, 1997.
116. Thapar, Romila, *Ancient Indian Social History: Some Interpretations*, Hyderabad, 1978.
117. Tharamangalam, Joseph (ed.), *Kerala: The Paradox of Public Action & Development*, New delhi, 2006.
118. Thomas Jr., William L (ed.), *Current Anthropology: A supplement to Anthropology Today*, Chicago, 1956.
119. Thomas, Elizabeth Marshall, *The Harmless People*, New York, 1959.
120. Thomas, P T, *A Study of a Travancore Tribe and its Problems: The Muthuvans of Travancore*, Baroda, 1958.
121. Thurston, Edgar, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India*, Vol. V, Madras, 1909.

122. Tribhuwan, Robin D and Preethi R Tribhuwan (eds.), *Tribal Dances of India*, Delhi, 1999.
123. Tucker, Richard P, and J F Richards (eds.), *Global Deforestation and the Nineteenth Century World Economy*, London, 1983.
124. Varrier Elwin, *The Tribal World of Varrier Elwin: An Autobiography*, London, 1964.
125. Vayaleri, Kumaran, *Kunchiente Jeevithavum Samskaravum* (Mal.), Kottayam, 1996.
126. Verma, R C, *Indian Tribes through the Ages*, New Delhi, 1990.
127. Vidyarthi, L P (ed.), *Applied Anthropology in India*, New Delhi, 1968.
128. Vidyarthi, L P and E K Rai (eds.), *Tribal Culture in India*, New Delhi, 1976.
129. Vidyarthi, L P, *Tribal Development and its Administration*, New Delhi, 1986.
130. Wallerstein, Levin, *The Modern World System, and Cultural Survival*, New York, 1998.
131. Westermarck, Edward, *Short History of Human Marriage*, London, Kessinger, 1926.

G139653

