

**TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA : A CRITIQUE  
(A CASE STUDY OF THE MALAI ARAYANS IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT)**

<https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/366?mode=full>

*Thesis Submitted to Mahatma Gandhi University in Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Award of the Degree of*

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNDER THE FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

*By*  
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KOTTAYAM**

**APRIL 2004**



*Dedicated to*

*The loving memory of my beloved father  
Late Shri. Jiyavirah Varkey Vettickal*



## CERTIFICATE

**This is to certify that this thesis entitled TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA: A CRITIQUE ( A CASE STUDY OF THE MALAI ARAYANS IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT) is a record of bonafide research carried out by Shri. V.V. Joseph under my supervision. No part of the thesis has been submitted for any degree before.**

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21.04.04

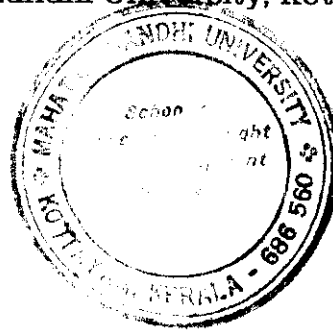
Kottayam  
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## DECLARATION.

I, V.V.Joseph declare that this thesis entitled **TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT IN KERALA: A CRITIQUE (A CASE STUDY OF THE MALAI ARAYANS IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT)** has not previously formed the basis for award of any degree.

Aruvithura  
15 April 2004



V.V.Joseph

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## *Acknowledgements*

I am indebted to numerous persons who have encouraged and supported me in the completion of this work.

It has been a rare privilege for me to have Dr. A.K.Chirappanath, Professor and Founder Director of the School of Gandhian Thought and Development studies, M.G.University, Kottayam as my guide. To come into contact with the right sort of guides and friends is a unique experience. When I started working under my guide I realized that he is a right guide and friend indeed. I am deeply indebted to him for his valuable suggestions, sustained encouragement, challenging questions and timely warnings.

This work would not have been completed with out the help of Dr.T.M.Joseph, Department of Politics, Newman College Thodupuzha. He deepened my grasp of the topic and his expertise in research methodology helped me present the data scientifically. I express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof.T.P.Antony who spared his valuable time for going through the draft and touching up the style. I also thank my friend Prof. George Cherian who patiently went through the original manuscript and gave me necessary directions. I am also thankful to Rev.Dr.K.M.Joseph, Principal, St.George's College, Aruvithura and my colleagues in the Department and College for their co-operation in this endeavour.

I am also grateful to Dr. Mahajan P. Mani, the present Director of the School of Gandhian Thought and Development Studies, and other members of the faculty especially Shri.A.U.Joseph for their helpful guidance in writing up my thesis.

I would like to express my special gratitude to Most. Rev. K.J.Samuel, Moderator of the Church of South India, Rt. Rev. Michael John, the first Bishop of the East Kerala Diocese, Melukavu, Smt.C.K. Janu, Chair Person, Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha, Shri M.S. Joseph, J.A.S (Rtd.), Former



State Election Commissioner, and a host of dignitaries who graciously condescended to be interviewed by me on the various aspects of the topic. Rev. P.D. John of Melukavu, Shri. M.K. Narayanan of Poochapra, Shri J.C. Chacko of Kulathikandam and Shri. Sukumaran Kallepally of Poonjar are to be specially mentioned in this connection.

Dr. P.K. Sukumaran Nair, Director, Kerala Institute of Research Training and Development Studies for Scheduled Castes and Tribes, Kozhikode and his colleagues were kind enough to throw open the library and other facilities for me very many times. I am very grateful to them.

The members of the Office staff of the school of Gandhian Thought and Development studies offered me all the necessary assistance during the course of my research. The staff of the Kerala University Library, Thiruvananthapuram, M.G. University Library Kottayam, Public Library Kottayam, St. George College Library Aruvithura, C.M.S. College Library Kottayam, C.M.S. Press Kottayam and the Dicoean centres of Kottayam and Melukavu of the Church of South India have been of very much helpful in my doctoral research. My thanks go to them all.

Among the superb typists who have graced the work are Mrs. Shyla P.P, Mr. Sabu and Ms. Uava. My thanks are due to them.

In fine I thank my mother Aleyamma, wife Leelamma and son Manu, who have supported and sustained me in my pursuit.

Above all beyond words, thought of life long indebtedness to Almighty God.

U.U. Joseph



## ABBREVIATIONS

A.P.L	- Above Poverty Line
ATMAS	- Akhila Thiruvithamcore Malai Araya Sabha
B.P.L	- Below Poverty Line
C.M.S	- Church Mission Society
C.S.I	- Church of South India
F.D.C	- Forest Development Corporation
H.D.F	- Human Development Index
I.T.D.P	- Integrated Tribal Development Projects
KIRTADS	- Kerala Institute for Research Training and Development Studies for Scheduled Castes and Tribes
I.R.D.P	- Integrated Rural Development Programme
M.A.D.A	- Modified Area Development Approach
M.A.S.S	- Malai Araya Samrakshana Samithi
M.F.P	- Minor Forest Produce
M.F.P.T.D.F	- Minor Forest Produce Trading and Development Federation
M.L.A	- Member of Legislative Assembly
M.P	- Member of Parliament
N.G.O	- Non Government Organisation
N.V.O	- Non Voluntary Organization
O.E.C	- Other Eligible Communities
P.Q.L.I	- Physical Quality of Life Index
P.T.G	- Primitive Tribal Groups
P.W.D	- Public Works Department
S.C	- Scheduled Castes
S.C.A	- Special Central Assistance
S.T	- Scheduled Tribes
T.D.C.C	- Tribal Development Co-operative Corporation
T.R.I	- Tribal Research Institute
TRIFED	- Tribal Co-operative Marketing Development Federation
T.S.P	- Tribal Sub Plan
U.T	- Union Territory
V.T.C	- Vocational Training Centre



**CHAPTER I**  
**INTRODUCTION**



## 1.1 Statement of the Problem

The Republic of India has completed more than five decades. It is indeed an occasion for introspection and retrospection. It is the time to evaluate in the proper perspective our gains and losses, shortcomings, and the challenges we have had to encounter. We are today passing through one of the most momentous watersheds of history. A great re-organization of the human society is taking place both within and outside the national boundaries. The barriers that have kept humanity apart are breaking down. We are striving to build up a new way of life, which will treat all men with dignity and respect. India, being a land of diversity, exhibits its divergent character not only in the realms of religion, language and custom, but in social status, economic well-being, literacy and so on. A section of our society, the tribals are leading a life, characteristic of feudal, medieval or even of the primordial times. The benefits emanating from civilization, urbanization and mechanization have so far eluded the aborigines, living in the far-flung villages and the wide tracts of forests in the Indian Peninsula.

Although numerous steps have been taken both by governmental and non-governmental agencies to improve their lot, the plight of the tribals remains much the same. The tribal population of the country even now faces the problem of underdevelopment in all its ramifications. As the fruits of the various protective measures are not evenly distributed, there arise glaring disparities among even the tribal groups. We see that among the same tribe there exist uneven degree of



development as in the case of the Hindu and the Christian Malai Arayans of Kerala. While some tribals progress at a faster pace, others lag far behind. In spite of the abundance of tribal studies, due attention has not yet been focused on the intragroup developmental problems.

## 1.2 Background of the Study

The Malai Arayans in Kerala are mainly concentrated in the *Meenachil* and *Kanjirappally* Taluks in the eastern part of Kottayam District. There are Malai Arayan settlements at *Punchavayal*, *Murikkumvayal*, *Mangapetta*, *Edakkunnom*, *Kosady* and *Pazhumala* in the *Kanjirappally* Taluk and *Melukavu-Moonnilavu-Adukkom* area of the *Meenachil* Taluk. Unlike the tribes of *Nagaland*, *Meghalaya* and *Misoram* who claim to be the most advanced among the tribes, the Malai Arayan settlements are not isolated from the rest of the community. Their life and living may be said to be juxtaposed with those of their non-tribal brethren. Right from my childhood I have had the opportunity to live and move about with my Malai Arayan brothers, who are in no way held inferior to their compatriots. It is encouraging to note that the Malai Arayan students are performing excellently well in both the academic and the athletic fields. One is naturally tempted to make an in depth study of the factors that have contributed to the elevated state and status of this tribal community. I come from a village interposed between *Mundakayam*, where a large community of Hindu Malai Arayans thrive and *Melukavu*, where a flourishing community of Christian Malai



Arayans live. There is a striking degree of resemblance between these tribes and non-tribes. A thorough investigation into the sociological, cultural, religious, political, economic, and ontological aspects of the life of the Malai Arayans would certainly be beneficial to policy formulators and academics alike.

### **1.3 Review of Literature**

There is a large and mounting body of literature on tribal problems looked at from various angles. Anthropologists were the pioneers in this field of study. Historians, economists, sociologists, and others stepped into tribal studies later. The earlier studies by them were, however, of a descriptive nature rather than a scholarly pursuit. In this section we propose to review major works on tribals.

The identification and listing of communities in India have had a long history starting with many regional lists of communities figured in early Sanskrit works. Medieval chronicles contained descriptions of communities located in various parts of the country. Listing in the colonial period began in 1806 and the process gathered momentum in the course of the census from 1881 to 1941 (Singh 1994).

There is no agreement among scholars as to the precise meaning of the term 'tribe'. Scholars like G.S. Ghurye are of the view that tribes were peasants like any other category of peasants and tribal problem is not a special problem; rather it is a general agrarian problem (Ghurye 1963). Classical anthropologists



tended to describe tribes as homogenous undifferentiated groups of people. However, scholars like Jaganath Pathy analysed the inter and intra tribe distinctions in socio-economic arena. K.S. Singh among others examines the transformation of tribal society over the years. They attribute this to the policy initiatives and tribals' response to them coupled with the activities of social formations. (Singh 1972)

Virginus Xaxa who studied transformation of tribes in India held that while tribes continue to undergo changes of many kinds these no longer transform them into castes. The study cited the example of Orans, who practise various religions and speak more than one language earned their livelihood from a variety of occupations, both agricultural and non-agricultural. Yet they remain as Orans in some socially significant sense. They have not become a caste with any definite standing in the caste hierarchy. Tribes have become peasants and socially differentiated entities, but contrary to the views held, without any loss of their distinctive identities (Saxeena 1999).

Beteille (1974) rightly points out that "It is one thing to show the boundaries between tribes and non-tribes or between different tribes and quiet another to specify its characters. The criteria used for deterring if a group was tribe or not, included (a) small population (b) pre-literate people (c) pre-agricultural society (d) geographical isolation and cultural backwardness. Sinha (1981) finds such characterization inadequate. Accordingly Bose (1971)



classified tribes on the basis of the characteristic mode of livelihood into (a) hunters, fishers and gatherers (b) shifting cultivators (c) settled agriculturalists (d) nomadic cattle keepers, agricultural labourers and (e) plantation and industrial workers. Some of these are considered not different from the non-tribal population.

Godelier (1977) sees tribal societies as being characterized by some positive and negative features, the negative factors being the absence of literacy, civilization, industrialization, socialization, etc. The positive features are those absent in modern societies-social relation based kinship bonds, all pervasive religion, frequency of co-operation for common goal, etc.

The early ethnographers were not very clear about the distinction between caste and tribe in India. The term 'tribe' was used synonymous with caste. It was even used in a cognate manner as one could see the use of phrase 'Castes and Tribes of India' by Risky and many others in their writings. It is only in Post-Independence period that systematic efforts were made towards distinguishing tribe from caste.

Virginus Xaxa (1999) sees tribes primarily as a stage and type of society. They represent a society that lacks positive trait of the modern society and thus constitute 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 a caste



society it is described as a caste society. If the reference is peasant, it is posted as peasant society. Xaxa emphasises that “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”.

The word *adivasi*, the term used in Indian languages for indigenous people has been used inter changeably with ‘tribe’ along with other related terms such as aborigines, autochthones, etc. However, scholars now began to question the rationality of calling the tribes as indigenous people. So long as it had not assumed a political dimension, it had remained an accepted term of description and designation of certain category of people. It is only with the internationalization of the rights and privileges associated with it that the use of the term indigenous has come to be critically examined or even challenged in the Indian context. Ghurye (1963) has reservation about the use of the term ‘*adivasi*’. He writes

When the history of internal movements of people is not known, it is utterly unscientific to regard some tribe or the other as the original owner of the soil. It is possible to contend that even if the tribes are not aborigines of the exact area they now occupy, they are the autochthones of India and to that extent they may be called the aborigines.

He further writes: “It is difficult to speak of original inhabitants, for tribal traditions themselves make repeated mention of migration of their ancestors.”



Betille (1995) makes similar observations on the point under reference. But the defenders of the term like Pathy writes that irrespective of the place and time of origin or their occupation or their present habitat in India, there are certain communities, which until recently maintained practically autogenous sources of legitimization of cultural and social processes and were accentuated by the ideology of a self-regulated economy and had only marginal articulation with the external political structures. Their indigenous identity cannot be brushed away by juxtaposition of non-meaningful occurrences in space and time in systemic terms. We can agree with Hardiman (1987) that when he defines *adivasi* as groups which have shared a common fate in the past century and from this, has evolved a collective identity of being *adivasis*. It is not meant to imply that *adivasis* are the original inhabitants. Xaxa in his article rightly points out that “the term *adivasi* in the sense in which it is used by radical scholars hardly takes note of the sense in which people, either outsiders or the tribals themselves, use it. Not all who shared a common fate in the past century, in fact, identify themselves as the *adivasis*. The caste Hindu population, howsoever deprived of it, may be invariably avoided being called *adivasi*, for it was tied to the loss of status.”

The scientific study of tribal economy in Independent India was first undertaken by the scholars Nag and Saxeena. Nag (1958) made an extensive tour of the areas of Madhya Pradesh and studied the vaiga economy in the context of the general economic theories laying emphasis on the source of economy of



the vaigas. Saxeena (1964) followed the model of Nag and studied the tribals of Western Hills in Madhya Pradesh and presented the economy of five tribes. Prior to these studies a number of accounts were given about tribal economy in different ethnographic monographs.

Verier Elwin identifies land alienation<sup>1</sup> as the principal curse of tribals. He has rightly pointed out that with land alienation the tribals lost their power of resistance and thereby they became vulnerable to external shocks. He has also observed that almost all the tribal upheavals during the colonial days may be attributed to the loss of land. Roy Burman (1982) and A Ayyappan (1936) consider officials as the main villain of the piece. They collided with the land grabbers, usurious traders, encroachers and forest contractors with vampire thrust for the living blood of the tribals. Ayyappan even opined that “I have seen bold heroes of jungle who for the sport net and spear tigers, quake with fear in the presence of revenue inspectors”. With land alienation they were engulfed by a vicious circle of poverty, indebtedness, bondage and further alienation. The Dhebar commission (1961) enumerates the different names of bonded labour such as *Saami* (Rajasthan), *Vatti* (Andra Pradesh), *Gothi* (Orissa), *Jethi* (Karnataka) and *Naukri* (Madhya Pradesh) and cite similar situations such as payment of bride price, death and feast, which forced the tribals to accept the illegal conditions.



The concerns of the British administrative scholars gave rise to the conception that tribes lived in isolation from the rest of the population and had no interaction or inter connection with them. However, the post colonial writers talk about a close interaction between the tribes and the main stream society. Sinha (1958) uses the word tribe as a dimension of little tradition that can't be adequately understood unless it is seen in relation to the great tradition. In contrast Betille (1995) views that even when tribes have been concerned as remaining outside the state which has most often been the case, they have been viewed as being in constant interaction with civilization.

### **1.3.1 Tribal Studies in Kerala**

Samuel Mateer (1883) who published a book titled "Native Life in Travancore", is considered as the pioneer who initiated a thorough study on the native communities of erstwhile Travancore.<sup>2</sup> In this book he made an elaborate study of all the communities giving special emphasis on tribes. C.M. Agur (1903) gives a description about the conditions of tribals before the evangelisation process began. He further elaborated the socio-economic life of tribals in their mission centres. However, the description is very much inter-pinned with the history of churches.

Among the British administrators and census officers, Edgar Thurston (1909) gives a brief account of all the tribes and castes of South India. The notes on some of the important tribes, the *Toda*, the *Koda*, *Bagda*, the *Kurumbas*, the



*Paniyans* and the Malai Arayans are based on his own observations. The focus of attention of his study was the original way of life, customs and manners, religious beliefs and superstitions of each of the tribal communities in the region.

Anantha Krishna Iyer (1909) undertook the ethnographic survey of the hill and jungle tribes and low caste people of Cochin. Iyer published his work in four volumes on “Cochin Castes and Tribes”. His analysis was also a general study of the various castes and tribes of the Travancore – Cochin area with specific emphasis on their socio-cultural milieu. In an article in ‘Man in India’ Krishna Iyer (1922) gives a detailed description about the life of *Kanikars* of Travancore. In his study (1937) he analyses the ethnographic survey of seven primitive tribes and castes of Travancore. He brought out an ethnographic account of seven hill tribes. He attempts to provide interpretative glimpses of the inner life of the tribes, who have, now, come under civilizing influence.

Ramanath Iyer (1923) makes a mention of the aborigines of Travancore. His study covers *Kanikar* tribes. His emphasis is on the legend of their original life; how they became Hinduised and their subjection to slavery. Thus the author reveals the pathetic condition of the tribes in the early years of their origin.

William Logan’s ‘Malabar’ popularly known as ‘Malabar Manuel’ or ‘Logans Manuel’ was first published in 1887. It is rightly considered as a classic on land and society in Malabar<sup>3</sup> and easily among the most well documented district gazetteers of colonial South Asia.



AAD Luiz (1962) studied the tribes of Kerala. His study is different from those of Thurston and Iyer. In it he gives a fairly good account of the changing pattern of the social life in the context of the socio-economic evolution of the state as a whole. His emphasis is, however, still on the sociological aspects of tribal life. V. Nagam Aiya (1989), the author of 'The Travancore State Manuel' further extended and elaborated the study conducted by Iyer and others.

Mathur (1977) made an appraisal of the tribal population in India and the setting of tribal population in Kerala. His study gives comprehensive details on the socio-linguistic evolution of the tribes of Kerala. In addition he brought to lime light that when the land reforms legislation was implemented the tribals were deemed as land lords and the non-tribal encroachers as tenants.

Jacob John Kattakayam (1983) carried out a detailed study on the Uralis of Idukki district in Kerala. His emphasis is on the social structure and changes among them. The study concludes that they have forced to throw away their traditional values and primitive technology by the interference of the plainsmen coined with the changing pattern of social structure.

Kunhaman (1989) made an elaborate study on the extent of inter-regional variations in the level of socio-economic development of the hill tribes of Kerala. The study highlights the present pattern of land distribution among the tribals of the various districts, and inter-district analysis of tribal agriculture and of the tribal farmers' participation in the product market. Attention is also made on the



major characteristics of the tribal agrarian proletariat and their influence on the bargaining positions of the tribals. In a later work, Kunhaman (2002) examined globalisation from a subaltern perspective. He brings to the forefront some of the most important aspects of the current process of globalising inequality as well as ideas which might help to reduce or overcome it. Among his most important contributions is the notion that we should move beyond the breakdown of the globe into first, second, and third worlds and see instead a world elite of the richest 20 percent that includes many in the first world but also the elites of the second and third. As he argues, there is a third world of subaltern peoples within the boundaries of the first, and first world of rich politicians and business leaders within the boundaries of the third.

Karunakaran (1989) investigated in detail about the *Kanikar* inhabiting the mountains of south Travancore. In addition to providing various statistical information, the author has mentioned of their origin, traditions and culture, and medicinal practices which he collected through oral information-the author concentrates on their present position as it stands.

Sebastian (1990) too attempted a study on the *Kanikar* community of Trivandrum district in Kerala. He opines that this community is gradually becoming extinct. Since most of these tribal settlements are in the wild life sanctuary of *Peppara* and *Nayyar* reservoirs, the author states that the forest rules are not conducive to them. Moreover, various religious organizations try bringing



them into their religions, as they do not belong to any religion. The author, hence stands for a radical change through which they could be led to the national mainstream.

Johnson (1991) made an attempt to delineate the exploitation of the *Adivasis* of Attappady. He says that the *Adivasis* are exploited by the plainsmen in all spheres of their life. He painfully narrates the instances of *Adivasis* love affairs and rape committed on their women. He observes instances of forced sterilization, and the denial the monetary benefits entitled to them. Hence his observation is focused on the miserable and pathetic condition of the tribal life.

In the book entitled *Adivasikalum Adivasi Bhashakalum* (*Adivasis* and *Adivasi* languages) Velappan deals with life, customs and languages of *adivasis*. Prakash's (2002) work *Annyadheenappedunna Bhoomi* (*Alienated land*) is a historical investigation of how the *adivasis* were alienated from their traditional habitats and of the most recent Muthanga<sup>4</sup> revolt. It is a comprehensive, realistic and unsuppressed description of the plight of *adivasis* for years. K.Ravi Raman (2003) gives a description of the unusual mode of struggle waged by the *Adivasi Dalit Samara Samithi* led by C.K.Janu and the factors leading to it. C.R. Bijoy (1999) in his article *Adivasis betrayed: Adivasi land Rights in Kerala* very well documents the legal history of the Kerala Scheduled Tribe (Restriction on transfer of lands and Restoration of alienated land) Act 1975. K. Panoor (1963) in his book *Keralathile Africa* (*Africa in Kerala*) gives a description of the *adivasi*



life in Kerala. By Africa he means the humiliation faced by the blacks in Africa from their colonial masters. He says that such an Africa was created in Kerala by the Keralites themselves.

### 1.3.2 Studies on Malai Arayans in Kerala

Apart from the above cited authors among whom few have studied the Malai Arayan social life as part of their research on the entire tribal community another set of scholars further zoomed in on Malai Arayans. Mention may be made of the following scholars.

Rev. Henry Bakers (Jr.) pamphlet entitled *The Hill Arrians* published in 1862 is the first and yet the most comprehensive description of the Malai Arayans. The researcher was lucky enough to have a hand written copy of the book got from the London Archives. He writes: "I must say a word about my hill people. The Arayans of *Melukavu*, *Eramapra* and *Mundappally* learn but slowly, they attend regularly morning and evening".

Rev. R.Collins (1879) a colleague of Rev. Henry Baker, in his book *Missionary Enterprise in East* gives a detailed description of the Malai Arayans of Melukavu. He writes: "The Arayans are for the most part short in stature and not very long lived, but the feverishness of the climate in the district they inhabit is enough to account for any physical degeneracy of race. They are as fair as the high caste Hindus, the women frequently beautiful, proving that the aborigines of



India were not black from race peculiarities, but only sometimes black through circumstances". Samuel Mateer (1883) added to the 1<sup>st</sup> published monograph of Rev. Henry Baker (Jr.) further observations by himself and others and rearranged and brought up the whole till that date.

Daniel (1998) conducted an extensive study of the conversion of Malai Arayans into Christianity during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. He reports that Henry Baker arrived in Melukavu at the request of Malai Arayans and was eloquent about the benefits of Christianisation. However, his study was confined only to the Christian Malai Arayans.

Oommen (1999) in an article entitled *Re-reading Tribal and Dalit Conversion Movements -The case of the Malai Arayans and Pulayyas of Kerala* confirms that pre-existing religious ideas played a role in Malai Arayans' conversion to Christianity. He writes "Christianity seems to have offered to them a package to deal with the crisis of the mid-nineteenth century. However, they did not seem to completely replace one system of belief with another. Malai Arayans appear to have appropriated new ways to deal with their changing world view."

It is evident from the above observation that a comprehensive study of the Malai Arayans in its socio-economic dimensions for the full span of a century is lacking although the community had been certified by Mateer (1883) as more civilized than all the other tribes. Moreover, no study conducted so far has



covered the life of Hindu Malai Arayans of the area. It is from this angle one has to look into the socio-economic transformation of the Malai Arayans.

#### **1.4 Objectives of the Study**

The teleology of this academic pursuit is an assessment of the process of change taking place in the present generation of the Malai Arayan community, their socio-cultural and economic development and the degree of their political participation. It seeks to place a comparative study of the process of modernization before and after Independence. It also seeks to compare the welfare measures launched by the government and various voluntary organizations. A detailed study of the functioning of different schemes introduced by the Central and State Governments, so as to assess the efficiency of the programmes will be helpful to those who are interested in tribal development. The main objective of this endeavour is to get at the reasons for the failure for their successful implementation and to suggest remedial measures and practical modifications. Specific objectives can be stated as follows.

1. To examine the reasons for the comparative advancement of Malai Arayans
2. To evaluate the contribution of governmental and non-governmental agencies to the development of Malai Arayans of the Kottayam District.
3. To make a comparative study of the development process between Hindu and Christian Malai Arayans.
4. To make possible suggestions for tribal development in future.



## **1.5 Hypotheses**

The present study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. The Malai Arayans of Kottayam have achieved remarkable socio-economic progress during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.
2. The Christian and the Hindu Malai Arayans are at different levels of development. The Hindu Malai Arayans are relatively less developed than their Christian counterparts.
3. Activities of the Church accelerated the advancement of the Christian Malai Arayans.

## **1.6 Methodology**

Our approach to the problem is multidimensional, interdisciplinary and comparative. Accordingly, the study starts from a theoretical discussion of the concept of development from the Gandhian perspective and proceeds through an analytical evaluation of the various aspects of tribal social structure in order to arrive at the prescriptive synthesis of the various problems facing the tribal population. Hence it will include both theoretical and practical aspects of development.

It is a serious concern of the whole nation to bring the aborigines – the *adivasy* population – to the national mainstream. But the various schemes for the modernization of the tribals are visualized without caring much for the values of



their indigenous cultures. Though we were not following the Caucasian attitude towards the Red Indians of America, we were not wholly free from the fallouts of the superiority complex and resultant prejudices in the framing of those programmes. There seems to be a pre-supposition that the adivasies are uncivilised. To Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi "civilization is that mode of conduct which points out to man the path of duty" (Young India 1925 Jan 29:41). Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. So the present study of the tribal culture and the developmental process is based on a theoretical enquiry so as to facilitate a realization of the concepts of civilization and development.

The study then proceeds to an analytical survey of the social system and its various transformations. A historical analysis of the modernization process of the society so as to identify the remarkable stages in the developmental process is attempted. A comparative study of the various schemes, implemented by governmental and non-governmental agencies has been attempted. The process of modernization among the Christian Malai Arayans is compared with that of the Hindu Malai Arayans. A critical analysis of the transformation of the tribal society and their interactions with non-tribal population is also attempted.

A theoretical discussion and a systematic analysis are totally unproductive unless it facilitates prescriptive reasoning. An earnest attempt is made to answer



the following questions on the basis of a theoretical discussion and analysis of the programmes.

- a) What ought to be the criteria followed in visualizing development schemes for Scheduled Tribes?
- b) How much of the indigenous culture is to be preserved for mutual benefit to tribal and non-tribal population?
- c) In what respects and to what extent are their beliefs and praxis to be changed ?
- d) What should be the nature of the machinery or agency to monitor tribal development?

A basic explanatory, comparative enquiry requires indepth treatment of the variables and accordingly we have chosen the following methods.

- (1) Analysis of Documents
- (2) Sample Survey and
- (3) Interview

Writers on history were attracted to the Malai Arayans only towards the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Considerable information about the early life of this group of tribals is available in the Church Mission Society records kept in the offices of the Church of South India as well as in the CMS Press and the C.M.S. College Library at Kottayam. Documents collected by Kerala Institute for Research Training and Development Studies for Scheduled Castes and Tribes (KIRTADS) are also highly congenial to this study. The sample statistics provides the basis for estimating the incidence of the attribute of interest in the



target population. Around the sample statistics is placed a mathematically calculated range within which the population parameter is likely to fall. The research depends very much on non-directive interviews for collecting data especially of the past. The data was recorded by writing down what has been observed then and there, and also taking down the interview responses.

### **1.7 Relevance of the Study**

At present, the term tribe, according to western writers, generally means an ethnic group, geographically isolated or semi-isolated, identified with one particular territory and having distinct, social, economic and cultural traditions and practices. In the Indian context the term has undergone a further change particularly in post-Independence period. As against the old concept of a tribe being a political unit of olden days it is now defined as a group of people characterized by poverty and backwardness. Centuries old exploitation and oppression have broken down their nerves. It is difficult to reconcile their glorious past with the present state of misery. However, it is heartening to see that they are gradually waking up from their centuries old slumber. The young generation particularly the educated segment has now come to realize their inherent strength and are willing to face the new challenges.

The process of socialization and modernization among these tribal population is very slow. The alienation and helplessness felt by them have driven some of them to extremist and separatist activities. It is true that various steps



have been taken since the dawn of Independence to improve the lot of these traditionally backward communities. Notwithstanding all the constitutional provisions and legislative and administrative measures aimed at ameliorating the disabilities of the tribals, glaring disparities and inequities still persist. The numerous welfare schemes launched by the successive governments have so far failed to produce any perceivable impact on the situation. Some of the tribal groups have remained completely untouched by the process of development and some have been adversely affected by it. The bulk of the funds allotted is diverted to other channels. The establishment expenses of various agencies of tribal development consume the lion's share of the sum apportioned for the implementation of these welfare measures. The condition of the tribes being what it is, they lack the initiative to involve themselves actively and dedicatedly in the efforts for the implementation of programmes for their own betterment. Another point noticed in the developmental activities aimed at the modernization and socialization of the tribal population is that the whole process does not seem to pay any respect to the values of their primitive culture. Although various welfare schemes were introduced and implemented following the Gandhian concept of social justice and total progress the Mahatma's basic spirit has not been given due importance by the policy makers, who formulated the schemes. It is, therefore, essential to take a fresh look at the tribal situation in the country, review the strategy of development and define the total national effort required, with a view to making tribal communities equal partners in all spheres of national life as early



as possible. All this calls for a re-evaluation of the welfare programmes in the light of Gandhian principles.

Out of the 4635 communities existing in India 642 are declared tribal groups. In Kerala alone there are 35 Tribes concentrated in the sylvan hilly regions of the state, mainly in the districts of *Kannoor, Wayanad, Palakkadu* and *Idukki* (Singh 1994:2). Among them the Malai Arayans constitute one of the comparatively advanced sections. Some of them have even risen to the upper levels of the administrative machinery. Political leaders with a large following that reaches out into non-tribal population have also emerged from among them. The comparatively high percentage of literacy, political awareness and involvement, formation of voluntary organization and co-operative societies, establishment of educational institutions and enrolment in them, bear ample testimony to the higher level of social progress achieved the Malai Arayans in recent decades. But it should be admitted that the condition of the Hindu Malai Arayans is much below the mark. They follow the old pattern of social relationship, engage in endogamous marriages and most of them are not yet free from addiction to alcohol. They have almost all the characteristics of a backward community.

It is to be further noted that the process of modernization and socialization has been started among the Christian Malai Arayans long before Independence. Several factors have contributed to the development of the socio-economic status



of the Malai Arayans of the *Melukavu* area. As it is a long time since the process of modernization was set in, an assessment of their all-round progress including their political participation and the identification of the factors involved in the process are very much relevant.

There has been an abundance of studies on the tribes and tribals across India. The studies on the tribals of Kerala have been mostly on a macro-level. Micro level studies on many of these groups have also been carried out extensively. Nevertheless, micro level studies on the Malai Arayans have been minimal, despite tangential references to their condition and historical position in many surveys. The foci of the two major works on Malai Arayans were of Oommen and Daniel, which were centred round the conversion of a section of Malai Arayans into Christianity. This research has been necessitated owing to the absence of a systematic enquiry into the nature of Malai Arayan society till now.

### **1.8 Universe of the Study**

Tribal settlements are isolated areas in most other parts of the country. But the situation in the Kottayam district is entirely different. Tribals, though they mainly reside in the hilly areas of the eastern part of the district, mix up with non-tribals and spend considerable time with them. The Malai Arayan settlements in the *Mundakayam* Panchayat of the *Kanjirapally* Taluk are inhabited mostly by Hindu Malai Arayans. There is a concentration of Christian Malai Arayan population in the *Melukavu* region (*Melukavu*, *Moonnilavu* and *Thalanadu*



Panchayats) in the Meenachil Taluk. It is the traditional homeland of the Malai Arayans who are dwelling around *Illycan*, one of the highest peaks of the Western Ghats in its southern half. The tribal settlements in the *Melukavu* region of the *Meenachil* Taluk and the tribal settlement of *Mundakayam* region in the *Kajirappally* Taluk are taken broadly as the subject of the present study for analysis and comparison.

### **1.9 Scope of the Study**

A comprehensive study of the Malai Arayans entails an indepth enquiry into anthropological, ethnographic, sociological, geographical, historical, cultural, linguistic and spiritual facets of their life. An anthropological approach would lead to the study of the origin, development, customs and beliefs in a larger canvas. One recalls in this context the observation in the note on the anthropological survey of India carried out during 1985-1992.

This series based on a comprehensive anthropological survey, will be found useful by all sections of our people- students, researchers, teachers, social activists, administrators and political leaders – and will prove to be a fascinating subject for study. We have probably prepared the groundwork for a comprehensive ethnography of the people of India which needs to be updated and built upon by successive generations of researchers and scholars.



An ethnographic research would describe the Malai Arayans from the racial and cultural stand point but such an exhaustive survey is beyond the ken and scope of the present study. Our study confines itself only to the socio-economic and political dimension of the life of these tribal population and one can make tangential references to the other aspects in so far as they subserve the pertinence of the research.

The Malai Arayans has a scattered existence – living as they do in far flung enclaves like *Adukkom*, *Kosady*, *Pazhumala*, *Pazhukakanam*, *Kurinjiplavu*, *Kudayathoor*, and even in some remote hills of Tamil Nadu. And the most populous habitations can be found in *Melukavu*, *Thalanadu*, *Moonnilavu*, *Poonjar*, *Mundakayam* and *Parathodu* Panchayats. A plurality of Malai Arayans profess either Hinduism or the Christian faith, more precisely Protestantism. Those living in and around *Melukavu* profess Anglican Protestantism while those living in and around *Mundakayam* follow the tenets of Hinduism. It is presumed that an analytical study of the Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and of *Mundakayam* would be a paradigm of the study of the entire community.

The Malai Arayans claim that their ancestry is as old as the hoary hills. Nevertheless, the historic period of Malai Arayans commences only with the advent of the Christian Missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It has to be emphasized that the light and enlightenment of civilization was ushered into their midst with the proselytizing zeal of the latter. It may also be noted that the federal and



degree of validity of the findings three largely depends on the veracity of the above mentioned details.

The research survey has been largely a field study and the responses of the members of the Malai Arayan community to the vital queries put by the researcher have been accepted as honest and truthful. Although most of the averments have been checked and rechecked through repeated investigation, allowance may be given to concealments and exaggeration.

### **1.12 Organisation of the Thesis**

The introductory chapter deals at length with the objectives, background, scope and limits of the study. It presents the hypotheses and explains the methodology. A comprehensive review of the literature pertaining to the subject is being undertaken so as to ascertain the relevance of the study.

The second chapter begins with a theoretical investigation into the concept of development. After examining the meaning of development an analysis has been made to distinguish between growth and development, endogenous and exogenous development, and economic and political development. An indepth analysis of the Gandhian concept of development has also been attempted.

The third chapter is a general survey of the tribal development process and schemes in India with special reference to Kerala.



The fourth chapter is an enquiry into the origin, growth and transformation of the Malai Arayans. It is a historical investigation of the identity of the Malai Arayans in Kerala.

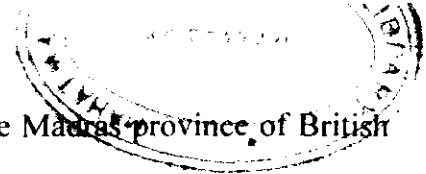
Chapter five is an empirical study of the Malai Arayan community at present. The socio-economic profile of the Christian and the Hindu Malai Arayans has been presented with the support of the primary data.

Chapter six is an assessment of the various tribal development programmes. Primary importance has been given to the viewpoints expressed by the Malai Arayans. And the final chapter gives the major findings and suggestions.

#### **End Notes**

1. Land Alienation is the process of loss of land traditionally occupied by the tribals either by deforestation for plan projects, and land reforms or by encroachment by plainsmen through bondage, illegal lease or sale deeds without due compensation. Due to various reasons the aborigines who were the lords of the forest are struggling for a piece of land to settle themselves.
2. Travancore was the native Kingdom founded by the celebrated King Marthandavarma of *Venadu*. The Kingdom was amalgamated into the Indian Union as part of Travancore Cochin State in 1947 and later the state of Kerala in 1956.





3. Malabar was one of the Districts of the erstwhile Madras province of British India. This area was amalgamated to the state of Kerala in 1956 which now consists of the northern districts of Kerala.

<https://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/handle/10603/366?mode=full>

4. Muthanga Revolt is the struggle for land organized by the Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha under the leadership of Smt.C.K.Janu, a self made Adiya woman. When the Government of Kerala failed to fulfill the promise it made to the Gothra Mahasabha, the Adivasis encroached the Muthanga wild life sanctuary. This ultimately led to the forcible eviction of the agitators which caused the life of an Adivasi and a policeman. The Adivasis were brutally lathicharged and the leaders were arrested. The incident, in spite of all its backdrops, highlighted the 'land problem' of the tribals.



**CHAPTER II**  
**DEVELOPMENT : A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS**



## 2.1 Meaning of Development

Development is a multidimensional concept (Lindbeck 1977:86). According to Webster's encyclopedic dictionary, development means "the act or process of developing; a gradual growth or advancement through progressive changes" (1971: 274). In other words, it is fundamentally a process of change that involves the whole society – its economic, social, political, moral, educational and physical structures – as well as the value systems and the way of life of the people (Alexander 1990:1). In the societal context, it is referred to as the progressive transformation of certain aspects of a given society. The idea of development as such has found expression in the writings of the pioneers of all social sciences. Initially, economic development was the focal point of discussion but with the passage of time, there has been a marked extension as regards its sweep and scope. In this context Horowitz (1966:39) writes:

There evolved a variety of notions of what constitutes development. In one conception development signifies innovative possibilities of discovery. Development is also viewed as the unfolding of the definite stages of the new in the place of the old. There is also the 'aesthetic' approach which views development as the working out of a theme or variations on a theme. Finally in the humanist tradition, development depends on knowledge and the bringing to light of new information.



The word development has its origin in an Italian word “*Velupara*” of the 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup> century (Gangrade 1997:10). It means to unwrap, to disentangle, or to get rid of something. The opposite of ‘develop’ is ‘envelop’, which means to hide, to cover up, and to put up constraints, which we do when we envelop something. When we develop something, we do the reverse;- we remove these constraints, whatever they may be. The word develop is a positivistic term, meaning progress and when applied to man, it indicates a comprehensive growth which enables an individual to feel that he is as much a part of humankind as anybody else.

Etymologically, the term development has an intriguing ambivalence. As a noun, ‘development’ is used in two senses: there is an active meaning according to which development is action in order to make something develop and there is a medial meaning according to which it embodies something that goes through a development process. It denotes action and process. As a verb, the word ‘develop’ is used in two senses: transitive and intransitive. When it is said that something is developing, be it a child, tree or for that matter anything, it is used in its transitive sense. In this sense, to develop means to bring out what is latent or potential, that is, the potential becomes actual. When it is said that development is taking place, it is its intransitive use. In this sense, to develop means to evolve, to advance through successive stages to higher, more complex or more fully grown state. Whereas in the literature of the past the verb ‘develop’



and its noun 'development' were used generally in the intransitive sense, in the current literature these terms are used in the transitive sense, particularly in the context of new nations. Thus etymologically, the word covers a wide range of different concepts (Pandey 1985:96-97).

## 2.2 Concept of Development

The concept of development is widely made use of in disciplines such as economics, political science, psychology, anthropology, sociology, etc. Owing to its interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature it evades precision and means different things to different people. The word 'development' like the phrase 'third world' is an Anglo-Saxon concept. Few ideas in our time have been investigated with as much respectability or historic significance as the concept of development. The crux of the concept is how to make poor people rich and undeveloped countries advanced. By and large, the philosophy of development has restricted its concern to the poor of the third world. Development schemes are formulated by experts, planners and voluntary agencies to alleviate poverty and lift the poor above the poverty line. In our times and in common parlance development primarily means economic development. Gunnar Myrdal defines development as follows:

By development I mean the movement upward of the entire social system, and I believe this is the only logically tenable definition. The social system endorses besides the so-called



economic factors, including all sorts of consumption by various groups of people, consumptions provided collectively, educational and health facilities at all levels; the distribution of power in society; and more generally economic, social and political stratification; broadly speaking institutions and attitudes to which we must add an exogenous set of factors, induced policy measures applied in order to change one or several of these endogenous factors (Quoted in Gangrade 1997:6).

Development is neither a static nor a uniform concept. As a historical fact, the classical model had remained the only model in the West until 1913 (Gangrade 1997:9). After World War I, especially after the Russian Revolution and the Great Depression, the classical model became decadent and alternative forms emerged. After World War II, the world entered another phase of development. During the closing years of the past millennium the whole concept underwent a drastic change. Development must be defined in each of these stages. Furthermore, development always varies widely in different countries. Yet, there are important features of development common to all phases and to all types of modernization.

The basic values of development are human dignity, equality, liberty, social justice and the like. These concepts are indivisible. Development based on these principles can be defined as a process that aims at achieving an integrated, balanced and unified development of the society. It is international in



magnitude and has a holistic approach to the societal issues and problems (Srivastava 1996:21).

### **2.3 Growth and Development**

There are many scholars who define both growth and development in terms of increase in total per capita income or output, treating the twin processes as essentially identical. But economists have sought to make a distinction between development and growth. The importance of economic growth as a condition for development is universally recognized. But a mere statistical increase of income or growth rates does not constitute development. Growth is one-dimensional in nature and is measured in terms of national income. Development is multidimensional and evaluated (rather than precisely measured) with reference to a host of qualitative factors (Meier 1995:7). Whereas growth is quantitative, development is qualitative as well as quantitative.

Economic development involves something more than economic growth. Development is taken to mean “growth plus change” (Pandey 1985:94). The main concern of less developed countries is development, while the developed economies can remain concerned with mere growth. A country cannot, however, develop without growing. If the advantages to the poor are minimum, then there may be growth for the country without the development of the masses. A country may be developing, yet it may be sliding down in international ranking owing to faster growth and development elsewhere.



Recently scholars have enlarged the scope of economic development. It is defined as nothing less than the “upward movement of the entire social system” (Gangrade 1997:5). Accordingly, economists have felt the need of going beyond the mechanical measurements to include such items as distribution of income, employment and political participation in the concept of development. The need to redefine development seems to have been motivated by a moral concern for the human costs.

The distinction between growth and development has to be specifically drawn. Growth is no longer a guarantor of ‘trickle down’<sup>1</sup> effect. It is now being increasingly recognized in the developing world that there is need for special attention to that group of population which has been left behind in the process of growth. Improvement in facilities for education, health and general welfare should receive priority over other factors in the development process. In short, economic development without social development is no development at all (Kess 1904:11-13). All the same social development cannot be achieved without economic development. The two concepts are inextricable so much so that they are intrinsically dependent on each other.

#### **2.4. Endogenous and Exogenous Development**

A close look at the determinants of development reveals that there are two sets of theories regarding the dynamics of change and development. One set of theories maintains that the forces of history originate from within the human



society, from its structure and culture. That is to say, development is the result of endogenous forces. As opposed to this another set of theories regards society and its changes as being determined by forces originating outside the social system. In other words, development is predicated by exogenous forces.

Among the advocates of the endogenous theory there are three schools of thought. One group of writers lays emphasis on economic development. They premise their reasoning on Marxist assumptions (Webber 1930:162). To them, the prime moving force of human history is in the material sphere. Economic development is the infrastructure upon which is built up the superstructure of social development. Being obsessed by Karl Popper's idea of 'economism', these scholars have assigned primacy to economic development assuming that societal transformation would inevitably follow the economic growth. Another group of scholars perceives the prime forces of history in the non-economic, spiritual spheres. They believe that social development would lead to economic development. This group draws inspiration from Max Webber, who sought to break loose with mono dimensional approach (Ruskin 1977 p:1741-54). The third group of scholars plays safer and pays attention to both, depending upon their orientation and circumstances. Some of them observe that economic development is possible without social development, while some others maintain that social development is possible without economic development. There is yet another set of scholars, who hold that economic and social developments are concomitants.



The driving force of development efforts may be either exogenous or endogenous variables. When societies interact with one another, ideas and practices may also penetrate their frontiers. This is what exactly happened as a by-product of colonialism. British colonies, for instance, absorbed and sought to perfect and perpetuate the Anglo-Saxon customs and traditions and even our parliamentary democracy has its provenance in the Westminster system. Many changes may occur as the 'spread effects'<sup>2</sup> and the 'back wash effects'<sup>3</sup> of external interactions. Here the inspiration for development is not from 'within' nor due to the benevolence from 'without' but due to the spread effects of the interaction between societies. The price paid by the less developed societies for this 'trickle down' effects may be comparatively high. It seems that at the initial stages of their development exogenous factors have contributed greatly towards sparking off the quest for development in all societies.

But the ultimate aim of development must be to obtain the seeds of change from within the society. *The society must internalize the external forces.* The socio religious reform-movements in India during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries are classic examples. *If the society is able to climb up the ladder of development, concomitant and complementary forces may automatically spring up.* While in the social sphere there may be fundamental changes in social relations and life styles, in the economic domain people may very well enjoy the benefits of endogenous technologies and in the political arena



new institutions and practices may develop, people enjoying more freedom than ever before. This kind of a development process alone can be sustainable and viable: The result of such a process is that all people are provided with such basic needs as housing, clothing, food and necessary education. Then a society is not exploited by others and it generates a feeling of self respect and independence. The society must seek development in order to dispel the feeling of dominance and dependence, which is associated with an inferior status. In such a society people enjoy freedom from the three evils of 'want, ignorance and squalor' so that they become the masters of their own destiny. This is what the Nobel laureate Amartya Sen envisages when he says that "development is nothing but enlarging the capabilities and entitlement of the people" (Sen 1985:669-70). Here is a dispensation where under self-respect, self- esteem, self- help, self- reliance and self-sufficiency prevail.

## **2.5 Economic Vs Political Development**

In spite of all this there is no gainsaying the fact that progress and development has taken place and the record of economic and political development was indeed remarkable. The liberals and Marxists regarded these as a many-sided development. Political development was not seen in isolation. At the same, today we tend to see this in a different light and distinguish it from economic development. It has been pointed out that some of the countries of Latin America with impressive economic development have a poorer record of



political development than a country like India with a comparatively poor record of economic development. This might well be so. But can one think of political development in the context of social stagnation, intellectual regression and a flourishing appeal to primordial loyalties and flaming religious identity? It is just as well that we look at the relationship between them more closely. The record of countries shows that the intellectual, social and political developments have been simultaneous and tend to reinforce one another.

Political development has been identified with the development of institutionalization. Historically, the initial steps in political development were taken in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries when powerful nations in Europe were nurtured and built. This was possible at the time on account of the termination of the supremacy of the Church over the State, the breakdown of feudalism and feudal structure, increased taxation, regulation of trade and commerce and a strong tendency towards centralisation. In fact, modern political theory was inaugurated by the development of these advancements. All these presumed the efficient working of one institution – the bureaucracy. Without the development of bureaucracy these developments would not have taken place at all.

## **2.6 Traditional Approach to Development**

One can trace the origin of the theory of development and change to ancient Greece and Rome. In Greek literature we get the concept of 'Physics', which means the way things grow. The concept of 'Physics' has four aspects –



life cycle, stages, telos and mechanism (Aristotle 1941: ch. 1-3). Thucydides (5<sup>th</sup> century B.C) dealt at length with both cultural progress and the obstacles which the national growth encountered in various places (Thucydides 1942: chs. 1-6). In the middle ages St. Augustine (354 - 430) made a distinction between the earthly city – the domain of evil and the heavenly city – the domain of spiritual good. The latter represents an improvement over the former (Augustin 1909:131).

The Industrial Revolution encouraged the prospects of economic transformation and radical innovation giving rise to modern social rationality, (Moore 1974: 31-361) in the wake of which there occurred a shift in social life from the rural to the urban, from agriculture to commerce, from relative scarcity to relative abundance, and from the continental to the universal. The social scientists of the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries were much concerned with the conditions of economic progress not only in the context of Europe but also in the context of the whole world. Adam Smith in his book “An Inquiry in to the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations” (1776) recognizes several factors both economic and non economic to explain the increase of the surplus which constructs the elements of the theory of economic development. Following the classical economic tradition, David Ricardo was the first to formulate the theory of dynamic growth in his classic work, ‘Principles of Political Economy and Taxation’ (1817). He holds that economic growth is contingent upon the creation of capital. After a careful observation of a great variety of social conditions and



diversity in degree of economic development in different countries, J.S.Mill concluded that a casual relationship exists between economic and social forces. To Alfred Marshall economic history is the history of the development of free enterprise. The two principles of substitution and optimum combinations resumed under free enterprise, constitute the core of his theory of development (Pandey 1985:6).

## **2.7 Liberal Materialist Approach**

The social, economic and political happenings that took place over a period of a hundred and fifty years from the 18th century in Europe can be regarded as constituting a type of development that was unprecedented and it exerted a profound influence around the globe. For want of a better phrase this could be called 'Liberal Materialism'. It developed gradually and fitfully, was both intellectual and institutional, no less than economic and political happenings contributed to this. It also witnessed a successful attempt to limit the powers of the government through the principles of constitutionalism embodied either in a written document or in conventions or in procedures to include among other things natural justice. It witnessed the development of political parties and pressure groups, which strove to influence government in specific areas. Public opinion became an important constituent and the press was freed of all control, especially of the government and this is to be regarded as a sacrosanct principle.



Individual rights ultimately meant the participation of the citizens, both men and women, in the government and universal education.

Within this political frame-work, economic and social changes began to evolve. First the economy changed from a feudal, agrarian order to one that was gradually to be regulated by capital and was to be urban based. The market and the mechanism of money, interest, credit and contract became important. With industrialisation and the application of science and technology, unforeseen prosperity began to dawn upon the European continent. There was a continuous movement of the population from the rural to the urban areas. These changes brought to an end or considerably modified the earlier relationship based on kinship and obligations arising out of feudal ties. All relationships were to take a new colour, most of which were based on new needs or novel functions. The dominant spirit was the acceptance of reason, science and technology, and not to question their legitimacy as arbiters on almost all issues. Social matters too were to be subject to reason and science. Census of the population was computed, statistics was pursued as a serious subject of study, on the spot checks were made of factory conditions and reports written thereof, Factory Acts were passed, public health measures were undertaken, urban areas were torn down and re-developed, agriculture was promoted by the application of scientific findings and preventive health measures were adopted. This entailed a different approach to social problems than was present in earlier times. Public welfare schemes were



undertaken in a number of west European countries. All these were considered as constituent elements of development. The traditionally held view of social reality has undergone a drastic change. However, the social reality that was being studied was also changing rapidly before the very eyes of the students and investigators of society. In brief a person is now judged on the basis of 'what he has' instead of 'what he is'.

## **2.8 Marxian Approach to Development**

Theory of development has found an altogether different treatment in the works of Karl Marx (1818-83). The genesis of Marxian theory of progress and development lies in his concept of "mode of production". It illuminates how change in the mode of production leads to changes in the nature of exploitation. A society based on uneven positions or class relations emerges as a result of exploitation of a large number of people by a few. Because of the conflicting interests of the two main classes, the 'haves' and 'have-nots', the bourgeoisie and the proletariat, the class-based society undergoes a process of revolutionary transformation. Citing examples from history, Marx tries to prove how societies have been transformed from primitive communism to modern capitalism.

Marx has attempted an economic hermeneutics of history and has provided an evolutionary scheme, which includes four stages – primitive communism, feudalism, capitalism and socialism. He discerned stages in the development of ownership – tribal, ancient, feudal and capitalist. Quite in



agreement with the standard evolutionist position, Marx believed that every society necessarily passes through each of the specified stages of development. He perceives the formation of a social structure in terms of class struggles. According to Karl Marx 'class' refers to those people who occupy a similar position in the organization of production. The nature of class formation may be different in different phases of social development, depending upon the kind and character of the mode of production. People may make compromises to form a social class if they have one attribute in common, the same relationship to means of production. Such a relationship is crucial in determining the life style of the individuals concerned. Subjective factors such as ideology, political consciousness, organizational connection and all other non- material aesthetics help in transforming a class in itself to a class for itself (Singh 1987: 7).

Marx observes that the economic structure of a capitalist society has grown out of the economic structure of the feudal society. For him,

*The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labour. As soon as capitalist production is once on its own leg, it not only maintains this separation but produces it on a continually extending scale (Marx 1867:668).*

Marx further maintains that this process, which takes away the possession of the means of production from the labourer, clears the way for the capitalist



system. The mode of production is thus the pivotal point around which the entire Marxist analysis revolves. To quote Marx again,

“In the social production of their existence men inevitably enter into definite relations which are independent of their will, namely, relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material force of production. The totality of this relations of production constitutes the economic structure of a society, the *real foundation on which arise a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness*. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life” (Marx 1970:20-2).

He, therefore, saw the heart of the change from a feudal to a capitalist society in the change from a primarily agrarian society of petty producers, which mainly comprised landlords and their unfree tenants, to a society producing commodities for exchange on the market, which principally consisted of capital owning entrepreneurs and propertyless wage earners (Hilton 1978:148).

The modern society has the same characteristics, but the classes have been moulded under the influence of “new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones” (Marx & Engels 1957:47). He points out that the modern society has two classes viz the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. By bourgeoisie he means that class of modern capitalist owners, who control the means of social production and who employ wage-labourers. The proletariat is



the class of modern wage labourers who, having no means of production of their own are reduced to selling their labour power for their very subsistence. He characterizes the modern society as “the epoch of the bourgeoisie” (Marx & Engels 1957:46). The bourgeoisie cannot exist without continuously changing the modes of production and the whole gamut of societal relations.

In the process of development the bourgeoisie exploits the proletariat. The proletariat also goes through various stages of development. The class war against the bourgeoisie commences right from the cradle. In the process of the struggle the proletariat revolutionizes the whole society, demolishes the entire bourgeoisie social systems and establishes the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus the society becomes a classless one in which “the free development of each will lead to the free development of all (Marx & Engels 1957: 88). Although Marx made fundamental contributions to a historical analysis, his theory can never be regarded as anything more than an important source of insights or, at the most, as a set of ideals, which could be applied to illuminate specific sequences of historical development (Sigh 1987:9).

Max Webber in his “Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism”(1930) has totally rejected the Marxian construction of determinative schemes based upon the theory of historical development and materialism as the key to the explanation of historical changes in particular. Webber has observed that from the very beginning two opposite attitudes towards the pursuit exist in combination. One is



internal, the traditionally emotional attachment of the individual to the society which inhibits him from exploiting it to his selfish advantage or gain. The other is external, which creates an unrestricted quest for gain from the foreigners. For him, religious ideas are motivating factors for economic development. Further Webber identified certain geographical, demographic, rational, spiritual, ethical preconditions for the development of capitalism. Thus he formulates a rationalistic model of development of men and society. For him, capitalism is identical with the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise” (Webber 1968:17).

While orthodox Marxists have supported and used the theories of Marx in the same way in which he has formulated them, another category of Marxists felt the need of revision of Marxism in the light of better information. They are known as Neo-Marxists. Maurice Dobb in his book “Studies in the Development of Capitalism” (1963) has recognized other factors such as competition among the lords and over exploitation of the labour force, which contributed to the decline of feudalism along with a mode of production paradigm. While discussing the development of capitalism he writes: “The development of capitalism falls into a number of stages, characterized by different levels of maturity and each often recognizable by fairly distinct traits” (Dobb 1963:17).

Paul M. Sweezy in “The Theory of Capitalist Development” (Sweezy 1942:32) holds that the main conflict is not between money economy and natural



economy, but between production for the market and production for use. According to Kolachiro Takashashi (1976) “the question of the transition from feudalism to capitalism is not merely one of transformation in forms of economic and social institutions.” J.A. Schumpeter draws a distinction between development, economic development and social changes in economic life, which are not forced upon from outside (Schumpeter 1936:77). According to Gunnar Myrdal, who divided the world into ‘developed’ and ‘undeveloped’, development of the whole society is possible only through reforms in social institutions (Myrdal 1959:131).

It can be inferred that in a society many kinds of modes of production may exist but one of them can dominate the other. The whole idea regarding the mode of production is that the capitalist mode of production has been achieved through the long process of transition from feudalism to capitalism. In this process of transition mercantilism and commercialism have also played a significant role.

## **2.9 Gandhian Concept of Development**

No discussion on India’s development in general and rural and tribal development in particular can be complete without a thorough and comprehensive understanding of Gandhi’s views on and techniques of development. His views on rural reconstruction are an integral part of his philosophy of life, which he saw as a whole characterised by truth and non-violence, respect for human personality, faith in the goodness of human nature,



dislike of all kinds of injustice and exploitation, resistance to all evils and a decisive preference for small and simple forms of organisation in which all can participate. Often labelled as idealistic, the Gandhian approach to rural and tribal development does not stand in isolation but is shaped by other concepts and ideas, constituting his philosophy of life. His dynamic and complex personality and genius embraced a wide range of the issues and problems of his time-political, social, economic cultural, etc. One, therefore, finds that several of his ideas are often intricately interconnected with one another.

Ahimsa or non-violence is the basic tenet of the political and economic philosophy of Gandhi. Since the state represents violence in a concentrated and organised form and is an organization based on 'force', Gandhi argued in favour of a stateless society. His ideal state was 'enlightened anarchy' in which men are naturally good and "hence need no government". In such a state, said Gandhi, "every one is his own ruler." He rules himself in such a manner that he is never a hindrance to his neighbour. In the 'ideal state' therefore, there is no political power, for there is no state. This was the ultimate ideal which he called "Rama Rajya". Being a shrewd and pragmatic idealist he had naturally his own reservations about the praxis of his philosophical anarchism. Hence he modified his stance by asserting that while the totally non-violent or stateless society was the ultimate ideal, the realisable or an immediate ideal was "a predominantly non-violent state" (Gandhi 1962: 17).



The Rama-Rajya or the enlightened anarchy of Gandhi's dream was to be realised in three phases. In the initial stage, the goal was '*Swaraj*', which means 'self rule' that was to achieve independence for India. In the second stage the objective was to bring about a 'predominantly non-violent state' through the evolution of village republics. In the final stage, the purpose was to achieve '*Rama-Rajya*', that is the 'Kingdom of God on Earth', which would be the totally non-violent and purely democratic stateless society. '*Swaraj*', '*Grama Swaraj*' and '*Rama Rajya*' are thus the three significant milestones in the process of the attainment of the ideal social order of Gandhi's vision. Since the ultimate ideal of *Rama Rajya* is difficult to realise, Gandhi said, in its absence the only realisable alternative and immediate ideal was *Grama Swaraj* (Prabhu 1959: 63).

### **2.9.1 *Grama Swaraj***

The village is the basic unit of Gandhi's ideal social order. Throughout his most active political life there was not a single day when he did not think or write about the revival and reconstruction of Indian villages. "The vastness of our country, the vastness of the population, the situation and the climate of the country have, in my opinion, destined it for a rural civilisation", said Gandhi (Young India 1922:22). His strategy of rural reconstruction was based on his programmes of '*village swaraj*' and the '*swadeshi*' movement. Under these two programmes he introduced many apparently very simple devices and modes like '*charka*' (Spinning wheel) and '*khadi*' (Spinning and weaving by hand) revival



of household / cottage industries and village handicrafts, village sanitation and hygiene and basic education for the harmonious development of the whole personality, etc. To him, efforts to achieve India's political independence and work on the constructive programme were inseparably linked. Along with his political activities for obtaining '*swaraj*' Gandhi paid special attention to the programme of attainment of '*village swaraj*' (Gandhi 1938:38). Under this programme of the revival of the villages, Mahatma advocated a self sufficient village economy or a self-reliant village community and emphasised the full utilisation of local resources for development purposes.

Gandhi's ideal village belongs to the ancient period, when Indian villages were small 'republics', self sufficient and self-reliant, undisturbed by the inroads of western civilization. In 1942, when he was already 73 years old, he said, "my ideal of village *swaraj* is that it is a complete republic, independent of neighbours for its own vital wants and yet interdependent for many others in which dependence is a necessity" (Gandhi 1941: 43). In order to build 'village republics' Gandhi's scheme envisaged maximum decentralisation of political and economic powers in favour of the villages. It implied, along with political decentralisation, a decentralised economy based on self-sufficiency at the village level. The villages would be self-sufficient as far as their basic needs like food, clothing, shelter, education, health, etc. are concerned. In certain matters, interdependence would also be necessary. No village can be totally self-



sufficient but it would strive to attain that goal. The village has to import certain things that it cannot produce in the village and regain economic balance by producing more of which it can. His concept of self-sufficiency pre-supposes that the basic human needs and wants are limited, that is, only the natural needs and not the artificially created wants.

### **2.9.2 Labour Co-operation and Common Good**

Physical labour occupied a very significant place in the Gandhian concept of a self-sufficient village. He asked 'how can a man who does not do labour, have the right to eat?' He advocated the Biblical Law "Earn your bread by the sweat of your brow" (Pyarelal 1953:153). According to him each man must do physical labour to earn his living. He called this 'bread labour'. Intellectual labour is only for one's own satisfaction and one should not demand payment for it. *The needs of the body should be supplied by the work of the body. "If all laboured for their bread and no more, then there would be enough food and enough leisure for all"* (Ray 1950: 253).

A self sufficient and non-violent village society could only be built up on the basis of co-operation and not conflict. For Gandhi, there could be no conflict of interests between different sections of the society and the idea of 'conflict of interests' or 'opposition of interests' was inconceivable and wrong. Man should live in co-operation and work for the common good. As far as possible every activity in the village, according to Gandhi, will be conducted on a co-operative



basis. Even in the field of agriculture he recommended co-operative farming that would save labour, capital, tools, etc. It would provide employment to all adult villagers and also increase production. The Father of the Nation favoured co-operative cattle farming also because individuals might find it quite difficult to raise cattle in a healthy and scientific manner. "Co-operative activities", said he, "would develop fellow feeling and would abolish poverty and idleness in the village"(Gandhi 1941: 48).

### **2.9.3 Trusteeship**

Gandhiji wanted to transform the system of capitalism and end its vicious effects on social order. To this end he propounded the idea of trusteeship based on the following conditions.

- a) Trusteeship provides a means of transforming the present capitalist order of society into an egalitarian one. It gives no quarter to capitalism but gives the present owning class a chance of reforming itself. It is based on the faith that human nature is never beyond redemption.
- b) It does not recognize any right of private ownership of property except in so far as it may be permitted by the society for its own welfare.
- c) It does not exclude legislative regulation of the ownership and use of wealth.



- d) Thus under state-regulated trusteeship an individual will not be free to hold or use his wealth for selfish satisfaction or in disregard of the interests of the society.
- e) Just as it is proposed to fix a decent minimum living wage, even so a limit should be fixed for the maximum income that would be allowed to any individual or group. The difference between such minimum and maximum incomes should be reasonable, equitable and variable from time to time with a view of wipe of the disparity ultimately.
- f) *Under the Gandhian economic order the character of production will be determined by the social necessity and not by personal whims or greed.*

His ideal of trusteeship aims at transforming the character of the rich. He claimed that every man had a right (a) to have a balanced diet, (b) the necessary khadi to wear (c) a decent house to live in (d) facilities for the education of his children and (e) adequate medical relief. Any possession over and above these, he regarded as otiose. The superfluous wealth must be held by those who possessed it as trustees of the people to be used for ameliorating their condition (Pyarelal 1953: 83).

#### **2.9.4 Three Dimensions**

Thus the Gandhian approach to rural reconstruction based on his ideal of self-sufficient, self-reliant, self-governing, non-violent village republics was a



total plan of establishing a unique social order in the place of the existing one. Gandhi's 'ideal type' of three-dimensional approach to rural reconstruction-economic, political and socio-educational can be embodied in a number of penetrating observations that constitute the quintessence of Gandhian philosophy (Pyarelal 1953: 87).

*On the economic plane:-*

- a. Everything belongs to God. Therefore it is meant for all His people. The cardinal principle behind a non-violent social order is equal distribution.
- b. The ultimate objective of economic planning is to attain self-sufficiency, full employment and decentralisation of power.
- c. The promotion of the village industries is basic to the economic development of the country.
- d. The superficially imposed intermediaries between the tiller of the land and the government have been virtually responsible for the social and spiritual degeneration of the rural folk.
- e. The principles of 'trusteeship' and 'co-operation' are of immense instrumental value.

*On the political plane:-*

- a. All the villages should ultimately be self-sufficient republics.
- b. Power should be vested in the 'Panchayat', elected by the villagers themselves.



- c. Panchayat is the legislature, the judiciary and the executive combined.

*On the socio- educational plane:-*

- a. The educated electorate is a 'must' for the successful functioning of people's government.
- b. Literacy is not the end of education, nor the beginning.
- c. Education is the all round 'three-fold' development of mind, body and soul.
- d. It has to build round a productive craft and be related to the environment of the student.
- e. The training of the mind through the hands produces a well-balanced intellect.

The Gandhian strategy of rural reconstruction needs to be reviewed in the light of the experience of rural development in the post Independent India. To understand and review his ideas and programmes, one has to keep the following things in mind. First Gandhi spoke and wrote so much on innumerable, different occasions on various aspects of Indian life, that there is always a danger of misunderstanding and misquoting him. Second Gandhi was a political strategist leading the Indian National Movement. As such, each of his programmes has to be interpreted in this perspective with extreme caution and in the light of the social, political and economic conditions prevailing during his time. Thirdly, any opinion expressed by him and any action taken by him pertaining to any subject



has a singular blending of two components- a very simple looking outward act having tremendous mass appeal, which would help in awakening the sense of the people's own power and the inward principle which would provide a moral and spiritual sanctity to the whole effort (Sanitha 1970: 38).

The Gandhian concept of development is humanitarian in nature. Under its rubric comes the entire human society with all its moral, spiritual, intellectual, aesthetic, and physiological facets. In the Mahatma's visions of work, wealth and happiness do meet in happy harmony; the philosophies of East and West, clipping notwithstanding. That his ideals and principles are being presently sought to be put into practice for the resolution of the manifold problems that beset humanity vouches for their timeless relevance. This has naturally engendered a resurgence of the Gandhian paradigm of development world wide (Mathai 2000: 137).

## **2.10 Appropriate Technology**

From the last five or six decades, more and more attention is being paid to the concept of 'appropriate technology' Dr.E.F. Schumachar, the author of the book, *Small is Beautiful* (Schumachar 1936:92) has among others started wide ranging discussions on the concept of an appropriate technology for developing countries, and even for developed countries. He used the term "intermediate technology' meaning there by a technology which does not require the same type of sophisticated equipment and man-power as are required in technologies which



are currently used in the developed world. “The key to success is not mass production, but production by masses” (Gandhi 1920: 36).

While we discuss the problem of appropriate technology, we have to first of all be clear in our minds about what we mean by this term. Does it only mean intermediate technology? Does it mean rural technology? Does it convey the idea of any array of technologies that could fulfil the needs of a developing country, taking the local conditions into consideration? The last one seems more apposite. In order to bring out its implications more precisely, the term ‘relevant technology’ has now come into vogue. It would cover anything from the spinning wheel to the satellite. Gandhi was not against science, technology or machinery, but being a practical politician, was against its indiscriminate multiplication. So there are grounds to believe that had he been alive, he would have even accepted mechanisation of agriculture, provided all able – bodied Indians are assured gainful and guaranteed employment in other sectors of the economy. So we can say that the concept of “appropriate technology” is so near to Gandhism.

The aptness of a technology to the needs of the country should be judged against a set of criteria determined in advance. Therefore the countries concerned will have to take into consideration their needs and circumstances and decide upon the criteria that should be prescribed for the selection of an appropriate technology. Another important consideration is the fact that the whole process of



choice of technology is a dynamic concept and not a static one. The concept of an appropriate technology, if properly understood, is one that appeals to most people. This is because they would like to do a proper thing and appropriate technology means just this.

However, the implementation of the concept is fraught with many difficulties and dangers. Its full implications are not early understood. Therefore, one has to be very clear in his mind about what is being attempted. With an open mind, proper planning, hard work and without preconceived notions, it is possible to implement this concept. This new strategy of development, on the one hand, will consolidate the industrial and technological progress achieved so far, and on the other, incorporate programmes to carry the fruits of development to the rural areas by decentralisation of industries, industrialisation of agriculture and mechanisation of small scale and rural industries, ensuring gainful employment to all. It would be an anthropocentric concept, Gandhian and non-Gandhian at once.

### **2.11 Nehruvian Model of Development**

It may be possible to piece together ideas of Nehru, expounded through his speeches and writings to get a picture of India's model of political development. However, more than being a thinker, Nehru was a political leader of modern India. As such, he had to come to grips with objective realities and been compelled to interact with contemporary events and forces within the



country as well as abroad (Joshi 1972:122). All these played a role in shaping India's political development during Nehru's lifetime. His ideas regarding nation-building were influenced by his long years of education in England and the dominant mood of scientific optimism that was then prevalent in the west. As a witness to the Soviet experiment it was but natural that he should have been impressed by socialist claims as holding out the key to modernize an underdeveloped land. He believed that with socialist principles based on science and technology, poverty could be done away with and illiteracy eradicated. He believed that scientific manpower would bring about self-reliance. India after Independence made a deliberate choice for a liberal democratic political system. As a corollary to this, stress was laid on institution-building; parliament, judiciary and the bureaucracy as institutional structures supporting the political system, worked in well set grooves according to fixed norms. However, India did not opt for a decentralised, village-based model set forth in Mahatma Gandhi's testament. Instead, a centralised governmental structure that could plan for the socio-economic transformation of the whole country was set up. Even the Federal framework created by the constitution was weakened by centralised institutions like the Planning Commission, the Congress Working Committee and many other omnipotent departments at the Centre. The Party was used mainly for the functions of political socialisation, recruitment, interest articulation and aggregation.



In economic modernisation India chose the path of industrialisation with initial emphasis on heavy industries; agriculture and rural development was relegated to the background. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Five-year plans, there was only an average of 20 percent outlay on agriculture and irrigation, while 60 percent was on industry, power and transport. Change in the village structure was sought so that capital and manpower tied to the feudal set up in the villages could be made available for diversion to the industries. Land reforms, therefore, mainly affected feudal relationship, abolished absentee landlordism and paved the way for the rise of capitalist agriculture. Similarly, in the industrial field, despite the socialist idiom used by Nehru and the public sector built by him, government policies helped to develop a capitalist economy. Both in technology and industrial fields the policy was to promote indigenous growth with restricted scope for foreign capital investment collaborations (Norman 1965:433).

Emphasis on higher as against primary education, the development of urban areas, the growth of a market economy catering to effective demand rather than to the common needs of the masses, greater importance of higher echelons in political institutions rather than those at the grass root level - all underlined the non-egalitarian nature of society. Lastly, in the elitist politics a policy of evolving consensus rather than competition and conflict was aimed at. The quest was for a consensus on issues and policies, all relating to secularism, official language and potential areas of ethnic conflict and in general to all socio-



economic policies as well as in the working of political institutions. The system characterised as a one party dominant system tried to buildup an all-encompassing political structure in which sharp dissent, though theoretically possible, was muffled (Stanely 1968:1057).

## **2.12 New Concepts of Development**

The idea of development sums up the aspirations of a great number of people both in the poor countries and in the rich countries. The attention given to economic cycles, the anxiety of the average man in the face of a possible recession, the political impact of the planning of development - all demonstrate this.

Development is the liberation of mankind from the manifold forces that restrict and stifle its holistic development. In a world, where millions of men, women and children in a miserable condition worry about the food for the morrow, where human life is reduced to a level below that of animal existence for want of even bare necessities of the economic dimension of development has great significance. But development cannot be combined with and confined to economics alone. Today the vision of development that rises before our mind is that of integral human development of the “ whole man, body and soul, and of all men every where” (Gandhi 1941:14), which Gandhiji calls as *Sarvodaya*.



To be brief, development now is not merely on the economic plain, which Marx made the basis of his analysis of human evolution in society. It indeed should aim at the total material, intellectual, moral, social, spiritual and similar planes of development of every man and all men in the world. It is not the concern of one section of the community for another but 'of all for each and each for all'. The universality of development is to be underlined, for development is indivisible. There is a dehumanising aspect in the selfish and isolated development of nations, independent of one another. In fact, the real interest of one individual, group or nation is not incompatible with that of the society, nation or even the world as a whole. This may be termed as enlightened self interest which is in consonance with the interest, of the whole. As Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out in a Convocation Address to the students of Allahabad University in 1947,

If we look back at India's long history we find that our forefathers made wonderful progress whenever they looked out on the world with clean and fearless eyes and kept the windows of their minds open to give and to receive. And in later periods, when they grew narrow in outlook and shrank from influences, India suffered a set back politically and culturally (Ananthu 1987:136).

Development is presently the concern of all nations. It is also recognised that the developed as well as the developing nations have special mutual responsibilities, if development is to be achieved and accelerated. If development



is defined in terms of liberation it applies in different ways and degrees both to developed and developing countries. The definition of development in terms of liberation offers us an opportunity to break away from a concrete historical model of development with all its ambiguous and transitory character and to lay down the basis for another model, closer to this greater ideal. It is for us an opportunity as well as a challenge.

Integral human development as the development of “ the whole man and of all men” has two dimensions. The vertical dimension - ‘the whole man’ - represents man’s gradual opening to higher values and perspectives: from the purely economic to the social and political, from the material to the spiritual, from the economic and political liberation to real human freedom. The horizontal dimension - ‘all men’ - points to the end, mans realization of the need to share his sorrows and anxieties as well as his joys and hopes with his fellow-men to bring into reality a really social and communitarian conception of human existence; to shift the emphasis from one’s own needs and interests to those of the family, of the neighbourhood, of the village or city, of one’s own country, of other countries and cultures, of other social groups or classes of the world. There is no true development along the vertical line without an equivalent development along the horizontal line.

Some political scientists have formulated a humanist and ethical concept of development, in keeping with the outlook that appears to us today as most



valid. Lindbeck says that development consists in 'having more, in order to be more' and he stresses the value of solidarity in this process (Lindbeck 1977:86).

The term development carries its own definition accordingly with its relation to several aspects such as like moral development, spiritual development, social development and economic development. Morals, which also imply human values, should come from personal conviction rather than through compulsion.

Besides moral development, we do need to make attempts to achieve spiritual development. Spirituality should be thrown into action through love of God and love of man and it is this that should motivate development. It is vital that we ourselves should be spiritual in order to foster spiritual development in others. Some extremists feel that such pre-occupations may have an opiate effect on the will for development. This is far from the truth. If development plans are to succeed the motive force should come from dedicated persons and such dedication is most powerful when it is spiritual.

The above discussion leads to the prime question – what is the core of development? Even economists recognise the importance of qualitative development along with quantitative growth. That is why they have strick a clear-cut distinction between growth and development. In other words development means growth plus structural change – institutional change and attitudinal change or qualitative change. Gandhian model of development advocates holistic development, both material and spiritual. To Gandhi material



and spiritual development is one and the same. Lack of material growth to satisfy the bare necessities of life may lead to moral degradation. At the same time material growth alone may lead to moral decay. On the other hand, moral development or qualitative development would lead to quantitative improvement. In the golden rule of Jesus of Nazareth, we read the complete spirit of this ethics of development. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all else shall be added unto you." The Gandhian dictum '*Swaraj* is self – rule or freedom from passions', is also not wide of the mark (Gangrade 1997:11).

### **2.13 Rural Development**

India still remains a predominantly rural country with 627 millions or 74.3 percent of its total population living in rural areas as per 1991 census (Ranchor Prasad 1998:1) "India lives in the villages". This adage which emphasizes the agrarian character of the Indian Economy and to which so much attention was drawn by Mahatma Gandhi, continues to be so to this day inspite of the industrial development that has taken place in the last five and a half decades since Independence. In a county like India an important aim of development should be the progress of the under developed, which ought to be treated as a euphemism for the programmes of poverty eradication (Sharma 1989:1). Since development means the alround development of all the people, our primary concern must be rural development. Since the tribals in India are the most neglected sections of the



society residing in the far flung villages and hill tops tribal development is indeed a pre-requisite for rural development.

Rural development is necessary not only because an overwhelming majority of the population live in villages but also because promotion of rural activities is essential to accelerate the pace of over all economic development of the country. Rural development has assumed greater importance in India today than ever before. It is a strategy package seeking to achieve enhanced rural production and productivity, greater socio-economic equity, a spatial balance in social and economic development. The primary task is to wipe off the hunger and poverty among this forsaken segment of the rural population by forwarding them with sufficient nutritious diet. Then there should be adequate provision for clothing, shelter and atleast a minimum of the other amenities of life such as medical care, facilities for recreation, education and transport and communication. Above all life in a healthy environment should be ensured.

Rural development is a complex exercise. It is often impeded by the backlog of rural poverty, unemployment, underemployment and backwardness. Moreover, rural people are by and large ignorant and superstitious and do not participate in the development programmes, initiated by the government. In the present context, rural development is conceived by the government with the assistance of urban intelligentsia, who have little first hand knowledge of rural India and its problems.



The government has been experimenting with various programmes in one form or the other, to eradicate rural poverty. During the span of the last five and a half decades of planned development, they have innovated, initiated and implemented various schemes to develop a self sustaining rural economy. Community Development Programme, Panchayati Raj, Applied Nutrition Programme, Drought Prone Areas Programme, Desert Development Programme, Small Farmers Development Programme, Area Development Programme, Integrated Rural Development Programme and Minimum Needs Programme are some of the important programmes formulated and implemented for the benefit of the weaker sections of the rural society (Desai 1988: 60)

The objectives of rural development, in terms of living standards includes a sustained increase in percapita output and income generation and expansion of productive employment and equitable distribution of growth. The operational goals of rural development are improved productivity while assuring a minimum acceptable standard of living, which includes adequate provision for food, shelter, educational and health services. These call for a number of programmes suitable to the varied socio-economic environment. The operational strategy of rural development, therefore, embraces a wide range and mix of activities. The mix of activities will vary with the requirements of a region and the priorities assigned to the components within a programme at a particular time and at a particular stage of development.



## **2.14 Tribal Development as Part of Rural Development**

Over the years since planning began we have been working out strategies to improve the socio-economic conditions of weaker sections and the more vulnerable groups. The poor weaker peasantry and slum dwellers were the pet subjects of discussion for planners, professors and politicians until very recently. Out of indifference or the inability to deal effectively with their problems, the ethos of our national feelings seems to have shifted very recently towards the dearest of our weaker sections, namely Scheduled Tribes.

India is one among the few nations of the world noted for its tribal concentration. About 80 percent of them live in remote forest areas and hill tracks without any access to modern socio-economic inputs. Although there are ethnographic variations in terms of their anthropological identity, most tribals share certain characteristics: nature of rurality, speciality of illiteracy, economic backwardness and social deprivation. Their standard of living, judged by any standard: income, position, calorie intake, nutritional norms, educational level and Physical Quality Life Index (PQLI) does not come anywhere near the minimum set by the Planning Commission (Narayanan 1997:117). The employment problem of these communities cannot be discussed in isolation for most of them are employed and a very few are engaged in traditional occupations. Their earnings apart from the monetary angle, fall far short of the minimum required for mere subsistence.



Even after five and a half decades of Independence, the tribals continue to remain cut off from the general prosperity of the nation and are still in the lowest strata of society. Their way of living is a shame on the modern civilization. They have been subjected to various types of exploitation for generations and their life is characterized by servitude, poverty and misery. Generally speaking they are still under the clutches of their century old traditions and inimical customs. They are in the firm grip of a subsistence economy and indebtedness in the hallmark of tribal existence in India.

It is indeed imperative that in all ages those who can think must act for and help those who toil for them,. The people at the grass root level must feel proud of their more fortunate country men, whose vision and learning can be of benefit to them. But the most distressing fact about our present day nationalism is that instead of the elite and educated community representing the brain and conscience of a nation as the legitimate spokesmen of the illiterate masses – their dream, the custodians of their interest, they have become their exploiters whenever and wherever possible (Narayanan 1997:120).

To bring the tribals into the mainstream of modern life, a large gap has to be bridged. But it is a reality that the tribals are getting isolated more and more socio-economically and even when development is ensured, they are often dragged into sub-proletarian servitude by the reactionary forces in a society, built up on the wages of exploitation. The statutory reservations, discriminations,



special provisions, guarantees of minimum needs, etc. as a means of social change is, no doubt, a welcome approach. This can bring about changes in educational standards, occupational mobility, cultural conditioning and redistribution as well as the over all competitive competence of these under privileged sections by boosting their will to better their lot by their own concerted efforts. A comprehensive analysis of the process of tribal development is dealt with in the ensuing chapter.

### **Endnotes**

1. The proposition that economic development benefit the poorest members of a society mainly through the effects of increased national income on the demand for labour, rather than through explicit measures to assist them.
2. Spread effects are the favourable repercussions on backward regions/ backward peoples emanating from expanding regions/people.
3. Once development differences appear, there is set in motion a chain of cumulative expansion in the favoured region/people, and this has what Myrdal calls a 'backwash' effect on other regions, causing development differences in general to persist or even diverge.



**CHAPTER III**  
**TRIBAL SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
**INITIATIVES**



### 3.1 Introduction

Almost every thirteenth Indian is a tribal. Etymologically, the term tribe derives its origin from the Latin word '*tribus*' meaning three divisions. Among the Romans, the tribe was a political division. In the West, as also in India, this term has undergone several semantic changes through the ages and its present implications are vastly different from its original context. The tribe was the highest political unit comprising several Districts, which in turn, were composed of Clans. It occupied a definite geographical area and exercised effective control over its people. Permanent settlement in a particular area gave geographical identity to a tribe. The territory under the domain of a particular tribe was generally named after it. It is believed that India derived its name, '*Bharat*' from the mighty *Bharata* tribe (Verma 1994:5). Similarly, the vast *Matsya* Kingdom, which flourished in the Sixth Century BC, was identified with the *Matsya* tribe (Verma 1994:2). The Mina tribe, found in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, is believed to be the descendants of the *Matsya* tribe: The Minas still believe that the universe has its origin in *Matsya* or *Meen*, that is the fish, which was the *Swayambhoo*. Even today, there are a number of regions, which owe their names to the tribes inhabiting them. The Northeast Indian states of Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura are named after the Mizo, Naga, and Trupuri tribes respectively.



### 3.1.1 Definition

There is no precise definition of the term 'tribe', on which there can be general agreement. It is generally applied to a community or a cluster of communities characterized by a common territory, language and cultural heritage, on an inferior technological level (Singh 1972:265). According to Majumdar, a tribe is

A collection of families or groups of families bearing a common name, members of which occupy the same territory, speak the same language, and observe certain taboos regarding marriage, profession or occupation and have developed a well-assessed system of reciprocity and mutuality of obligation (Majumdar 1977:71).

It was Mr. W.R.H. Rivers, who gave to anthropological literature the most accepted definition of 'tribe':

A social group of a simple kind, the members of which speak a common dialect, have a single government and act together for such common purposes as war. Other characteristics of a tribe have been listed as common name, contiguous territory, a relatively uniform culture or way of life and a trace of common descent (Luiz 1994:1).

Today with the anthropologists and sociologists of western origin, the term 'tribe' is defined in the latest edition of the Oxford Dictionary as "a race of people; now applied especially to a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or



barbarous condition, under a headman or chief.”(1996:1275). It is in this sense, roughly speaking, that most of the western scholars, working on India, have been using this term, often with a shifting of emphasis.

*A tribal community in India had generally the following attributes.*

1. They lived in an isolated area as a distinct group culturally and socially.
2. They had originated from one of the oldest ethnological sections of the population.
3. They followed primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting and gathering of forest produce and were, therefore, backward economically and also educationally.
4. They professed a primitive religion and were not always within the Hindu fold in the usual sense. Even when they are treated as Hindus, they do not exactly fit in the Hindu caste hierarchy.
5. They had their own common dialect.
6. They loved to drink and dance.
7. They were largely non-vegetarians
8. They dressed scantily (Luiz 1994:11).

### **3.2 Indian Tribes and Tribal Areas**

There are 427 Scheduled Tribes in India. The total number of tribal communities, nevertheless, is estimated to be 642, several of which have now either become extinct or been merged with other communities (Singh 1990:17).



There are some who have undergone transformation of their identity altogether. Tendencies for fusion and fission among the tribal population still continue and it is difficult to work out the exact number of such communities in India without making a reference to any specific point of time. It is, however, evident that the overall population of tribal communities in India is appreciably high. Anthropologically speaking, the proportion of tribe-like population in India is much higher than that of the tribes as such. In reality, very few of the Scheduled Tribes, according to anthropological definition, will as such qualify as tribes. Besides, there is a number of apparent anomalies related to the issue. For example, there are several cases where the same people distributed over adjoining States of India are being treated as tribes in some States but as non-tribes in some other State or States. The Gonds are a Scheduled Tribe in Madhya Pradesh but they are counted as Scheduled Tribes only in certain Districts in Maharashtra (Singh 1990:18).

In areas where scheduling has been done on territorial basis, even the so-called upper Hindu Castes like *Brahmans* and *Kshatriyas* enjoy the same privileges and facilities earmarked for Scheduled Tribes, as is the case in *Kinnore* District of Himachal Pradesh (Singh 1990:19). In Lakshadweep, where most of the people are Muslims, in Ladakh, where most of the people are Buddhists, and in Nicobar, where most of the people are Christians everybody enjoys the Scheduled Tribe status.



Ironically enough, some communities that were eager to assert their non-tribal identity during the pre-Independence days have become very vocal in their claim for the status of the Scheduled Tribe, obviously to avail of certain special benefits Scheduled Tribes are entitled to.

The actual position of tribes in India cannot be properly understood without a probe into their demographic distribution. Most of the major tribes such as the Santal, Bhil, Gond, Oraon, Munda, Ho, Kwar, and Nagasia are several million strong and distributed over a number of States of Central and Eastern India (Singh 1990:23). Although there are pockets of their specific concentration, the bulk are interspersed in their distribution and mostly live in multi-ethnic villages. The tribes in the Southern States of India are demographically smaller but have a very large number of identifiable ethnic groups. Most of them have their separate hamlets too. In the overall population composition of their immediate neighbourhood, they constitute rather an insignificant fraction. The Tribes of North-East India on an average are somewhat larger in this regard than their counterparts in the Southern States. Each, nevertheless, is much smaller than any of the major tribes of Central and Eastern India. The uniqueness of their distribution in the North-East India in more or less exclusive tribal tracts have, however, helped them to form tribal majority States like Meghalaya, Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (Singh 1990:3). Areas identified for scheduling like Kinnore, Ladakh and Lakshadweep have also



a sort of exclusiveness, though they do not have the uniqueness of Nagaland or Mizoram. These special features have helped to create greater solidarity among them and wield real bargaining power. The Negrito tribes as a whole of Andaman Islands, some of the Central and South Indian tribes like the Kodaku and Pando of Madhya Pradesh, the Birhor distributed over West Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the Chola Nayakan of Kerala and the Shompen of Great Nicobar Island are rather too small to produce considerable impact on decision making.

The proportion of the Scheduled Tribes to the total population of the State/Union territory is highest in Lakshadweep (93.82 per cent), followed by Mizoram (93.55 per cent), Nagaland (83.99 per cent), Meghalaya (80.58 per cent), Dadra and Nagar Haveli (78.82 per cent), Arunachal Pradesh (69.82 per cent) and Tripura (28.44 per cent). The lowest proportions are in Uttar Pradesh (0.21 per cent), Kerala (1.03 per cent) and Tamil Nadu (1.07 per cent). (Singh 1990:23)

The size of the tribal communities is also an important factor to be considered. According to a study conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India in the light of the 1981 census the following conclusions were arrived at. There are communities with very large populations of 3 to 7 millions. The largest tribes were the Gond (7,449,193), the Bhil (7,367,973), the Santal (4,260,842), the Mina (2,087,075) and the Oraon (1,865,995). A few tribes, such as the Haisa, the Tangsa, the Hotang Tangsa, the Katin Tangsa, etc. had only a single member



(1981 census). Tribes such as the Bomdo, the Jambo Karka and the Kongbo, had between two to ten members. The Andamanese including all subgroups had only 42 members; other small groups included the Jarawas (31), the Chaimal (18), the Onges (97), the Aranadan (236) and the Kochuvelan (53). The 1981 census also recorded five tribes with a single membership, 17 tribes with a population of 2-10 members, and 17 tribes with 101-500 members. Thus, a total of 64 tribes were recorded which had a population of less than 500. To sum up, the number of tribes with a population below 5000 was 96 (22 per cent); between 5000 and 10,000 there were 39 (9 per cent); between 10,000 and 20,000 there were 32 (7 per cent); between 20,000 and 1,00,000 there were 75 (17 per cent); between 1,00,000 and 5,00,000 there were 37 (9 per cent), and the number of those with a population of 5,00,000 and above stood at 19 (4 per cent). (Singh 1990:4)

According to the above survey as many as 294 tribes, i.e. 46.2 per cent were found within the boundaries of existing State/Union Territories. Three hundred and twenty-six tribal communities (51.3 per cent) were spread over two States, and eighty-nine of them (14 per cent) were distributed across three States. This is significant as it shows that the tribes inhabit well-defined territories that cut across the administrative boundaries of adjoining States. Only thirty tribes or 7 per cent of the tribes, are found in four to six States. The tribal people in India inhabit all climatic zones. However, about 52.4 per cent of them live in areas of moderate climate. They also live in extreme/warm climates. About 63.4 per cent



of the tribal communities live in hilly terrains. They also inhabit the deserts (0.2 per cent), the semi-arid zones (1.6 per cent) and the island (2.2 per cent). (Singh 1990:4)

### **3.3 Tribal Situation In Kerala**

No definition of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes is found in the Constitution of India. They are specified in accordance with Articles 341 and 342. By virtue of these provisions the President is empowered to draw up a list in consultation with the Governor of each State, subject to revision by the Parliament (Basu 1997:382). According to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Orders Amendment Act, 1976, there are thirty-five (Census 1991) tribal communities in the State of Kerala (see Appendix). There are also other tribal communities that are included in the list of Scheduled Castes (Verma 1995:187). They claim to be tribals and want to be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes. Accordingly thirteen other communities are also entitled to enjoy the educational privileges at a par with those of the Scheduled Tribes, who are termed as Other Eligible Communities (OEC) (Govt. of Kerala 1996:39). According to the 1991 census the population of Scheduled Tribes all over India is 6.78 crore constituting 8.08 percent of the total population and in the State of Kerala they number 3,20,967, belonging to 69,441 families (Govt. of India 1998:187). They form 1.1 percent of the total population of the State. The gender ratio among the Scheduled



Tribes is 996 women for 1000 men while that of the general population is 1036 for 1000 (Census 1991).

The population growth among the Scheduled Tribes is below the state average. During the 1990's the state average stood at 14.32 percent. The same is only 12.75 percent among the Scheduled Tribes while among the Scheduled Castes it is 13.22 percent. The average strength of a family is also lower among the Scheduled Tribes, that is 4.6 percent as against the 5.3 percent state average. Literacy among the Scheduled Tribes in this most literate State is also comparatively low, that is 57.22 percent against the prestigious 89.81 percent stage average. Literacy rate among tribal men is 63.38 percent, while that among tribal women is 50.07 percent. Among the tribal population the largest number of literates live in the District of Kottayam, the area of our study, while the number is the lowest in Palakkadu District (Census 1991).

The majority of tribals in Kerala (55.47 percent) are agricultural labourers, while 16.66 percent of them are marginal agriculturalists. Until recently they were mostly food gatherers and hunters and hence they are believed to have been of Middle Stone Age Culture. People of that remote age had been food gatherers and hunters (Bridget 1995). The Adivasis of Kerala such as Malayar, Irular, Kanikar, Mala-Pulaya, Kadar, Paniyar and Aranadan were all living sencity as such until recently. Dr. A. Ayyappan in his "Kerala Darshan" opines that these tribes might have adopted the present life style just before the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup>



century (Ayyappan 1951:154). Owing to paucity of forest produce and animals they became ordinary agriculturalists and later owing to the alienation of land most of them were forced to become labourers.

Concentration of the tribal population shows a wide variation from 17.25 percent in Wayanadu District to 0.13 percent in Thrissur District. The adivasi areas in various parts of the state are divided into seven geographical divisions (Census 1991).

1. Kasargod:- *Maradis* and *Koragans* are the prominent *adivasi*'s of this area comprising Hosdurg and Kasargod Taluks of the erstwhile Cannoor District.
2. Wayanadu:- The Wayanadu area consists of south and north Wayanadu of the District of the same name, which lie at 3000 feet above the sea level. This region is inhabited by *Paniyar*, *Kurichiar*, *Mullakurumar*, *Kattunaickans (Thenkuruman)*, *Wayanadu Kadans*, *Adiyars*, *Kundu Vadiyans*, *Kanaladies*, *Thachanadans*, etc.
3. Attappady:- This region, situated between 1200 – 3000 feet above sea level in the District of Palakkadu is peopled mainly by *Irular*, *Mudugar* and others. This is the only area falling under the Integrated Tribal Development Project in the State.
4. Nilamboor:- The savage Chola naickans, known as 'the Cave Men of Kerala' live in the Nilamboor valley of Manjery Taluk in the District of



Malappuram. In his "Adivasis and Adivasi languages" (1994, Mal) K. Velappan testifies that 281 of these cave men subsist in 18 caves in the *Kurulaya Chunkathara* ranges of Nilamboor (Velappan 1994:19).

5. Parambikulam:- This area lies in the Chittoor Taluk of Palakkadu District. The presence of the Kadar here with Negro features has fascinated anthropologists like Ehren Hyles.
6. Idukki:- Adivasi communities consisting chiefly of *Malai Arayans, Uraly, Ulladan, Mannan, Muthuvan, Paliyar, Kurumbar* and *Pulayar* eke out their pittance in the Taluks of Thodupuzha, Devikulam, Udumpanchola of Idukki District and also the hilly terrain's of Melukavu and Mundakkayam in Kottayam District.
7. Thiruvananthapuram:- The area comprises the Nedumangadu and Neyattinkara Taluks of Thiruvananthapuram District and a few adjacent enclaves in the District of Pathanamthitta, where the Kanikars and Malavedans eke out their living.

### **3.3.1 Classification of Tribes in Kerala**

There is considerable controversy as to the number and particular names of the various tribal communities in the State of Kerala. Officially there are 35 tribal communities in the State (Census 1991). However, the anthropological studies conducted by authentic scholars enumerate differently. A.A. D. Luiz in his "Tribes of Kerala" gives us a list of 48 tribes of Kerala (Luiz 1962:4-5). The



Department of Harijan Welfare now redesignated as the Department of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes enumerated 41 tribes in the State in 1972. According to Nettoor P.Damodaran, author of *Adivasikalude Keralam* (Nettoor 1974:28) provides a list of 45 tribal groups. After scrutinising the list of A.A.D. Luiz and that of the Government, P. Somashekharan Nair, author of 'Paniyar' (Nair 1976:210) concludes that the number lies between 41 and 54. To quote the author himself, "On the basis of our examination, it is not incorrect to say that the total number of tribes in Kerala is in between 41 and 54, but this too is not hundred percent accurate. After an exhaustive analysis of the various lists of tribals prepared by different authors and institutions the Kerala Bhasha Institute enumerated 53 groups in the Book *Adivasikalum Adivasikalude Bhashakalum* (Velappan 1994:14).

The reason why we are not in a position to fix the precise number is the absence of consensus among scholars regarding the names and the basis of categorisation. While the anthropologists examine the general features, the folklorists study the folklore and some others depend on linguistics. Consequently they differ on their conclusions as much as on their approaches. On the other hand, the official enumerators are depending on the statistical data regarding the socio-economic aspects. Thus a comprehensive approach is needed to identify the accurate number of tribal groups as well as their distinctive characteristics. Because of the fact that the same tribe was known by different



names in different localities, the process of listing the tribes becomes extremely difficult. Moreover, certain communities which ought to have been included in the list of tribes have been left out altogether (Mathur 1977:42).

### **3.3.2 Common Features**

There are tribal populations in all the Districts of Kerala. Regional and racial differences can be traced among the different tribal groups. Tribal groups such as Kadar, Urali, Paniyan, Kanikar, Malamandaram, Malavedan and Vishawar exhibit characteristics of the Negroid race while the Kurichiar of Wayanadu and the Malai-Arayans of Kottayam are believed to belong to the Proto Austrolid race. Anthropological studies reveal striking similarities between the tribes of Kerala and the original inhabitants of Australia and Sri Lanka. There are not only racial differences among the various tribes in Kerala but also striking dissimilarities in their customs, beliefs, practices, diet, dress and habitation. At the same time one can easily identify certain common features in the culture and characteristics of the tribes in Kerala (Velappan 1994:19).

### **3.3.3 The Gothra Structure**

Tribes in Kerala lived as different '*Gothras*'. Each Gothra was called *Illom*. A tribe consisted of a number of *Illoms*. Each tribe had a *Totam* which might be any of the forces of nature or a tree, a fish, a bird or even any structure or instrument designed by man. Over the millennia, totamism has been a



universal phenomenon among the tribals, and the *adivasis* of Kerala also have been its votaries. According to Sangam literature, neem, courtyard, palm, basket, etc. were some of the symbols adopted by early tribal communities. To kill and eat the animals so considered was taboo. Each Gothra had a Chieftain, popularly known as *Muppan*. Wife of a headman is known as '*Muppathy*' among most of the groups. *Kanikaran* (Urali, Paniya, Ulladan), *Poramban* (Malai- Arayan) *Melvakku* (Muthuvan), *Moottuvan* (Kanikar), *Shami* (Mala- Vedan) and *Ooralu* (Malamkuravan) are some other designation for the headman (Luiz 1962:14). In all the tribes excepting the *Kurichiar* the Chieftaincy is hereditary. Among the *Kurichiar* of Wayanadu the chieftaincy is believed to be divinely ordained (Chacko 1994:2). Kinship defined the relationship and respective duties of every member of a Gothra. Descent was traced either through the father or through the mother. However, inheritance is popularly *Makkathayam*.<sup>2</sup> This has been the result of the incursion of external forces into their society, for, *Marumakkathayam*<sup>3</sup> was the rule among the primitive aborigines of Kerala. The Tribal people of modern days are also organised on the Gothra pattern. The *Gothra Maha Sabha*, the recently formed apex body of the various tribal groups in Kerala is an example. (The Hindu Jan 3 2002:2)

#### 3.3.4 Legends

Each tribe traces their origin either to some preternatural power or to some heroic personage. These legends usually proclaim the noble origin of the



particular tribe. The popular legends among the *Uralis*, *Karimpalans*, *Ulladans* and *Vishavans* trace their origin to some arcane curse that had visited upon their ancestors at a critical point of time in the past, while the legends among the *Kurichiars* and *Malai-Arayans* trace theirs to royal pedigree. It is to be noted that most of the stories are directly or indirectly related to the *Purans*. All the legends must have absorbed imaginative additions and alternations in the hands of succeeding generations (Velappan 1994:23).

### **3.3.5 Matriarchal Tradition**

Most of the tribal groups in Kerala followed the matriarchal social system. Agriculture was considered the responsibility of the women folk while animal husbandry was the chief male occupation. Matriarchal order prevailed among the *Kanikars*, *Mannans*, *Vedans*, *Muthuvans*, *Vishawans*, *Parayans*, *Kurichians*, *Vettuvans*, *Karimpalans* and *Kadars*. On the other hand, patriarchal order was followed by the *Kattunaikar* and *Urali* tribes. However, at present among all these tribes, who have adopted settled agriculture, though with very marginal land holdings, patriarchal descent is the order of the day. The Headman is selected on the basis of *Marumakkathayam* system among the *Adiyans*, *Karimpalans*, *Kundu Vadiyans*, *Kadars* and *Thachanadans*. The emphasis is here invariably on matriarchal Kinship. In certain communities there is a combination of both patriarchal and matriarchal systems. Interaction with non tribals in the recent past has resulted in drastic changes in their customs and practices. We can



safely conclude that the matriarchal system is gradually dying out in favour of the patriarchal order (Panoor 1995:98).

### 3.3.6 Dress, Food and Dwelling

Tribal huts are usually made of bamboo and the roof is thatched with dried grass or leaves. The walls are made of either mud or bamboo poles. Ventilation is facilitated by some holes on the walls. Different tribal groups call their huts by different names such as *Chala*, *Chitta*, *Pathi* and *Kudi*. The *Anamadams* set up on tree tops to protect themselves from elephants have now become a thing of the past.

As regards their food habits, most of the tribals are non – vegetarians. Rice is the staple food. They eat fish and meat of the hunted game. But the *Koragars*, *Malavedans*, *Nayadis*, *Karavazhi Pulayars* and *Kurumars* eat mutton and beef and hence they are considered to be low in status. Almost all the tribes present a pathetic and convincing picture of short supply of food and malnutrition. They drink tea and coffee but their favourite drink is toddy tapped from '*Azhappana*'. At present the *adivasis* are addicted to arrack, and this slavery is the chief impediment to their progress. Rules of hygiene are practically unknown to most of the groups.

In the early days they have scantily dressed often in leaves or the bark of trees. Nonetheless the young generation has joined the main stream in sartorial manners (Iyer 1937:123).



### 3.3.7 Marriage Customs

The early form of marriage was the system of abducting the girl. Certain customs among the *Muthuvans* and *Mannans* betray the vestiges of the old practice. On the day of marriage, accompanied by a group of coevals the bride hides herself in the nearby bushes and she is sought out and caught by the relatives of the bridegroom. To the accompaniment of nuptial music she is brought to the *mandapam* and is given away to the groom in a solemn ceremony. The whole thing is redolent of the romantic escapade of ancient times. Instead of the dowry system, a social menace of the Kerala society, theirs was the system of paying the *Pen Panam* (bride price) by the bridegroom to the father – in – law. The practice of *Penpanam* still exists among the *Mala-Vedan*, *Mala-Kuravar*, *Thanda pulayar*, *Mala Pulayar*, *Kurumabar*, *Erular*, *Cholanaickar* and a few others. Among the *Ararandans* and *Aazlars* this payment is to be repeated every year. It is obligatory on the part of the father to repay the *Penpanam* in case of a divorce initiated by the husband.

Service marriage was one of the ancient form of marriage in which the bridegroom had to pay the *penpanam* in the form of manual labour to the father-in-law. Only after paying satisfactory free service for a fixed period, say one or two years, he is allowed to marry the daughter. This form of marriage existed among the *Mannans*, *Malayars*, *Uralis*, *Paniyans*, *Paliyars*, *Kurumbars* and some others. Yet another form prevailed among the *Uralis* of Idukki in which there was



the exchange of girls. The bridegroom received a wife in exchange for his sister. Under this system those who had several sisters were so lucky to receive as many wives. But the young men with no sisters had perforce to remain chronic bachelors. This type of exchange marriage is believed to have existed among the tribes such as *Irular*, *Kurichiar*, *Malampandarma*, *Vishvar* and *Marady*. The most common custom was that of “*Murappennu*” (cross-cousin) in which the bridegroom finds his bride from among the daughters of his maternal uncle or paternal aunt (Luiz 1962:22-23).

The common marriage ceremony comprised ‘*Thalikettu*’ and ‘*Pudavakoda*’. The practice is followed even today and it is common to all in Kerala society. Yet, so many strange practices prevailed in the past. To cite but a few of them the *Karavazhi Pulayan* couple were seated on a mat. The bride and the groom placed a ball of rice in each others mouth. Among the *Paliyar*’s wedding was conducted at cock-crow, the small hours of the morning. The bride and the groom were to stand on a millstone and they betal and betal-nut seven times. The *Malayars* persisted in the practice of consanguineous marriages. The extra ordinary practice of the father marrying the daughter prevailed among the *Azhars*. All these strange customs are now things of the past.

### **3.3.8 Faith and Worship**

In ancient days animism and other primordial forms of worship constituted the core of tribal religion in Kerala. But a majority among them have



followed beliefs and practices similar to those of Hinduism and they are often designated as Hindus in Government records. However, a considerable section of *kanikkars*, *Paliyars* and *Malai Arayans* got converted to Christianity during the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and conversions are still going on in a lesser degree. The tribals other than those converted to Christianity follow a faith akin to Hinduism and animism. It is quite natural because the hallmark of Hinduism is that it lends itself to multifarious constructions and schools.

Ancestral worship is a common aspect of tribal religion. *Pithru Pooja* was a common religious ceremony. There are clear indications of the existence of Totemism, which formed the basis of many beliefs and practices. This enigmatic phenomenon created a belief among some tribes that their families and clans stood in a definite blood relationship to specific animals, vegetation and rocks. Totemic names for groups, and taboos prohibiting the destruction, killing and consuming of totems were common to all these ethnic groups (Velappan 1994:37).

Magic was widely practised. The people who practised both white and black magic were known in different names such as *Mantravadis*, *Plathis*, *Pujaris* and *Velichapads*. The tribals reposed greater trust in magicians than in physicians. 'Odi' means the name of the chief cult practised by *Nayadis*, *Ulladans*, *Paniyans* and others. This was a form of black magic. It was believed



that the *Odiyan* (magician) could make himself miserable and accomplish murder and other atrocious deeds to please his devotees.

Many taboos popular in the primitive society continue to be observed. These are prohibitions and restrictions that were forced how the primitives. The breach of a taboo invites due consequences. The important taboos are related to puberty, menstruation and child birth. There were interesting social taboos. It was objectionable for a man to talk to his nieces after they had attained puberty. A wife was forbidden to address her husband by name. Young *Adiyan* couples were expected to eat unnoticed by the elders (Baly 1995:52). Among *Mannans*, *Muthuvans*, *Paniyans*, *Uralis* and some others a women was bounded to keep away from the presence of her father-in-law. *Uralikurumans* and *Visavans* had *Chavadies* (Common halls) for young men, which combined the features of a dormitory, club and guest room, so that they might have no contact with females, and no knowledge of the sexual life within homes. There were taboos regulating diet, drinking, smoking and the use of vessels. Many considered that violation of social taboos bring about a decline in the standard of morality invide the wrath of the Gods. Even now the incidents of suicide among the tribes are few.

### **3.4 Initiatives of Tribal Development**

The problem of tribal development has reached a critical stage and has assumed an added significance in the context of the high priority accorded to social justice in the new planning efforts. The Indian Constitution enjoins on the



State the responsibility to promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the Scheduled Tribes, and to protect them from social injustice and from all forms of exploitation. Their development is a special responsibility of the President; the Governors are responsible for reviewing the administration and development of tribal areas and for submitting periodical reports to the President. The successive plans have been laying considerable emphasis on special development programmes for the tribals; the broad objective of planning has been defined as rapid economic development accompanied by continuous progress towards equality and social justice (Govt. of India 1978:37). The physical development of an area in itself will not be sufficient; it must go hand in hand with the development of the people of the region. No section of any community should be allowed to be exposed to exploitation and the benefits of development must diffuse as widely as possible. Tribal development can be defined, therefore, as social and economic development of the tribal people through phased and time-bound integrated area development through the implementation of programmes suiting to the genius and the economic condition of the people, ensuring progressive elimination of all forms of exploitation and accelerating the process at work towards equality and justice (Govt. of India 1978:40).



### 3.4.1 Ten Commandments for Tribal Development

What the tribals experience now was loss of their former status of tribals by being caged in schedule and fed with a dash of modern education and technology which do not help them improve their life and preserve their culture. If the government had a sympathetic tribal policy, their lands would have stayed with them and they would have registered real progress. If the successive governments had followed the principles of tribal policy enunciated by Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru strictly, the tribals would have realized their *Shangrila*, the hidden paradise, by now (Singh 1972:267).

Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, laid down '10 commandments' as guidelines for the governments to follow for the uplift of the tribals.<sup>1</sup>

They are:

1. The foremost task is to achieve the psychological integration of the tribal people.
2. Full protection should be accorded to the rights of the tribal people to their lands, forests, and all other aspects of their culture.
3. Nothing should be forcibly imposed on the tribal people.
4. Forced de-tribalisation or assimilation of tribal people by non-tribal societies should be resisted.
5. Tribal languages should be developed and allowed to flourish.



6. Development plans for the tribal areas should be drawn up with particular emphasis on roads and communication.
7. Anthropologists are to be appointed as advisors for the administration of tribal areas.
8. We should train and build up a team of their own people to do the work of administration and development. Some technical personnel from outside will no doubt be needed, especially in the beginning. But we should avoid bringing too many outsiders into the tribal territory.
9. We should not over-administer these areas or overwhelm them with a multiplicity of schemes. We should rather work through and not in rivalry to, their own social and cultural institutions.
10. We should judge results not by statistics or amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved. (The Hindu Sept 2, 2001:5)

### **3.5 Tribal Revolts**

One interesting feature of tribal history in India is the large number of revolts and uprisings that have taken place as a result of the tribal peoples' resolve to resist injustice, oppression and exploitation. There have been as many as 68 uprisings by tribal communities all over the country, from as far back as the mid-eighteenth century when the British were first consolidating their presence in India (Verma 1995:201). And, even after Independence there have been over a



dozen major uprisings since 1956. The most recent ones are the continuing Naga insurgency, the Bodo problem in Assam (Verma 1995:204) and the tribal violence in Tripura. Several sociological problems have been exploited by politicians to give them political overtones. It is evident that the great Indian tribal communities are being exploited even today, by a different set of people and with a different kind of tool. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the great Indian statesman and philosopher, one-time President of the Republic, said: "We must approach the tribal people with affection and friendship and not with condescension or contempt" (Verma 1995:206). That, in the ultimate analysis, holds good even today. We should not deny a chance even to hostile and misguided tribals.

### **3.6 Tribal Social Movements**

Social movements among the tribes aim at collective action to alter, reconstitute, reinterpret, restore, and protect their social structure, with the additional objective of improving their social, cultural, economic and political conditions. Hinduism, Christianity, British rule, modern education and post Independence legislations have generated a level of consciousness among the tribals, which has in turn act in motion several agitations. There have been movements to assert their tribal identity and political solidarity. Ecological-cultural isolation, economic backwardness and a feeling of frustration have been responsible for these movements. Those tribals who are either too isolated from



or too integrated with the Hindu society are not involved in these socio-cultural movements. The Unnati Samaj, an organisation established in 1912 for socio-cultural reforms, and the Adivasi Mahasabha established in 1938, aimed at revivalism in Bihar. The Jharkhand movement in 1950 was, however, started to fight against land alienation, exploitation and for political solidarity among the tribes of Bihar and the adjoining States of Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. This movement ultimately made a demand for and succeeded in the formation of a separate State for the adivasis of these areas (Sharma 1988:93).

The movement led by Ayyankali during the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the recent *Adivasi-gothra Mahasabha* under the leadership of C.K.Janu in Kerala deserve special mention in this regard.

The questions which still remain unsatisfactorily answered are: (1) Why have the tribals been pressing for cultural revivalism, autonomy and restoration of aboriginality? (2) Why have some tribes been making efforts for cultural, ethnic, and linguistic revivalism? (3) Why have some others been raising a hue and cry for the formation of a Separate State, and for a greater share in education institutions, jobs and other opportunities? Exploitation of the *adivasis* by outsiders, and the dominant segments among the tribals themselves has now come to light.



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### 3.7 National Commission for SCs and STs

By virtue of the Constitution (Sixty-fifth Amendment) Act, 1990, the Special Officer's post under Article 338 of the Constitution has been substituted by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Govt. of India 2000:338). It shall consist of a Chairperson, A Vice-Chairperson and five other members to be appointed by the President. It shall be the duty of the Commission (a) to investigate and monitor all matters relating to the safeguards provided for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution or under any other law; (b) to enquire into specific complaints with respect to the deprivation of rights and safeguards of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes; (c) to participate and advise in the planning process of socio-economic development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; and to evaluate the progress of their development under the Union and any State; (d) to present to the President annually, and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, reports upon the working of these safeguards; (e) to make in such reports recommendations as to the measures that should be taken by the Union or any State for the effective implementation of those safeguards and other measures for the protection, welfare and socio-economic development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; and (f) to discharge such other functions in relation to the protection, welfare and development and advancement of the Scheduled Castes and



Scheduled Tribes as the President may, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament, by rule, specify (Govt. of India 2000:338).

The President shall cause all such reports to be laid before each House of Parliament along with a memorandum explaining the action taken or proposed to be taken on the recommendations relating to the Union and the reasons for the non-acceptances, if any, on any of such recommendations. Where any such report or any part thereof, relates to any matter with which any State government is concerned, a copy of such report shall be forwarded to the Governor of the State, who shall cause it to be laid before the legislature of the State.

The Commission shall while investigating and monitoring any matter relating to safeguards provided for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution or any other law for the time being in force or under any order of the government have all powers of a civil court trying a suit and in particular in respect of the following matters, namely: (a) summoning and enforcing attendance of any person from any part of India and examining him on oath; (b) requiring the discovery and production of any document; (c) receiving evidence of affidavits; (d) requisitioning any public record or copy thereof from any court or office; (e) issuing commission for the examination of witnesses and documents; and (f) any other matter which the President may by rule, determine. The Union and every State government shall consult the Commission on all



major policy matters affecting Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. (Govt. of India 2002:425)

### **3.8 Tribal Development Programmes**

The all India literacy rate of scheduled tribes as per 1991 Census was 29.60 against the national average of 52.21 per cent. The gap between percentage of literacy of tribal women and women in general is still wider. It is only 18.19 per cent against 39.29 per cent of general female literacy in the country. The Tribal Sub-Plan (TSP) strategy which was evolved during the Fifth Five Year Plan is based on the twin objectives, (1) protection of the interests of the tribals through legal and administrative support; and (2) promotion of development efforts through plan schemes to raise their level of living. At the outset the TSP scheme launched 178 ITPS covering 65.25% of the Scheduled Tribes population. There are now 194 integrated tribal development projects (ITDPs). During the Sixth Plan, pockets outside ITDP areas, having a total population of 10,000 with at least 5,000 scheduled tribes were covered under the Tribal Sub-Plan under Modified Area Development Approach (MADA). So far, 252 MADA pockets have been identified in the country. In addition, 78 clusters with a total population of 5,000 of which 50 per cent are Scheduled Tribes have been identified (Govt. of India 2002:426).



### **3.8.1 Scheme for Primitive Tribal Groups**

There are 75 Scheduled Tribes which have been identified and placed in the list of Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs). These tribes were identified in 15 States/ Union Territories on the basis of stagnant or diminishing population, very low level of literacy, i.e. below two per cent and practising shifting cultivation, collecting of minor forest products for livelihood, etc. In the Ninth Plan period a separate plan of action for the development of PTGs has been formulated and a sum of Rs.2 crores has been sanctioned under the scheme in the last two years (Govt. of India 2002:428).

### **3.8.2 Special Central Assistance**

Special Central Assistance (SCA) is given to States/ Union Territories as part of a Tribal Sub-Plan strategy. During 1996-97, the entire budget provision of Rs.330 crore was released. Grants are given to the State governments under the First Proviso to Article 275(1) of the Constitution to finance schemes to promote the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and to raise the administration of tribal areas at par with other areas in the State. The amount of Rs.100.00 crore was provided as grants to States/Union Territories during 1999-2000. (Govt. of India 2002:428)



### **3.8.3 Girls'/Boys' Hostels for Scheduled Tribes**

Girls' hostels scheme was started in Third Five year Plan with an aim to provide residential facilities to tribal girls in pursuit of education. Central assistance of 50 per cent of cost of construction to the States and cent per cent to the Union Territories is provided under the scheme. Against the budget provision of Rs.3.50 crore for 1996-97 Rs.2.26 crore was released for construction of 59 hostels. During 1999-2000 an amount of Rs.393 lakhs has been released for 29 hostels (Govt. of India 2002:428).

Boys' hostels scheme was started in 1989-90 on the same pattern of girls' hostels' scheme. Against the budget provision of Rs 3.50 crore for 1996-97, an amount of Rs.3.19 crore was released to States/ Union Territories for the construction of 68 hostels. During 1999-2000 an amount of Rs.698 lakhs has been released for the construction of 77 hostels (Govt. of India 2002:428).

### **3.8.4 Ashram Schools in TSP Area**

This Centrally- sponsored scheme was started in 1990-91 to provide Central assistance to the States and the Union Territories on 50 per cent sharing basis and cent per cent, respectively. During 1996-97 against the budget provision of Rs. three crore, an amount of Rs.3.87 crore was released for the construction/ extension of 15 Ashram Schools. During 1999-2000 an amount of



Rs.532.28 lakhs has been released for the construction of 36 *Ashram* Schools (Govt. of India 2002:428).

### **3.8.5 Vocational Training in Tribal Areas**

This is a scheme under the Central sector which was started in 1992-93, aimed at giving employment opportunities to the unemployed tribal youth to wean them away from disruptive activities. The Scheme envisages setting up of Vocational Training Centres (VTCs). During 1996-97, against the budget provision of Rs.3 crore an amount of Rs 2.98 crore was released for setting up of 13 VTCs. During 1999-2000 an amount of Rs.375 lakhs has been released for 19 Vocational Training Centres (Govt. of India 2002:428).

### **3.8.6 Education of ST Girls in Low Literacy Pockets**

This Scheme launched in 1993-94 aimed at raising the literacy level of tribal females in 48 identified tribal districts in eight States with a female literacy ratio below two per cent. The Scheme envisages residential educational complex upto the fifth standard. The scheme is implemented by voluntary organisations. During 1996-97, an amount of Rs.1.20 crore against the budget provision of rupees two crore was released for setting up of five new complexes and for the improvement of 33 existing complexes. During 1999-2000 an amount of Rs.183.76 lakhs has been released for 75 complexes (Govt. of India 2002:428).



### **3.8.7 Tribal Research Institutes**

Fourteen Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs) have been set up by the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Manipur and Tripura. All these institutes, except the ones in Manipur and Uttar Pradesh, have museums, exhibiting tribal articles. These institutes are being used by the States and the Central Government for research, education, collection of data, training, seminars/workshops, professional input in the preparation of tribal sub-plans, publication of tribal literature, codification of tribal customary laws, etc. During 1996-97 the entire budget provision of Rs.1.50 crore was released. During 1999-2000 an amount of Rs.105.5 lakhs has been released to the State governments (Govt. of India 2002:429).

### **3.8.8 Tribal cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India**

In order to save tribals from exploitation by private traders and to offer them remunerative prices for their minor forest produce and surplus agricultural products, the Government has set up the Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) in August, 1987 which is registered under the Multi State Co-operative Societies Act, 1984. It started functioning effectively from April 1988. TRIFED dealt in 12 items in 1988-89. For almost all the items the price offered to tribals was fair. In subsequent years the Federation expanded its activities to cover a number of new items. It has been



appointed as a channelising agency for export of gum Karaya and Niger seeds. The authorised share capital of TRIFED is Rs.100 crore and the paid up capital has upto 99.98 Rs 70.73 crore in 99-2000. The Government's investment in the share capital of TRIFED at the end of 1999-2000 stood at Rs.99.75 crore and the balance of Rs.0.25 crore has been contributed by other share holders.

### **3.8.9 Scheme of Village Grain Banks**

As part of the Government's efforts to prevent deaths of children in remote and backward tribal areas, mal-nutrition a scheme of Village Grain Banks was launched during 1996-97. A one time grant towards purchase of grains, at the rate of one quintal per family of tribals or Scheduled Castes living below poverty line in such areas, storage facilities for the grain and purchase of weights and scales will be provided by the Ministry of Welfare through TRIFED as the channelising agency. The Bank will be managed by a village committee elected by the beneficiaries themselves, who as members of the bank, can borrow grain from the Grain Banks at times of scarcity. A provision of Rs.1.50 crore was made for the Scheme during 1996-97 for 231 Grain Banks. The allotment for 1997-98 was Rs.2 crore for an additional 312 Grain Banks. An amount of Rs.1 crore has been released during 1999-2000, whereas Rs.2 crore has been earmarked for 2000-01.



### **3.8.10 Grant-In-Aid for Minor Forest Produce Operations**

This is a Central Sector Scheme with provisions for a 100 per cent grant to the State Tribal Development Cooperative Corporations (TDCCs), Forest Development Corporations (FDCs), and Minor Forest Produce (Trading and Development) Federations (MFPTDFs) for taking up the minor forest produce MFP operation. Under this scheme grants can be utilised by the states for (1) strengthening the share capital base of TDCCs, FDCs and MFPTDFs for increasing the MFPs presently handled; (2) construction of scientific warehouses; (3) establishing processing industrial units for value addition to MFP items; and (4) research and development activities by the corporations. During 1996-97, the budget provision of Rs four crore was disbursed to five state corporations. In the financial year 1997-98, the budget provision was Rs.10 crore and in 1999-2000, Rs. 13crore (Govt. of India 2002:429).

### **3.8.11 Aid to voluntary organizations working for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes**

The Ministry gives grant in aid to voluntary organizations working for the welfare of Scheduled Tribes for projects such as residential schools, hostels, medical units, computer training units, short hand and typing training units, libraries and audio-visual units. The grant is generally 90 to 98 percent of the approved total cost of the project and the balance of 10 percent is borne by the



guarantee organizations. During 1999-2000 amount of Rs.14.74 crore was released to 137 NVOs.

### **3.9 Problems and Challenges**

G.S.Ghurye, in his book “The Scheduled Tribes” (1963), lists a number of socio-cultural and economic problems of the tribal people of India. Some tribes represent aristocracy, landlords and noblemen; others consist of the Hinduised sections of tribesmen; and, thirdly, there are tribes and tribal segments that are still isolated from the non-tribal population (Ghurye 1963:181)

Since tribal people are at different social, political, economic and ecological levels, their problems also differ in degree. These differences can be identified in the diversity of their life style as of hill tribes and plainsmen; as those engaged in forest based economic pursuits and the ones who are employed as settled agriculturists; those who are Hinduised or converted to Christianity and those who are adhering to an unadulterated tribal way of life. Despite these distinctions some common problems of the tribal people as a whole are: (1) poverty and exploitation, (2) economic and technological backwardness, (3) socio-cultural handicaps, and (4) problems related to their assimilation with the non-tribal population (Sharma 1988:9)

S.C. Dube’s five-fold classification of the Indian tribes provides a more clear picture of the diversity in the tribal structure as well as the problem they



face (1) aboriginal living in seclusion; (2) tribal groups having an association with the neighbouring non-tribal society while retaining their distinctiveness; (3) tribals living in villages along with caste groups, sects and religious groups and yet retaining their identity; (4) tribals who have been degraded to the status of untouchables, and (5) tribals who enjoy a high social, economic and political status. Such a classification is based primarily on the nature of cultural contact of the tribals with the non-tribals. The U.N. Dhebar Commission (1961) recommended that an area could be declared "tribal" where more than 50 per cent of the people were tribals. Economic criteria have also been suggested, such as dependence upon forests for food, primitive agriculture and forests both as sources of livelihood and occupations, particularly employment in forest industries.

The tribal people had a strong sense of community life before the British rulers and Hindu zamindars and moneylenders intruded into their lives. Exchange of goods and transactions at weekly markets and fairs were the basic mode of economic intercourse. However, the British took over the forests on which the tribal people depended for their livelihood. The moneylenders brought them under their control by extending loans, at exorbitant interest rates and then taking possession their lands on mortgage alienating them from the lands they cultivated. Indebtedness led to exploitation and pauperisation of the tribal people. Hinduisation has also contributed to indebtedness and exploitation; as the tribals



adopted Hindu ways of life and rituals they were forced to spend on rituals as the Hindus did. Tribals occupied a very low rank in the Hindu society even after they embraced Hinduism.

K.S. Singh points out that agrarian issues are basic to tribal development in India. The tribal agrarian problem cannot be treated in isolation (Singh 1972:186) Tribal people have to be treated along with other weaker sections of the Indian society. Keeping the situation of Bihar in view Singh observes that the concept of aliens (diku) is crucial to the understanding of an agrarian situation where non-tribals outnumber the tribals. The class of moneylenders has arisen due to several contributive factors, including the agrarian legislation. Alienation of land has resulted from tribal backwardness and indebtedness. Integrated Tribal Development Blocks have not produced the desired results in the tribal areas. Famine and drought have become recurrent curses. The tribal sub-plan has been introduced to combat problems of famine, drought, illiteracy, indebtedness, exploitation, etc. by taking up special schemes to help the tribals meet emergencies arising from unpredictable, indervent weather conditions.

Per capita landholding has decreased among the tribals owing to three reasons: (1) alienation of land due to indebtedness and socio-economic backwardness; (2) increase in tribal population; (3) takeover of tribal lands by the government for establishing industries. Tribal land were alienated long before legislations were passed by the State governments. Today even after such



legislations the process of the tribal elite alienating the tribals from their lands continues. The tribals have been displaced in parts of Bihar, Orissa and some other States by the taking over their lands for establishing industries. But they have not been provided with alternative avenues of employment. The compensation paid to them for their land was quickly spent by them without making any investment in productive and remunerative enterprises.

The dilemma for the tribal people in India is the choice between two bitter alternatives isolation and association. Isolation keeps the tribals away from forces of change and development; and contact with the outer world creates problems of adjustment, cultural shock and the disintegration of tribal social organisation and community living. The intrusion of outsiders into tribal life, for example, has adversely affected the institutions in traditional such as weekly markets, dormitory and reciprocal relationships. The institutions of untouchability- pollution purity and social status have made inroads into tribal life. The tribals to a large extent have become a "caste" or "pseudo-caste" by this process of cultural contact. Ignorance, illiteracy, superstition and poverty are the major problems of the tribal people of the Indian Sub-continent.



## **Endnotes**

1. In a memorandum submitted by P.R.G Mathur and some other social activists to the Chief minister of Kerala on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2001 requested the Government to look into the suggestions put forward by Late Jawaharlal Nehru
2. Succession through the male line, Patrilineal rule.
3. Matrilineal succession and inheritance.



## **CHAPTER IV**

# **MALAI ARAYANS OF KERALA : A DISTINCT SOCIAL CATEGORY**



#### **4.1 A Brief Profile of the Malai Arayan Population in Kerala**

The Malai Arayans inhabit mainly the Kottayam, Idukki and Pathanamthitta Districts of Kerala. They are included in the list of Scheduled Tribes officially accepted as such both by the Union and Kerala Governments. Since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a great deal of misinformation has been generated about the origin and socio-economic institution of the Malai Arayan. Samuel Mateer in an extensive survey found that the aggregate Malai Arayan population comprising their different annual denominations numbered 11918 in the year 1883 (Mateer 1883:27).

He also stated that there were about 2000 thriving Arayans belonging to Christian faith in the North of Mundakkayam. The number of Malai Arayans shown in a memorandum submitted by European Missionaries to the Government of Travancore in 1887 requesting for the abolition of slavery was 16224. In the 1931 census they were classified for the first time as 2807 Hindus, 120 Tribals and 225 Christians (Iyer 1937: 162). According to the 1981 census 53.34 percent of the Malai Arayans were Hindus and 46.06 percent Christians. The census data reveal that the number in the Christian segment increased from 2.93 percent in 1961 to 32.76 percent in 1971 and further to 46.66 percent in 1981.



**Table 4.1**

**Malai Arayan Population Through the Census**

Year	Population
1881	4702
1891	4809
1901	4513
1911	2612
1921	2858
1931	3182
1951	2739
1961	4528
1971	4194
1981	24499
1991	24949
2001	17996

*Source : Census reports Govt. of India.*

As there is no separate census available in regard to either Christian or Hindu Malai Arayans or even the entire community of Malai Arayans of Kottayam District one has to be contented with the total figure of the Scheduled Tribes in the District as per the census report of 2001, that is 17996. As the official list of the Scheduled Tribes of the Government of India species that the Malai Arayans of the erstwhile Kottayam District and the *Kanikars* of Southern Kerala are two distinct entities, the same approach is followed in this study as well. Although L.A.K.Iyer emphasized the difference between the Malai Arayans of *Thodupuzha* and *Manimala* of the former Kottayam division, on the ground of differences in their life style, such over-wrought distinctions do not seem relevant as they are not now prevalent. However, the dichotomy of the Malai Arayans of



today is based on their religions - the Christian Malai Arayans and the Hindu Malai Arayans. The former, proselytized by the Anglican Missionaries in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, are concentrated in the *Melukavu* area of the District of Kottayam and the latter in the tribal settlements of Kottayam and Idukki Districts.

#### **4.1.1 Among the Numerous Tribal Groups the Malai Arayans Stand Out**

The word *Malai Arayan* means 'Monarch of the Hills' *Arayan* is a transformation of *Arachan*, King. Incidentally, the Dravidian word '*Arachan*' is likely to be cognate with the Greek word '*Arche*' meaning 'chief', which occurs in expressions like Arch Bishop, monarchy, oligarchy etc. The term literally means the one who rules and it throws some light on the sovereignty the Malai Arayans had over the hills. It may be noted that till recently the *Uralis* and *Ulladans* addressed a *Malai Arayan* as '*Vazhiyan*' or '*Vazhathiyaramma*'. These satisfactions seem to corroborate the theory of the rapid status once enjoyed by the Malai Arayans. According to R.Collins the author of '*Ways of Thinking of Eastern People*' (Collins 1989:18) '*Arayan*' means 'one who is faithful to the religion of the clan'. The history of how the *Malai Arayans* came to occupy their present habitat is buried in the mist of time. We may just as well quote here from the holograph of a pamphlet entitled "*The Hill Arayans*", authored by Henry Baker (Jr.) in 1858 and published in 1862. It carries the following account:



An old *Arayan* very rich, who used to call himself Mulla Nair (from mere pride as I conceive), and had taken to read the *Ramayanam*, told me that Bali, the brother of Hanuman, went out hunting with his servants. Being thirsty and wearied, he sat on a rock while his men searched for water. His girdle string with bells broke as he turned on the rock to avoid heat, and a bell rolling down fell close to a little rill of water, which had been overlooked by his attendant monkeys. Bali drank and being refreshed, uttered a mantrum by which all the bells became men. He called them *Arayan*, as they had sprung from his waist, the *arai*, told them to inhabit the precipitous rocks and gave them for food the attendants. .... So the low country people called the Arayans '*Korungu theeni*' (monkey eater) and '*Arabunthi*' that is half witted. But none of the people of his village would allow his pedigree. (Baker 186:11)

As attested by Mateer (1883) the Malai Arayans occupied a pre-eminent position among the tribals of Kerala. They had been traditional agriculturists, each family holding hundreds of acres of land. Their harvest festivals often lasted for six months, commencing from the month of *Chingam*. At a time when a majority of the caste Hindus and their Christian counterparts dwelled in mud huts, the Malai Arayans enjoyed the comfort of wooden houses. Matter (1883:73) points out that the caste Hindus placed the Malai Arayans on a par with the Jewish Diaspora in Kerala. That each Malai Arayan couple had a separate nuptial chamber must be a surprise to us. They never stooped to be agricultural labourers. They never carried any load on the head. The load was either basket borne or bag



borne. There were no beggars among the Malai Arayans. They hunted with the muzzleloader. Magic fascinated them. That they never killed the ant testifies their environmental consciousness. Mateer points out that the caste Hindus placed the Malai Arayans on a par with the Jewish Diaspora in Kerala.

#### 4.2 Legends

There are many interesting myth and legends that have received wide currency among the tribal people of Kerala and more particularly among the Malai Arayans on which this research work has placed considerable emphasis. An investigation of these stories is attempted herein with the honest belief that they can be of immense help in explaining away some of the anomalies found in the life styles and character traits of various segments of the same community living in different parts of the state, often of the same district. Adequate caution is taken and attention paid to give allowance to possible aggrandizements and exaggerations that go with such notions as racial superiority and cultural heritage. All the same, focus directed so as to bringout corroborative elements in them that might help to prove or disprove a certain hypothesis.

L.A.K. Ayer (1937) refers to a legend in vogue among the *Malai Arayans* they often narrated with pride to establish that they are the progeny of Rishi Gauthama and Ahalya. "Ahalya was transformed into a rock by the curse of Gautama on account of her being found with Indra in a suspicious situation. When Rama trod over the rock on his way to Mithila, she was freed of the curse,



regained former form and reunited with assumed her former Gautama. The Malai Arayans are claimed to have been born of them after this incident. They now style themselves as '*Karinkal Brahmins*.' They claim superiority over all the other tribes in social status (Iyer 1937:162),

Another Legend tells us that Malai Arayans are the people of '*Agastya Muni*'. Lord Siva made a man and a woman. Sage Agastya accidentally saw them in the forest, cutting a tree. Being provoked, he cursed them and ate them up. Lord Siva enquired of the whereabouts of his children to Sage Agastya. Thereupon the sage re-created them from fire. The Arayans are the descendents of this couple. They had four sons. At the time of his death the sage called all the four together and told them to ask of him any boons they wanted. The elder son requested for the gift to live in the forest gathering honey; the second to live by the sea catching fish, the third son wanted to be an expert potter and the younger one requested to be allowed to live as a plainsman. This has led to the origin of four groups the *Malai Arayans* (Lord of the Hills), the *Katarayan* (Lord of the Sea), the *Ottarayan* (The Palanquin bearers of the Maharaja) and The *Natarayan* (The Maharaja) (Iyer 1937:163). Though this story is apocryphal, the weight of the tradition is in favour of the belief that sage *Agastya* moved on to the South along with the *Aruvalar* tribes, who are believed to have been the ancestors of *Kurumbas* (The Kurumbas are, according to Dr. A.H.Keane, the remnants of a great wide spread people, who erected dolmens and they form one of the Pre



Dravidian tribes of South India) (Iyer 1937:163). The Malai Arayans avowed ancestry to Sage *Agastya* is borne out by the fact that the Malai Arayans also used to set up rocky constructions commemorating the dead as the descendants of the sage used to do.

The Malai Arayans of *Erumapra* have yet another story to tell. During the reign of Reveendra Varma, King of *Dekshinapatha* (Kollam) in the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century (Kollam Era) his brother Viran Aditya Varma visited the court of the Raja of *Vadakkumkoor*. When Aditya Varma went to the swimming pool in the courtyard it was found polluted. He went to another swimming pool belonging to the *Mundackal Brahmin Tharavad*. While he was taking bath, a long hair curled round his leg. The length of the hair attracted his attention and he learnt that it was of *Unnineeli* and met her. The handsome Prince fell head over heels in love with her. But her father wanted to give her in marriage to the young heir of *Vadakkumkoor*. Adityavarma made clandestine visits to *Unnineeli*. One night he was caught from the bed room of *Unnineeli* and was immersed in hot water. In retaliation Adityavarma attacked the *Vadakkumkoor Raja*. The members of the *Mundakal Tharavad* fled to the nearby forest. The present Arayans are claimed to be the descendents of this group.<sup>1</sup> '*Unnineeli Sandesam*' (1350-1365) is said to be a celebration of their surreptitious romance. An analogous legend in vogue among the Kurumas of *Vayanadu* also.



The Malai Arayans of *Koottickal* were the first tribals to be converted to Christianity by the legendary English missionary Henry Backer (Jr.). The name *Koottickal* means the meeting point of the three villages of *Kondoor*, *Kanjirappally* and *Peruvanthanam* and the three Taluks of *Meenachil*, *Kanjirappally* and *Peerumedu*. The *Karikulam* temple at *Koottickal* had been a major pilgrim centre in those days. 'The *Coinmars*' constituted the majority of the population and they were the land owners. The Arayans claimed that they were Brahmins (*Karinkal Brahmins-Karinkal* means granite, hard blackish rock) and they performed religious ceremonies in the temple (*Koottickal Sabha Charitram* 1961:3). In the History of the *Koottikal* Church we need yet another study.

The royal households of various principalities used to visit the *Karikulam* temple annually. The queen and other dignitaries of the *Thekkumkoor* kingdom were once ill-treated by the '*Coinmars*' of *Koottickal*. In order to avenge the humiliation the Raja of *Thekkumkoor* mounted an all-out assault on '*Coinmars*' and decimated them. The Arayans were spared by the Raja because of their sacerdotal position. However, terror stricken, they fled to the back – woods, as they were afraid of living in the place of such a gory carnage (*Koottickal Sabha Charitram* 1961:4). Having lived a life of total isolation among the far-flung hills, in course of time they came to be styled as Malai Arayans. R.Collins is of the view that 'Arayan' means 'one who is loyal to the religion of one's clan' may



have been inspired by the fact that they were a priestly class (Collins 1879:14). However, the legend holds no water, as the Malai Arayans were not confined to Koottickal only. According to another legend the *Katararayans* and Malai Arayans are the descendents of two Brahmin sisters, who fled to the jungle in the wake of the invasion of their Kingdom in North Malabar by some formidable enemy.

All the legends trace their origin to royal romance. That may be part of claiming superiority in forests. But the most significant thing is that all these legends are directly or indirectly related to the stories of the Ramayana and the *Mahabharatha*. L.A.K. Iyer opines that all the weight of retired points to migration from the North to the South. It is said that Sage *Agastya* repaired to *Dwaraka* (Tamil *Tuvarupati*) and then taking with him eighteen families of 'Vels' or 'Velars' and others, moved south ward with the *Aruvalar* tribes. In the South *Agastya* had the forests cleared and all the people he had brought with him settled there. This migration may have taken place about 1075 BC. The *Kanikars* of Thiruvananthapuram (Kanikars and Malai Arayans are believed to be the same tribe) believe in the story of a survey conducted and allotment of land made by *Dhanusha Kodi* and *Korutha*, their ancestors, who measured the land with a 'Kanipattu' of 3 feet long. Accordingly 72 'Kanipattu' area (north of *Pathinam Oramala*) was granted to the eldest one, 32 *Kanipattu* area (*Chandalketu Bhagam*) to the second and 22 *Kanipattu* area (*Kizhakkan mala*) to the youngest



one. The adventures of *Agastya* are relevant only to the extent that he is said to have played a conspicuous part in reclaiming the primeval forests in Southern India, making them fit for human habitation. Like the *Kurumbas*, the Malai Arayans were in the habit of erecting dolmens. These builders are said to be pre-Dravidian in origin. (Iyer 1937:165)

### 4.3 The Migration Theory

M.K. Narayanan, who codified a folk song of the Malai Arayans, holds that they originally belonged to Madurai. They were forced by political compulsion to migrate to the forests of Kerala towards the close of the 12<sup>th</sup> century A.D. According to the '*Nattu Pattu*' (folk song) the Arayans were the rulers of the fortified city of Madurai. The songs mention of three 'rulers': Adityan Arayan, who was in charge of *Alunthara Kotta*; Seethankan Arayan in charge of *Chennaloor Kotta*, and Veerappan Arayan in charge of *Veeranelly Kotta*. They were the High Priests of the Madurai Meenakshi Temple. Having been vanquished by a Chola King, the *Pandiyans* under their Rajah fled westward, carrying the idol of Goddess Meenakshi. While enjoying a brief rest and repast on the bank of the *Kanchiar*, they were attacked by a gang of bandits of the Marawa Tribe. Although the *Marawans* were defeated in the battle, some controversy that developed among the victorious *Pandiyans*, led to a split resulting in the emergence of three groups: the first led by the Minister of the Rajah; the second under the leadership of Carrier of the idol of the goddess; and



the third which comprised the King and his cohorts. The followers of the Minister came to be known as *Mannans*, cognate with the word '*Manthri*' (Minister). The second fraction was styled '*Muthuwan*', as their leader carried the idol on his back ('*Muthuku*'). The Raja and his associates and their progeny came to be known as Arayan, related to the word '*Arachan*', meaning King.<sup>2</sup>

The rationale of this conclusion is very weak. First of all, the period of migration as per the folk-song does not accord with the claim of the Malai Arayans that they are the Adivasis of Kerala. There is a marked similarity between the claim of the *Poonjar Koikal* that their ancestors had fled from Madurai with the idol of goddess Meenakshi under *Manava Vikraman* and settled at Poonjar, which is buttressed by historical documents and the legend prevalent among the Arayans as expressed in the folk-song. The incongruity has in the fact that the name of the King in the Arayan folk song is Adithya, while that of the founder of the Poonjar Kingdom is *Manava Vikraman*. It is possible that in those good old days the same ruler was known by different names. The moot point is how it was that the Meenakshi Temple came to be erected at Poonjar, while the Arayans settled on the remote hill tops, despite their claim to royalty. Nonetheless, the fact that the *Mannans and Muthuwans*, who are placed in the list of the Scheduled Tribes along with the Malai Arayans, call the latter respectfully *Vazhiyars and Vazhathiyars*, meaning administrators and administrative respectively, remains to be explained. It is again interesting to note that there is a



striking similarity even in the names of the Chieftains and the Illoms of Arayans and those of the Kanikars of Thiruvananthapuram District, who also claim to have migrated from Madurai, according to their *chattu song* (Iyer 1937:226). One is amazed by the reference in the above '*Nattu Pattu*' to their migration from North India (Harappa and Mohenjedar?) to the South in pre-historic times. The fact could be that the Malai Arayans might have been the vassals of the Pandiyan Kings from very early days, who probably had independent chieftainship of the clan. Even now the term denoting ruler is associated with the designation of high ranking officials as well as ministers, but it does not mean that they are sovereign rulers. Moreover, migration is a long historical process. The one mentioned in the '*Nattu Pattu*' might be just a part of the complex process. That the collector of a District or the President of a Panchayat is sometimes styled as the administrator or ruler, does not mean that the person enjoys sovereign power.

#### **4.3.1 The Aryan Origin Theory**

During his search to trace the origin of this tribal community. The researcher came into contact with an elderly Christian Malai Arayan, Shri.I.C.Chacko, an octogenarian who had been an active member of the Communist Party of India during 1950-60 and carried out an extensive study of the origin and historical evolution of the Malai Arayans. He is in possession of a good number of manuscripts and pamphlets dating back to the days of Henry Baker. According to him the Malai Arayans are of Aryan origin. He made an



impassioned defence of his hypothesis when the researcher met him at his residence at *Kulatikandam* three kilometers away from *Melukavemattom*. He traces the history of Malai Arayans to the early Buddha Vihars of Kerala which were destroyed during the Hindu revival in the days Sankara in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Aryan origin theory holds that the Malai Arayans are the descendants of Arya Brahmins who fled to the jungles in two phases due to several reasons. The first wave of migration occurred in 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. It was a period marked by the Bhakthi Movement, a byproduct of the Hindu renaissance inspired by the profound intellectualism of Sankaracharya. The movement was ironically aggressive in nature. Under the patronage of the Hindu rulers of the *Kulasekhara Dynasty*, the pioneers of the movement unleashed a reign of terror, and resorted to forced conversion of *Budha Bhikshus* to Hindu faith and the abduction of the *Bhiskhunies* and reducing them into prostitutes. Those who refused to fall in line were gored with the trident, and had their teeth knocked out. Shri.Chacko opines that the *Poorappattu* (the psalm of abuses) at Kodungalloor and some other Hindu temples first started as an attempt to humiliate and mentally torture the gentle Buddhist women folk. Of course, it is a moot point. One should not lose sight of the fact that the Buddhist had fallen to a state of moral depravity by this period. Against the backdrop of such a scenario the followers of the Buddha had no option but to flee to the inhospitable mountain regions. Being afraid of fierce



persecution they never dared to return and in course of time they adapted themselves to the rigours of the new surrounding and became forest dwellers. However they preserved their faith and worship of the Sasta (Buddha) by establishing a number of *Kavus* at various hilltops.

The second phase of migration occurred, according to the same author, during and after the 'Century War' fought between the Chera and Chola Kings in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Compulsory conscription imposed by Raja Varma Kulashekara of the *Chera dynasty* during this period made it mandatory for the temple administrators, respectfully referred to as *Sabhas Aryans* to serve in war. These panic stricken *Sabha Aryans* found themselves in between the devil and the sea, as they knew nothing warfare but at the same time were afraid of the wrath of a furious monarch. Following the foot-steps of their brethren Buddhists of the 9<sup>th</sup> century fled to the jungle and became forest dwellers. The people who thus migrated to and settled in the forest came to be referred to as Malai Arayans, who according to the theory in course of time emerged as Malai-Arayans.<sup>3</sup>

Amongst the various legends and myths, pertaining to the historical origin of the Malai Arayans the theory advanced by the above author seems to be more reliable and convincing, owing to the following reasons.

1. There is no gain saying the fact that Buddhism flourished in Kerala from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> century. It is also a historical fact that Buddhism vanished from the



Malabar shores by about the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Thus the regression of the Buddhist Aryans into the wild synchronizes with the decadence of the faith.

2. While there is a strong belief that many of the famous Hindu temples of Kerala such as the *Vadakkumnatha* temple (Trichur) and the Bhagavati temple Kodungallor were originally *Buddhavihars*, the uniqueness of the rituals and practices followed at Sabarimala shows a closer affinity to the Buddhist worship. A.Sreedhara Menon, author of 'The History of Kerala' marshals the following arguments in favour of the claim. Firstly, before visiting the Sastha the devotees observe non-violence, vegetarianism and abstinence from sensual pleasures for thirty days. Secondly, the Sabarimala pilgrims disregard all caste distinctions during the pilgrimage. Thirdly, the invocation chanted by the Sabarimala pilgrims *Sharanam Ayyappa* is reminiscent of the Buddhist *Sharanatraya*. To give added creditability to the theory some Malai Arayan associations claim certain special privileges in connection with the ritualistic pilgrimage to Sabarimala. L.A.Iyer and others who conducted research study on Malai Arayans have testified to this claim. (Iyer 1937:192)

3. The word 'Aryan' has got different connotations. The racial implication attributed to 'Arayan' by the Nazis has added to the confusion. The temple administrators and the staff (*ambalavasis*) during the days of the Bhakthi Movement in Kerala were called 'Sabha Aryans'.



4. The faith and beliefs of the Malai-Arayans were not at all animistic. They were more akin to the Hindu Buddhist traditions. The legends about the origin of the Malai-Arayans already discussed at length are invariably puranic in nature.
5. The physical features of the Malai-Aryans do not resemble those of the other tribal groups of Kerala. In fact, their fair complexion radiates traces of nobility as was observed by Rev. Henry Baker.
6. The Malai Arayans instinctively assimilated the modern way of life to which they were introduced by the Christian missionaries who evangelised them.
7. 'The Church History of Erumapra' authored by late Rev. W.S. Hunt testifies that the Malai-Arayans resemble the high caste Hindus of the plains, who followed the *Marumakkathaya* system. (Hant 1966:7)
8. The Anglican missionaries who had carried out an indepth study on the origin of different groups of aboriginals in Kerala had been compelled to take recourse to linguistic support for want of sufficient anthropological evidence and found that their lingo contained a good number of Sanskrit words.
9. In ancient Kerala only the Brahmins and other high caste Hindus had their own temples '*Kavu*' (Sacred Grove) and priests. That the Malai Arayans



had exclusive temples at *Arakulam, Kalluvettankuzhi, Pazhaya Pachini* etc reinforces the theory of their Aryan percentage.

10. Like the upper caste people of the plains the Malai-Aryans were honest, truthful, obedient and God-fearing. They also led a settled life, practising agriculture and animal husbandry unlike the other tribal groups of Kerala. This is another factor in corroboration of the same view.
11. This claim is similar to that of the *Kurichias* of Waynad, who are believed to have been the descendants of the warriors of the ancient Kingdom of *Pallavas* of Kanchi. They also follow Brahmin customs. (Chacko 1994:5)
12. The Malai Arayans were termed as Malai-Aryans in the book "*Kottikhal Sabha Charitram*", the first ever written document of the history of a Malai Aryan settlement by the Malai Arayans themselves (Church History 1997:3).

#### **4.4 Physical Features of the Malai Arayans**

The Anthropological Survey of India, while categorising the aboriginals of India into four racial stocks, based on their physical features, identifies Malai Arayans with the Proto- Austroloid group. To quote from the series "*Scheduled Tribes*":

The Malai Arayans are mostly short-statured. They have a long and narrow head and show a short and broad nose. Serological studies (Roy,1995; Saha et. al, 1976) among the



Malai Arayans from the Nilgiri hills of Tamil Nadu indicate a predominance of gene O (79 per cent) with a very high (4 per cent) A<sub>2</sub> allele in gene A (11 per cent) for the ABO blood groups. However, those who inhabit the Travancore area of Kerala, are reported to have a very high incidence of gene A (23 per cent) but the incidence of gene O is comparatively low (only 55 per cent). And a relatively higher incidence of non-secretors for ABH substances in saliva has also been registered. A few other serological and bio-chemical genetic markers from the Nilgiri hills indicate a similar pattern of gene frequencies with other Australoid tribal groups, such as higher gene M and R<sub>1</sub> chromosome, Hp<sup>2</sup> and PGM<sup>1</sup> alleles in the respective marker systems. They also show a relatively higher incidence of r for the Rh blood group and indicate the absence of sickle cell hemoglobin (Hb AS phenotype) particularly in those in the State of Kerala. (Singh 1994:719)

The Malai Arayans are non-vegetarians, but do not eat beef and pork. Rice is their staple food and they use different varieties of pulses. Coconut and palm oils are used for cooking. Locally available roots and tubers are consumed. They occasionally drink alcoholic beverages purchased from the market. In his "*Native Life in Travancore*" (1883) Rev. Samuel Mateer observes:

The Arayans are for the most part short in stature, and not very long lived. But the feverishness of the climate of the Districts they inhabit is enough to account for any physical degeneracy of race. They are as fair as the high-caste Hindus, the women frequently beautiful, proving that the aborigines of India were



not black from race peculiarities, but only some times black through circumstances. (Mateer 1883:72)

#### 4.4.1 Habitation

Formerly the Malai Arayans were found at *Eadeadu, Edappalli, Mulakad, Kodayathur, Peringacherry* and *Nalayani* of the Chemmannar Forest Belt, Thodupuzha Range, Thodupuzha Taluk of Idukki District; *Urumpikara, Pakkanam, Assabanveil, Murikkumveil, Punehaveil, kadamanthodu, Kosadi, Kombukuthi, Vakanam, Irumbunnikara, Azhutha, Moozhukelkudi, Nobupara, Valakuzhi* and *Annakkallu* of the Manimala Range, Kanjirappally Taluk and *Adukkom Mala, Vellani, Erumapra, Kurinjiplavu, Melukavu, Kolani* and *Valakam* of the Meenachil Taluk of Kottayam District. (Luiz 1994:238)

The general feature of the region of Malai Arayans is that it is highly mountainous. The average rainfall is 180". The region is watered by the Pampa, the *Manimala*, the *Meenachil* and the *Arakulam* rivers. The Pampa River is navigable for small country craft and has its source in the woody ridge of broken hills, 13 miles to the South east of the *Sabarimala Pagoda*, which is about 2500 feet above sea level. The *Manimala River* is one of its chief tributaries, originating from *Kodamuruty hills*, has aboard and deep sandy bed and is confined by steep banks, which gradually shrink westward. The *Meenachil River* runs a devious course of 35 miles, twenty eight of which is navigable for small



boats during the greater part of the year. The Malai Arayan live spread over hinter lands of these rivers and their tributaries. (Aiya 1989:166)

The climate presented a diversity owing to lack of uniformity in the physical range of the geography of the terrain. Warm humidity was one of its special features. The most noticeable variations were found in the mountains. Extreme heat combined with excessive humidity accounted for the physical and mental inertia of the people. They suffered greatly from the oppressive heat of the low hills in summer. The fever endemic in the hills might have been due to the frequently experienced sudden changes in temperature. Combined with the inclement climate characterized by searching heat and blistering cold with a very high level of humidity throughout, scarcity of water especially in summer, and the perpetual menace of mosquitoes make their life on the hills virtually miserable.

The Malai Arayan Village was built generally on high ground mostly by the side of a stream. The huts were scattered here and there and they had an easterly orientation. They were built of Jungle-wood posts, bamboos, and reeds and thatched with grass. The huts were built without windows as a safe guard against the sultry heat of summer. In defense of possible attacks by wild elephants they built *anamadam* on trees (tree houses) a bamboo ladder access. They took shelter in them during night and drove off wild elephant by shouting



*Ayyappa*". They stored the harvests chiefly paddy and tapioca in the "*anamadam*". (Iyer 1937:178)

Some Malai Arayans had huts made of stone or mud, built on foundations about two feet high. Some of the huts had mud walls and rooms with doors and windows fitted on wooden frames. Those settled within the reserve forest tracts had extremely uncomfortable huts, made of some locally available material. Bamboo mats were used for sitting and sleeping. Rev. Samuel Mateer observes that the Malai Arayans had their own fixed villages. He says, 'Many of their houses are good sustainable substantial erections of wood and stone, built by workmen from the plains' (Mateer 1883:72).

At present the Malai Arayans are scattered throughout the State of Kerala most probably employment and the result of a frantic search for employment and a better life style. There are 31 settlements in Kottayam District and 20 settlements in the District of Idukki. Normally each settlement consists of 50 to 100 households. The *Akhila Travancore Malayaraya Maha Sabha* has units in all these settlements comprising of at least 10 families and 15 members each. The prominent settlements are *Edadu, Karippalangadu, Edappally, Morkkadu, Panthaplavu, Adoor mala, Paakkanam, Kolapram, Naliyani, Poochapra, Urumpikara, Kompukuthy, Vellathanam, Adukkom, Kannikal, Methotty, Pathippally, Peringachery, Erumponnikkara, Kolani, Kossady, Murikkumvayal, Thalanadu, Moozhikkel, Punchavayal, Kalaketty and Kuringiplavu* (Malai Araya



Sabha by Law 1996:2). While the Hindu Malai Arayans live in the above mentioned settlements, the Christian Malai Arayans are mainly concentrated in *Melukavu - Moonnilavu - Adukkom* area, which is the head quarters of the East Kerala Diocese of the Church of South India, having 61 Parishes in the Districts of Kottayam and Idukki (CSI Synod 2002:7). More than 90 percent of the faithful belonging to 50 of these Parishes are Malai Arayans.

It is to be specially noted that a good number of Malai Arayans are now settled in different towns, as well as in the large cities of Thiruvananthapuram and Kochi. There are 94 families residing within the Thiruvananthapuram City (CSI Church Records 2000:17). A few of them are permanently settled there. Most of them own ancestral property at *Melukavu, Moonnilavu* or *Adukkom* in the Kottayam District. Seldom do we come across grass-thatched or frond-thatched huts in the settlements at *Melukavu, Moonnilavu* or *Adukkom*. Most of the houses are tile-roofed. There are also a good number of concrete-roofed houses. There is no comparison whatsoever between their former crude hutments and the highly sophisticated houses of today.

#### **4.4.2 Occupation**

G. Keralavarman Thirumulpadu in his vernacular work *Malabar Laws of Inheritance* (1875) characterizes the Malai Arayans as 'hill cultivators'. Earlier the Malai Arayans had been nomadic agriculturists. Later they became settled peasants. Rice was their staple diet. They cultivated paddy, cassava, plantains,



and other cereals and pulses. During the period when they were engaged in clearing the jungle they abstained from sex. Living as they did in the domain of Sasta, they feared that they would incur his wrath if the injunction of continence was violated. They believed that in the event of a transgression, an elephant or tiger was likely to cross his path or some other mishap might befall him. It was taboo for a woman in menstruation period to enter the field or farm for seven days, lest the returns for the year should be poor. Similarly in *Chingum*, *Kanni* and *Tulam* carnal pleasures were scrupulously avoided for the fear that it might blight the crops. It was taboo for any one to enter the cultivated area in a state of pollution (Iyer 1937:183).

In the selection of land for cultivation before clearing the jungle, they took five strips of bark of equal length and knotted the ends together, holding them in the left hand by the middle. If they formed a perfect circle it was considered an auspicious augury, and that part of the jungle was selected for cultivation and distributed among the men of the hamlet. Each one cultivated a block of land for three years and then shifted to another area. A portion of the land was used for cultivating tapioca, ragi, gram, and a variety of pulses. They also raised cash crops, especially pepper. In the old Arayan lingo, '*Kolam*' was the word for pepper and hence the sobriquet *Kolarayans*. Both men and women worked in the fields and removed weeds soon after the onset of monsoons. Harvesting was done by women usually in the month of *Chingom* (Iyer 1937:184).



Some of the Arayans were very rich, being large cultivators in possession of extensive areas of the hill slopes, which they cleared off the jungle in the dry season where the sowing was done during the rains. This gave them abundance of rice. Little terraces were cut out on the steep ascents to prevent elephants from getting at them. High and strong wooden fences were also erected. Every peasant, however, had to watch out with loaded guns during seed time and harvest, to protect the crops from elephants, deer and other animals and the cattle from leopards and tigers. The Headman of each village was very wealthy, his annual returns going up to ten to twelve thousand '*parahs*' (measure) of paddy, besides large quantities of other grains, pulses and tubers. The Malai Arayans were also good hunters. It is to be specially noted that unlike their co-tribals who hunted their quarry with bow and arrow, the Malai Arayans used guns. The meat of the 'black monkey' was their favourite dish (Iyer 1937:169).

At present the Malai Arayans are found engaged in business. Many of them have taken up salaried jobs in the Governmental and private enterprises. The 1981 census figures show that 29.62 percent (48.67 percent males and 10.57 percent females) of the total population of the Malai Arayans are listed as workers. Of them, 56.86 percent are cultivators and 21.53 percent are agricultural labours. Of the rest, 7.32 percent are engaged in rearing livestock etc. and the remaining 14.29 percent are in other services (Census 1991).



#### 4.5 Family

In the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a typical Malai Arayan family consisted of a man, his wife and a few children. In other words, theirs was not the joint family system. The father was the head of the family and his authority was unquestionable and supreme. However, his children belonged to the clan of the mother. Similarly the names of the maternal grand parents were given to the children. He looked after the family, and his children acted according to his biddings and so did his wife. The uncle's consent was a pre-condition for any marriage. The dowry brought by the woman was returned in case of divorce. A widow had no claim on the property of her husband. On the death of the husband his brother whether married or not, would become her husband and the custodian of her children by her former husband and the property was kept intact. The sons succeeded to patrimony, and, in their absence, the property devolved on the daughters. If a man died childless, his property went to his brothers or to his sisters in their absence. In the absence of brothers and sisters, the property devolved on the nephew(s). It is interesting to note that, while under the Hindu Law, a daughter did not take an absolute estate in her father's property in the absence of sons, a daughter among the Malai Arayans did. The daughters, if there is more than one, divided the property equally among them (Iyer 1937:179).

As a rule, the names among this hill tribe were not strictly Hindu; they signified some physical features as *Kannan* "the eyed one", *Pottan* – "the deaf



one”, Thadian – “the fat one”, for men; and for women, *Mathura* - “the sweet one”, *Thankam* and also *Poonny* - “the golden one, *Chakara* - “the sugary one” etc. Where the people were under the influence of the Nayars, the names used to be drawn from the Shastras. Their language was a dialect, akin to Malayalam, with several words, not found in Malayalam.

#### 4.5.1 Kinship

The system of kinship among the Malai Arayans has been of the classificatory type, and its fundamental feature lies in the application of the same kinship terms in addressing most, though not all persons of the same generation and sex. A list of some kinship terms is given below with their corresponding vernacular equivalents (Iyer 1937:169) :-

No.	Relationship	Vernacular Name
<b>I. Relations through father</b>		
1	Great grandfather	<i>Valiappan</i>
2	Great grandmother	<i>Valiamma</i>
3	Grand father	<i>Appuppan</i>
4	Grandmother	<i>Ammumma</i>
5	Father	<i>Appan</i>
6	Mother	<i>Amma</i>
7	Father’s elder brother	<i>Perappan</i>
8	Father’s elder brother’s Wife	<i>Peramma</i>
9	Father’s younger brother	<i>Elayappan</i>
10	Father’s younger brother’s Wife	<i>Elayamma</i>
11	Father’s elder brother’s son	<i>Chettan</i> or by name



12	Father's elder brother's Daughter	<i>Pengal</i> or by name
13	Father's sister	<i>Ammayiamma</i>
14	Father's sister's Husband	<i>Aschan</i>
15	Father's sister's son	<i>Aliyan</i>
16	Father's sister's Daughter	<i>Chettathi</i> or by name
<b>II. Relations through mother</b>		
1	Great grandfather	<i>Valiappan</i>
2	Great grandmother	<i>Valiamma</i>
3	Grand father	<i>Appuppan</i>
4	Grandmother	<i>Ammumma</i>
5	Mother's brother	<i>Aschan</i>
6	Mother's brother's wife	<i>Ammayiamma</i>
7	Mother's sister	<i>Peramma</i> or by name
8	Mother	<i>Amma</i>
<b>III. Relations through wife.</b>		
1	Wife	No name
2	Wife's father	<i>Aschan</i>
3	Wife's mother	<i>Ammayiamma</i>
4	Wife's brother	<i>Aliyan.</i>
5	Wife's brother's wife	<i>Nathune</i>
6	Wife's sister	<i>Chettathi</i> , if elder, and by name
7	Wife's sisters husband	<i>Chettan</i> , if elder, and by name
<b>IV. Relations through husband</b>		
1	Husband's father	<i>Aschan</i>
2	Husband's mother	<i>Ammayiamma</i>
3	Husband's brother's wife	<i>Chettathi</i> , or by name
4	Husband's brother	<i>Chettan</i> , if elder, or by name
5	Husband's sister	<i>Nathune</i>



It is worth noting that the honorific terms among the Malai Arayans and those prevalent among the Syrian Christians of the plains have been the same except the term '*Achan*' denoting father<sup>4</sup> (The Syrian Christians usually address the father as '*Appan*' or '*Chachan*').

#### **4.5.2 Position of Women**

Gender equality was more or less observed at home. But the Hindu Malai Arayan women were not allowed to participate in religious ceremonies. On such occasions they stood at a distance. During menstruation, food was cooked for them separately. According to their belief if the custom was violated harm would befall the family. The parents trained their children in their own occupation. The mother trained up the girls in domestic work. The practice of the husband and wife eating off the same plantain-leaf at all Malai Arayan feasts in former times was, indeed, a manifestation of nuptial intimacy and, to a certain extent, gender equality (Iyer 1937:171).

#### **4.6 Games**

The Malai Arayans indulged in pass-times such as *Ayyarkali* and *Kaduvakali* in the month of *Kanni* and *Tulam*. Drama and dancing were performed at night. About a dozen men used to take part in the play. Portions of the Mahabharata formed the theme for the songs in Malayalam. In *Ayyarkali*, the escape of the Pandavas from the mansion put up for their reception by



Duryodhana and his brothers, and their adventures were the central theme. The *Kolukali* (Stick dance) was an exciting game; a party of ten to twelve men were provided with sticks, each about a cubit long. They stood in a circle with a lighted lamp in the centre. One member set the ball rolling by reciting a couplet from one of the songs, after which he would be caught by the rest, singing profuse strains. They moved in a circle striking the sticks, keeping time with their feet, and singing at the same time. The circle alternately widened and narrowed. The *Vattakali* was a wild dance. This also required a party of ten to twelve men. The dancers would move in a circle, clapping their hands, while they sang (Iyer 1937:198).

#### 4.7 Social Structure

Legend has it that the Malai Arayans had originally belonged to six illoms and eight 'Vakas' (families), as given here under.

##### Illoms

1. Valayillom
2. Puthaniyillom
3. Nellyppallyillom
4. Malayillom
5. Mundilliom
6. Ennayillom



### **Vakas and Surnames**

1. Valiyaveetil Arayan
2. Eattackal Arayan
3. Kanavara Arayan
4. Pootakal Arayan
5. Konnackal Arayan
6. Naramundackal Arayan
7. Tharanganal Arayan
8. Chelackal Arayan (Iyer 1937:170).

Scholars like Rev. Samuel Mateer (1883), C.M. Agur (1903), L.A.K. Iyer(1937), A.A.D. Luiz,(1962) and Edgar Thurston,(1909) are unanimous about the illom based social matrix of the Malai Arayans. According to L.A.K. Iyer, the Malai Arayans of the *Manimala* range of the erstwhile Kottayam District were divided in to *six clans or illoms* namely *Vala illoms, Ennaillom, Puthani Illom, Mundi illom, Korangani illom and Panthirayira illom* (Luiz 1996:239) Malai Arayans were in the habit of presenting 'Kanikya' to the Ambalapuzha chief. The group of Malai Arayans in the southern parts of Kerala who were later called Kanikars offered *kanikya* to the *Naduvazhi* (ruler). The *Vala illom* belongs to the descendents of the man who presented bangles to the *Ambalapuzha Chief*. The *Enna illom* belongs to the descendants of the man who presented oil to the Chief and *Puthani illom* to those of the man who presented flowers to the Chief.



The *Mundi illom* is believed to constitute the descendants of those who presented cloth. *Korangani illom* consists of those who habitually eat monkeys and *Panthirayira illom* consists of those who attend festive occasions. The first two *illakars* claimed superiority over the others. Next came *Mundi* and *Puthani illakars*. The last two clans were the lowest in status. The lower *illakars* could not serve food to the former owing to their inferior position.

In the Thodupuzha Range of Idukki District Malai Arayans were divided into five clans, namely *Puthani, Mala, Vala, Nellipally* and *Modalakad* and this division is believed to be on the basis of presents given to the Cheraman Perumal. From the gift of garlands originated the name *mala illom*, and the gift of paddy created the name of *Nellipalli illom*. The *Modalakad illom* constitutes the descendants of their ancestor, who squeezed himself out through a small hole. *Vala* and *mala illoms* were 'annan - thambi' or brother illoms. *Modalakad* and *Puthani illoms* were *Machambi* or brother in law illom to the former. *Modalakad illom* is said to be inferior to the others (Iyer 1937:169).

Malai Arayans have the institution of the Headman formerly known as *Poramban* or *Kani*. *Poramban* means one who is privileged to sport a cane cap, an honour bestowed by the Poonjar Rajah. *Kani* is suggestive of the practice of presentation of the *Kanikya* to the *Ambalappuzha* Chieftain. A headman when alive could nominate his successor, but the final approval rested with the Chieftain in early times and with the District Forest Officer later, who could



disapprove the choice, and choose another person in consultation with the elders. The modern Kani does not enjoy the powers, privileges and attentions that he had enjoyed in early times. Each settlements had a Kani and a *Mantravati* (magician) who played the role of the *pujari* (Priest) and medicine-man (physician) (Iyer 1937:195). But the Christian Malai Arayans had freed themselves from such traditional practices. Their present social structure is Church based.

## **4.8 Customs and Ceremonies**

### **4.8.1 Child Birth**

The birth of each child made the mother impure for a month, during which she resided out of the hut. She did not cook, nor did she go near the springs or touch any implement or vessel. She generally lived in a temporary hut a little removed from home or sometimes in a dwelling on the tree top called *Pettumadam* (delivery hut). The father also was considered as impure for a week and did not eat rice, but like the mother he lived on roasted roots and water. A child, when a month old, was seated in the fathers lap and fed with sweetened rice, a declaration of the legitimacy of the child. (Iyer 1937:178) This practice is now prevalent only among some Hindu Malai Arayans.

### **4.8.2 Talikettu Kalyanam**

A marriage was always preceded by the *talikettu kalyanam* which was celebrated, when a girl was at the age of three, five, seven, nine or eleven.



Occasionally, the *talikettu kalyanam* of a group of girls was also celebrated together. The *enangan* (celebrant) might be any married man ordinarily a nephew of the girl's parents. A *kaniyan* (astrologer) was consulted as to the agreement of horoscopes, and an auspicious day and hour for the ceremony. On his nod of approval, the *tali* was tied. The assembled guests were then treated to a sumptuous feast both in the morning and evening. *Kettuveelamma* pollution was observed for three days. On the fourth day the *enangan* and the girls took a bath (*Malankuli*) in the morning (Luiz 1962:122). This was followed by a feast after which all departed. This custom is now a thing of the past (Luiz 1962:240).

#### 4.8.3 Puberty Customs (Rites of Passage)

When a girl attained puberty, she was lodged in a separate shed for a day. On the morrow she was taken for a bath by her aunt and a cousin. On their return the girl was put up in a room in the main building and all were treated to a feast. Pollution lasted for 7 days and two or three *velans* were requisitioned for singing 'The randupattu' suited to the occasion (proclamation of puberty). The girl was seated on a plank and in front were placed two plantain leaves with a lighted lamp between them. On one leaf was placed a measure of paddy and on the other a quarter measure of rice. A coconut and a bunch of plantains were also placed in front of the lamp as offerings to Ganapathi while a piece of cloth and a coconut on it were placed on one of the leaves. Songs were chanted for over an hour for three days and the *Velans* were presented with all the offerings and the cloth. On



the 8<sup>th</sup> day followed by her paternal aunt and her daughter the girl was led to a stream for a solemn ablution to the accompaniment of the tom-tom and the '*kurava cry*' (rhythmic ululations). She was then led in procession to her home, to the beat of the tom-tom and the *kurava cry* with the simulated groom in front and her aunt and daughter behind. On reaching home the girl and the tali-tier were seated in the same room and treated to a feast. After regaling themselves on the delicacies the gathering dispersed (Iyer 1937:177). Such esoteric and strange rites of passage are no longer practised. However, Smt Kartiyani of *Meladukom*, now aged 85 to the researcher that she had undergone this ceremony during her infensing.

#### 4.8.4 Marriage Ceremony

In most cases the simulated marriage was formally solemnised at the age of sixteen after a girl had attained puberty. The boy was usually older by at least two years. Freedom of choice was not allowed to the contracting parties. When a girl became nubile the boy's father broached the matter to the girl's father. If he agreed, the date of marriage was fixed. The best form of marriage was that of cross-cousins by which a man married his uncle's daughter or aunt's daughter.

On the occasion of marriage the bridegroom and party arrives at the bride's hut on the appointed day. The wedding takes place in the evening or at night. In front of the couple are placed three plates, each containing a quarter measure of rice. On one of them are placed three bundles of betel leaves, on the



second, the bride's apparel and on the third, the bridegroom's attire. The bridegroom's father purchases the marriage presents for the couple. One of the *enangans* then asks those assembled whether any one has any objection to the marriage. When approval is nodded, the bridegroom hands over the wedding costume to his affianced, while his brother-in-law hands over his apparel to him. The bride is led to a room by her best friends, where she is attired in her wedding clothes. The bridegroom also puts on his wedding costume. The couple are seated on a mat facing east. The bride's brother gives the bride a betel leaf and asks her to tear it in halves. She is asked to give the chew to her betrothed. She chews one half of the leaf. They are then asked to spit on the same leaf. All the guests chew betel and tobacco. In certain *illoms* chewing is followed by '*palukudy*', wherein milk, sugar and slices of fruits are partaken. Escorted by the aunt and her daughter the girl is brought to the marriage dais at an auspicious moment (Iyer 1937:174).

The married couple and the bride's best friends are then treated to dinner. The couples eat from the same leaf. After eating together, the bridegroom ties the *tali* on the bride's neck, and a collection is made for the happy couple, which is concluded by the bride taking possession of any brass cooking vessels or gold ornaments in the house, saying, 'these are my father's'; then her husband appropriates them. The marriage is held as sacred and indissoluble. After feasting, the next morning the bride is led to the husband's residence escorted by



*Kanikaran, Nadavan and Munnaman* with three bundles of betel leaves on the undertaking that if they fall out for any reason the bride shall be brought back to her father or kept in the safe custody of the *Kanikaran* until he arrives. The bride stays with her husband in his parents' hut or they live separately. A man can marry a second time with the consent of his first wife, if she is childless. In such a case, both the wives live under the same roof but the first wife is the mistress of the household (Luiz 1962:240). But the Malai Arayans of the present day are monogamous. While the Hindu Malai Arayans still follow the above nuptial customs and practices, the *Christian marriages* are solemnised in the Church.

#### **4.8.5 Menstruation**

During menstruation the woman remains in the isolation shed for four days and returns home on the fifth day, after a ritualistic ablution. If the men at home observe any vow at the time, she remains in the shed for seven days. It is feared that the sylvan deities would be offended if she allowed to return earlier, as she may be unclean ((Iyer 1937:178). This observance is no longer in vogue among both the Hindu and the Christian Malai Arayans.

#### **4.8.6 Funeral Ceremonies**

The dead are buried in the vicinity of the house. When a person dies, word is sent round to the *enangans*, who gather to choose the site of burial. The eldest son and the nephew are the chief mourners, and they go round the site three



times, strewing rice and fried paddy where the grave is dug. The grave is made about sixty feet to the south of the hut. They remove three shovels of earth from the site with their faces turned away from it. The shovel is then handed over to the *enangans*, who dig the grave to a depth of four feet. The grave diggers do not carry the corpse. The chief mourners go to the house of the deceased and the body is carried to the front yard of the hut. The nephew anoints the body with oil and washes it. It is wrapped in a new cloth brought by the son of the nephew. A coconut leaf is placed on the ground over which a cloth is spread, and the body is laid on it, head southward. All the *enangans* cover the body with a new cloth. Over this is laid a shroud, five cubits long, fully covering the body. At the two corners of the cloth near the head, rice and paddy are tied while *tulasi* leaves and sandal are tied at the other two corners near the feet. In the case of females, a small gold piece is placed in one of the nostrils.

The son, nephew and other *enangans* strew rice and paddy at the feet, sides and head. They walk thrice round the body. The chief mourner anoints the forehead with a mark of sandal, and the nose with gold paste and offers *pansoaru* to the body. Chanting Rama's name, the carriers take the body round the grave and lower it. All the mourners throw earth three times into the grave with face turned away from it. They turn round and fill the grave with earth. Small pebbles are placed in a line round the grave and one big stone is placed from head to foot vertically. The chief mourner makes a human figure over the grave and



places a tender coconut on it. Huge boulders are placed over it so that it may not be disturbed by wild animals.

Thereupon all the guests chew betel with lime, tobacco and arecanut and enjoy a refreshing bath. They return home. The chief mourners fast for the day. The next day a meagre breakfast is served to all the mourners at the front yard. Pollution observance lasts for 16 days. A small piece torn from the shroud is tied in the ear to indicate that a man is in mourning. The process is called '*Keerikettuka*' (Iyer 1937:186). There are special ceremonies at the grave from the third to the 16<sup>th</sup> day of death. On the 16<sup>th</sup> day the *enangan* pours oil over the heads of the mourners, who then take a bath. Pollution ceases. The priest places raw rice, gingely seed and kusa grass on a plantain leaf. Another plantain leaf is placed in front with one torn leaf on each side. A small quantity of rice is scattered over the leaf three times. This is gathered, and with lamp and water borne in front, the leaf is taken to the foot of a jack tree and placed there. Frankincense is burnt. Cooked rice and balls of rice are taken and placed at the foot of the tree. All then pray, return to the home of the deceased and disperse after a sumptuous repast.

Death caused by the wild elephant or the tiger is considered abnormal and the spirit of the dead is called '*Arukola*' (Iyer 1937:189). In the case of such a death, the son and the nephew bury the body but perform no ceremonies. The spirit is said to cause disease to infants, and lead men astray to the jungle. It is



therefore propitiated. A metallic effigy of the deceased is made and installed on the rock at a short distance. A cover stone is placed over two upright stones in order to give protection to the effigy from rain. On Thiruvonam in Chingam and on Vishu in Medom the spirit is propitiated by the son at dusk by offerings of rice powder, tender coconut, arrack, toddy and lighted wick. He offers the following prayer. 'May you protect us when we are ill and also when we go to the jungle.' The offerings are then partaken by those present.

Samuel Mateer in his 'Native Life in Travancore' (1883), speaks about a certain necromancer of the Thalanany family of Erumapra, near Melukavu, whose spirit was haunting the area. In order to placate the troublesome spirit his effigy was set up in the manner described above. The book gives us a picture of his effigy (Mateer 1883:76).

This practice is even now observed by some Hindu Malai Arayans. However, the Christian Malai Arayans have given up the practice long ago. In the above book, Mateer says that the descendents of Thalanany, after having been converted to the Christian faith, surrendered his effigy to the Parson of the local Church (Mateer 1883:76).

#### **4.9 Religion**

The religion of the early Malai Arayans may be described as a system of animism or spiritism and his attitude to the supernatural is one of reverential fear



in the presence of certain supernatural powers. While he had not yet systematised his notions of the supernatural, he made a distinction between the souls of the dead and the deities giving functions and individual names to the vague spirits of the jungle, stone and stream and attributing diverse function to them.

The objects of Arayan worship were the spirits of their ancestors, or certain local demons, which were supposed to reside in rocks or peaks and wield power over a particular village, or families. The religious services rendered to these were intended to defuse anger rather than to seek benefits, but in no case was lust gratified, or wickedness practised, to please the deities (Menon 2002:740).

The Malai Arayans in Manimala made offerings to the hill-gods after the harvest in the month of *Kanni*. Continenence was observed for seven days. Men cooked their own food. Women had no part in the ceremony. Offerings were made to the five Hills, *Thalaparamala*, *Azhamala*, *Puthiyamala*, *Ponthenmala*, *Savamparamala*. It consisted of one and a quarter measure of rice, fifty one coconuts, sandal, and tulasi (Iyer 1937:193).

Although the tribal religion of the Malai Arayans is described as animism by Christian missionaries and Church historians, striking similarities between the Hindu and Malai Arayan faiths exist. The tribal legends abound in references to Lord Rama and other puranic heroes. *Rama* is chanted at death. *Ganapathi pooja*, *Onam* and *Vishu* festivals, rites of passage at puberty are all common to both the



Hindus and the Malai Arayans. Tulasi, Paddy, Coconut and plantain leaves constitute the main ritualistic elements of both. *Archanas*, untouchability and avoidance of bovine meat are all common practices. The dead are not cremated by the Malai Arayans. They worship clan gods. The centre of their worship is often not the temple but the sacred wood (*Kavu*)

However, by the 1930s of the last century the Hindu Malai Arayans gave up animistic worship and ever since, their profession and practice of faith have been similar to those of other Hindus. As for the Christian Malai Arayans they have been following the tenets, rituals, ceremonies and practices of the Anglican Communion with a smattering of Indianisation (Daniel 1998:48).

The Encyclopedia of the temples of Kerala refers to a number of temples which are believed to have been erected and administered by Arayan Chieftains. The *Arayankavu temple*, *Arattupuzha temple*, *Mancombunkavu temple*, *Arakulam Sasta temple*, etc are such centres of worship. A common feature of all these places of worship was the prominence given to *Yakshi Goddess*. The Encyclopedia mentions a legend about the *Arakulam temple*, according to which the surrounding area was the chiefdom of an Arayan Chieftain. With the passing of time most of these temple came under the sway of Brahmanical Hinduism. Nonetheless, there still exists a temple, *Pazhaya paschima Kshetram* (The Ancient West temple), which is now under the Travancore Devasom Board. This small temple is tucked away among the reserve forest on the *Mundakkayam* –

*Korauthodu P.W.D road. The Main Moorthy (Diety) is "Ayleshi Yakshi", whose destructive power is believed to be greater than that of even Bhadrakali, the puranic symbol of ultimate destructiveness.*

Fables about the fantastic feats of Arayan practioners of black magic, sorcery and necromancy abound. Legend has jt that a junior parson, Kochu Paulose of *Kadamattom* in *Kunnathnadu* Taluk had spent 12 years with Araya occulists and returned to his church wellversed in all kinds of magic. The young priest later came to be known as *Kadamattathu Kathanar*, the most educated magician of yore. It may also be noted that being highly superstitious, the Malai Arayans set great store by omens, auguries as well as astrology.<sup>8</sup>

#### **4.9.1 The Worship of the Sasta**

The worship of the Sasta constitutes an important feature of the religion of the Malai Arayan. They worships the deity at *Sabarimala* and *Arakulam*. The worship at Sabarimala betrays many animistic features. The deity receives offerings from his votaries annually. The annual festival falls on the thirteenth of January and continues for five days. The Sasta is very frigid and rigid in his tastes and expects a high standard of purity in his votaries for fourteen days, during which they abstain from meat and sex. The Malai Arayans go in batches, led by *Periaswamy*, who is the head of the fraternity. During the period of abstinence, they propitiate Sasta, *Karuppuswami*, *Kochukadutha*, *Ganapathi* and the crests of hills. On the eve of their march to Sabarimala, all the votaries put



their kit together. A huge fire is lit at a distance. As the votaries circumambulate the fire, all of them get possessed. Their oracular utterances are considered to be the voice of the God or spirit dwelling in him and speaking through him. It is only when the frenzied Ayyappan passes through fire that his utterances are accepted. Otherwise, they are not given heed to. After taking part in *Pettathullal*, which is an interesting ceremony at Erumeli on the 27<sup>th</sup> *Dhanu* (January 10<sup>th</sup>), they begin their march to Sabarimala in easy measured stages at noon the next day and reach *Azhutha* in the evening. On the way, they offer fried rice and molasses to the crag in the *Peruthode* stream, the supposed resting place of Sasta. On the evening the 29<sup>th</sup> of *Dhanu* (January 12<sup>th</sup>) they reach the banks of the *Pamba*. At *Kallidamkunnu*, a small pebble is dropped over the crest of the hill to prevent the *Asura*, who haunts the place from coming out and harming them. The *Pambavilakku* is a magnificent sight at night on account of the illuminations and is considered to be in honour of Sasta, who is said to be cooking his food and dining among the *Ayyappans* that night in disguise and resting there on his way to Sabarimala. The next morning the votaries arrive at the *Sabarimal Pagoda*, break a coconut on reaching *Pathinettampadi*, and adore the deity. They make offerings to *Kochukadutha* and *Karuppuswami*. At night comes *Makaravilakku*, when a procession is taken out from the shrine of *Malikappurathamma* to Ayyappan's shrine with the accompaniment of illuminations. Next morning, they bathe in *Orakuzhithirtham* and enjoy a sumptuous repast. They then return home. Sasta's boons to the votaries are phenomenal and enlarge the circle of his



votaries. He protects them from all adversities in the jungle and averts all calamities (Iyer 1937:193)

#### 4.9.2 Lord Ayyappa and Malai Arayans

The *Malai Arayan Nattu Pattu* deals at length with their especial relationship with Lord Ayyappa.

The Malai Arayans held sway over *Karimala* and *Chinganpara* when Rajasekhara Raja was the suzerain of Pandalam. At that time, the *Maravans*, a savage people, were a menace to the Pandalam Rajah as well as to the Arayans. The *Karimala Arayan* Rajah adopted and fostered a boy of the Ulladan tribe and trained him in all martial arts in order that he might take over the marauding Maravans. He was made the captain of the army. This *Ulladan* captain was attracted by the exquisitely beautiful daughter of the Rajah of Pandalam. He waxed eloquent about her physical accomplishments before the Karimala Rajah and entreated to be allowed to take her captive so that the Arayan Rajah's son could wed her. The beautiful princess was abducted and brought to *Karimala*, where the Arayan prince *Kanddan* and the *Kshathriya* princess *Karuthamma* were united in matrimony.

At that time the barbarian *Maravans* launched an allout assault on *Karimala*. In the wake of the horrendous massacre the panicked Arayans approached their *Kula Guru* (High Priest) for guidance. Filled with anguish and



horror, the *Kula Guru* was lost in meditation for forty days. Waking from the trance he prophesied that a grandson, an avatar of Sasta, would be born to the king. He shall be named 'Ayyappa' and he would vanquish their foes. *Karuthamma* conceived, and gave birth to a bonny baby boy. They called him Ayyappa. He grew in age, strength and wisdom.

During one of his hunting expeditions, the Pandalam Rajah came across the handsome young Ayyappa and his parents. It was indeed an emotive meeting. The issueless Rajah adopted his nephew and offered to make him the heir apparent of his Kingdom. Years passed, and the Pandalam queen gave birth to a son.

The queen, assisted by the minister, resorted to a trickery to prevent Ayyappa from becoming the next king. She feigned an abdominal ailment. The court physician, hand in glove with the plotters, prescribed a medication, the main ingredient of which was the milk of the leopard. Ayyappan himself volunteered to procure the feline milk and ventured out to the jungle.

During his adventurous wanderings, he visited his parents and sought their blessings. Fortified with all occult mantras and power, he sallied forth to confront the leopards. Making for a dense forest, he strew a few enchanted pebbles, reciting 'Moola Meenakshi Mantras'. Thereupon a pride of leopards appeared on the scene and began frolicking with the young Ayyappa. The docile leopards followed him to Pandalam. Utterly stunned by the fearsome sight,



everyone took to their heels. Plucking up courage the Rajah profusely apologised to his adopted son, offered to punish the conspirators and requested that leopards be sent back to the forest. 'I am your adopted son and heir apparent. I want neither kingship nor kingdom. I am retiring to the forest. I will never come back again hither', said Ayyappa (Translated from Malayalam by the Researcher).

Rallying the Arayans together, Ayyappa took on the Maravans head on and vanquished them. He graciously pardoned those who were spared the sword. The surviving Maravans were allotted the area North of Kachinipara in Moonnar and they were forbidden to breach the boundaries. (The area later came to be known as Marayoor and the place of their capitulation (Vattivachupara) is presently known as Vathukudy). Importuned by the triumphant Malai Arayans to be their sovereign, Ayyappa led them to the Sasta Temple at Sabarimala and spoke thus:

"I do not long to be a king or Sovereign,  
I will be here always a Yogi,  
Here there is no Rajah or subject,  
Man has no bounds here,  
I am open to all,  
That are worthy of me,  
Vavar will be the guardian at Erumely,  
And Kadutha the keeper of my Poonkavanam."<sup>5</sup>

Thereupon the heavens were shrouded by darkening clouds. A tempestuous storm raged, overwhelming the entire forestscape as if unleashed by



wrath of some mystering power. The hills and dales wilted and withered like bereaved parents. A brief spell, and the sky was splendourously fit up by the emerging Sun. An eagle circled in the high heavens. A mysterious star blinked and twinkled in the sky. Watched by the bewildered multitude, emptying himself corporeally Lord Ayyappa merged and became one with the Sasta Moorthy (Malai Arayan Nattupattu).

The claim in the 'Malai Arayan Nattu Pattu' is a highly controversial issue because the popularly prevalent legends as to the Ayyappa Avatar do not tally therewith. For instance, the late Shri. P.R. Rama Varma Rajah of Poonjar Koikal, in his 'Sabarimala Sree Ayyappa Charithram' (Malayalam,1998), holds that Sree Ayyappa was the son of the sister of Pandalam Raja, and her spouse, a Brahmin, who was the son of the '*Melsanthy*' (high priest) of the Sabarimala Sasta Temple (Rajah 1998:160). There are striking similarities between the Ayyappa legend according to the Arayan folk song and the one given by the Poonjar Rajah; in that Ayyappa is the incarnation of Sasta, he is the son of a Pandalam princess, he emerged victorious over the Maravas, and that he was united with Sasta. The Malai Arayan folk song mentioned above is just one of a large corpus of legends as to the birth and life and preternatural dissolution of Lord Ayyappa: *Ayyappan Pattu*, *Ponnambalam Pattu*, *Pandala Shevam*, *Ezhothy Shevam*, *Ezhothara Shevam*, *Pandya Shevam*, *Vavarankam*, *Vavaru Mahathmyam*, etc. Over the eons, various races and tribes and clans have fallen back upon similar yet



dissimilar myths about their god-experiences, emphasizing their self identity and promoting self aggrandizement, and there fore, we need not set much store by such stories, as we cannot establish it beyond doubt.

#### **4.8 The Proselytisation of the Malai Arayans**

Following the proclamation of the Maharaja of Travancore in 1789 investing all the forest land of the realm with the Government, the Lords of the jungles over might became the tenants of the Rajas of Poonjar and Pandalam, the vassals of Travancore, resulting in the eclipse of the Malai Arayan glory. For almost a century thereafter they languished in bondage, penury and indignity. They were to collect the forest goods for the Rajah. They were to clear the jungles to facilitate the *Sabarimala* pilgrimage. They were subjected to severe taxation under the Muhammeden middlemen appointed by the Raja for the collection of taxes. A barbarious practice was the levying of *Thalakaram*<sup>6</sup> (head tax) and *Mulakaram*<sup>7</sup> (breast tax). LAK Ayer (1937) and Elgar Thurston (1962) testify that the heinous practice was stopped following a macabre incident. A frightened Araya woman at bay cut her breast off and her bewildered kin offered it to the Rajah in lieu of the tax (Thurston 1962:388).

Now there appeared up on the ravaged scene an angel of deliverance in the person of Rev. Henry Baker (Jr), whose father had travelled all the way from the shores of England, settled at Kottayam and converted thousands of social outcastes to the Christian faith. Having been insistently importuned by a group of



Malai Arayan leaders from Mundakkayam, this Protestant divine finally visited their settlement. He was moved by their pathetic plight. He preached the Gospel to them and in their own request baptized them. He erected churches at Mundakkayam and set up a school (Agur 1903:1008). There upon the Malai Arayan leaders took him to the tribal settlements scattered across the mountain ranges from *Koottickal* to *Melukavu*. In course of time a large section of the Malai Arayans embraced the new Faith. Henry Baker himself established 11 churches and 27 schools across the high ranges. It may also be mentioned here the initiative for the construction of Kottayam – Kumily Road came from him. As a result a sea change came over their social scenario (Babu Paul 1989:63).

Following the foot steps of Henry Baker many English Protestant Missionaries continued their work among the Malai Arayans. Preachers and teachers emerged from among the Malai Arayans. They abandoned most of their social mores, joined schools and attended the Sunday schools in the Church. Under the auspices of the church the prohibition movement was launched, toddy palms were cut down, hooch manufacture was stopped, drinking was practically given up. Exogamous marriages were encouraged. The social mobility of this localized community widened, climaxing in the elevation of Most Rev. K. J Samuel of Melukavu as the Supreme Head (Moderator) of the Church of South India (CSI Church Souvenir 2002:18).



No aspect of the life of the Christian Malai Arayans was left untouched by the Church. The missionaries sought to ensure their social stability and financial security. Baker himself had delivered them from the clutches of Mohammedan merchants, who were the tax collectors of the Poonjar Rajah. Their education stood then in good stead when they were brought within the ambit of the Reservation Scheme in 1962. Shri M.S Joseph, the first Malai Arayan to enter the I.A.S observes that the Missionaries came to their midst not with the Bible in one hand and a gun in other as alleged, but with the Word of God in one hand and the Word of Science in the other.<sup>9</sup> The religion classes introduced them to the prophets and heroes of the Old Testament, who inspired the Malai Arayan youth immensely. The Church was also instrumental in inculcating in them an aversion for liquor, to which they had been traditionally addicted.

A concomitant of the Christianisation of a large section of the community is the division of the tribe into Christian Malai Arayans and Hindu Malai Arayans. As of now 99.18 percent of Malai Arayans in *Melukavu*, 93.78 percent in *Moonnilavu* and 75.47 percent in *Parathodu* are Christian while 97.39 percent in *Mundakkayam*, 55.17 percent in *Thalanadu* and 43.64 percent in *Poonjar Thekkekara Panchayats* are Hindus.



## Endnotes

1. Personal interview with Dr.Daniel, author of *Let the Hills Rejoice* on 7.2.2003.
2. Personal interview with Shri. M.K. Narayanan *Poochappa*, on 12.8.2003.
3. Personal interview with Shri.I.C.Chacko Kulathikandom on 01.04.2000.
4. Personal interview with Late T.J. Joshua on 07.03.1995.
5. Translated from Malayalam by the Researcher from the *Nattupattu* recited by Shri.M.K. Narayanan *Poochappa* on 12.08.2003.
6. The tax levied by the Raja of Poonjar from all Male Malai Arayans.
7. The tax levied by the Raja of Poonjar from all Female Malai Arayans.
8. Personal interview with Kunjukuttan Kallaipalli of Puchavayal on 10.08.1998.
9. Personal interview with M.S. Joseph I.A.S on 02.08.2000.



## **CHAPTER V**

# **SOCIO-ECONOMIC BACKGROUND: A COMPARISON BETWEEN HINDU AND CHRISTIAN MALAI ARAYANS**



## 5.1 Introduction

The present Malai Arayan community consists of Hindus and Christians. Both sections are entitled to all the rights and privileges specially granted to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes by the Constitution and other laws. However, they differ considerably in beliefs, customs and practices. Attributing a single socio-economic profile to both of them will thus be an injustice done to both of them. So consistent efforts were made to collect as much data as possible from both the sections residing mainly in the six panchayats of *Melukavu, Moonnilavu, Mundakayam, Parathodu, Poonjar Thekkakara* and *Thalanadu* of Kottayam district with a view to study their socio-economic profile.

## 5.2 Methodology

More than 95 percent of the Malai Arayans in the district are residing in the above six Panchayats. The survey was conducted among 451 respondents (selected by cluster sampling) in the months of April – May, 2003. The sample survey represented a cross section of various income groups and educational standards. More than 50 percent of the respondents were women as they were available even during the peak hours of the day. An error margin of three or four percent at 95 percent confidence level has been allowed. The survey covered all the main habitations in these six Panchayats. The sample study was roughly (15 percent) of the Malai-Aryan population of each panchayat and special care has been taken to give due weightage to the Christians and the Hindus in proportion



to their respective number and chronology. The field work was carried out in four wards of the *Melukavu* Panchayat, four divisions of the *Moornilavu* Panchayat, four wards of the *Mundakkayam* Panchayat and in two wards each of the *Parathodu*, *Thalanadu* and *Poonjar* Panchayats. It covered the Malai Arayan habitations of *Melukavu*, *Kulathikandam*, *Melukavu mattom*, *Vadakkumbhagam*, *Erumapra*, *Kurinjuplavu*, *Kolani*, *Mechal*, *Valakom*, *Adukom*, *Meladukom*, *Edamala*, *Kaippally*, *Mannom*, *Pazhumala*, *Edakkunnom*, *Mundakkayam*, *Murikumvayal*, *Punchavayal*, *Inchiayani*, *Aanakkatty*, *Kompukuthy*, *Kosady* and *Mangapatta*. Panchayat wise classification of families and the number of samples taken are depicted in Table (Table 5.1 & 5.2)

### 5.2.1 Profile of the Data

*Melukavu* and *Moornilavu*, the two adjacent panchayats have a concentration of Christian Malai Arayans (99.18% and 93.78% respectively) while all the tribal settlements of *Mundakkayam* Panchayats are inhabited largely by Hindu Malai Arayans. There are only six Hindu Malai Arayan families at *Melukavu*, and the number of Christian Malai-Aryan families at *Mundakkayam* is only 20. There are 290 Malai Arayan families in *Thalanadu Panchayat* where the *Chovoor* and *Meladukkom* settlements are Christian dominated, whereas the *Adukkom* and *Vellani* settlements shelter an overwhelming Hindu majority. *Poonjar Thekkekara* and *Parathodu* Panchayats have only a marginal



**Table 5.1 Number of Families**

Panchayats	Total no. of families	Hindus	Percentage	Christians	Percentage
Melukavu	735	6	0.81	729	99.18
Moornilavu	805	50	6.21	755	93.78
Mundakkayam	765	745	97.39	20	2.61
Parathodu	106	26	24.53	80	75.47
Poonjar Thekkekara	55	24	43.64	31	56.36
Thalanadu	290	160	55.17	130	44.82
Total	2756	1011	36.68	1745	63.31

Table 5.2 Sample Size

Panchayats	No. of families	Hindus	Christian
Melukavu	116	6*	110
Moonnilavu	122	9	113
Mundakayam	120	112	8
Parathodu	24	8	16
Poonjar Thekkekara	24	11	13
Thalanadu	44	25	19
Total	451	159	262

\* Since there are only six Hindu Malai Arayan families with Melukavu Panchayat all of them are taken as the sample

Malai Arayan population. There are 24 Hindu Malai Arayan families at *Mannom* (ward iii) and 31 Malai Arayan households at *Edamala* (ward vi) in the *Poonjar Thekkekara* Panchayat. *Edakkunnom* settlement (80 families) of Christian Malai Arayans and *Pazhoomala* settlement (26 families) of Hindu Malai Arayans are the Scheduled Tribe areas in the *Parathodu* Panchayat.

### 5.3 Educational Attainment

The Malai Arayans of Kottayam are educationally far more advanced than any other tribal segment in Kerala. The literacy rate among the Malai Arayans is as high as 98.92 which is evident from table 5.3.

There is 100 percent literacy among the Christian Malai Arayans and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Moonnillavu* and *Parathodu* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu*, *Poonjar* and *Mundakkayam* panchayats. It is pleasing to note that about 95 percent of the population have passed the Seventh Standard. Matriculates among the Malai Arayans constitute 68.58 percent of the population. The percentage of matriculates is as high as 90 among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*, 82 among their counterparts in *Melukavu* and 77 among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*. The lowest percentage of matriculates is 52 among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*. However, the number of highly qualified people among the Malai Arayans is comparatively small.



**Table 5.3 Educational Attainment**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Illiterate	Literate only (1-7)	Above 7 & below 10	SSLC & below +2	+2 & below degree	Any degree	Above degree	Technical	Total above SSLC
Melukavu	X	--	--	18	30	18	16	9	9	82
	H	--	10	28	50	12	0	--	--	62
Moonnilavu	X	1	6	24	32	16	8	8	5	69
	H	0	12	29	25	14	12	4	4	59
Mundakayam	X	--	--	10	39	30	17	4	--	90
	H	2	--	23	36	25	5	9	--	75
Parathodu	X	4	4	40	41	10	1	--	--	52
	H	--	2	21	55	14	2	4	2	77
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	--	4	32	42	22	--	--	--	64
	H	2	--	43	48	14	6	5	2	55
Thalanadu	X	0	2	22	20	24	12	4	16	76
	H	4	3	31	41	14	3	2	2	62
Total		1.08	3.58	26.75	36.58	17.75	6.83	4.08	3.33	68.58

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan



Only 14 percent of the population has a University degree or above. There is not even a single degree holder among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara*. On an average 32 percent of the Malai Arayans have passed Plus Two or its equivalent examinations. In the field of technical and professional education too, there is much to be desired; only 3.3 percent of the population has any technical qualification to speak of. Sixty five percent of them read newspapers regularly and 53 percent subscribe to newspapers at their homes.

#### **5.4 Employment and Occupation**

The survey revealed that the Malai Arayans of Kottayam pursue diverse occupations ranging from the All India Services to casual labour. We cannot attribute a particular occupation to the community as a whole. But government employment, agriculture and related activities absorb a majority of Malai Arayans. Employment rate differs from settlement to settlement. Where as 52 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* are government employees, its share is only two percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Poonjar*. Fifty percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* are traditionally agriculturists. They hold ancestral property at an average of more than five acres of land. Whereas 31 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* are agricultural causal labourers, there is hardly any one of that category among the Christian



Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*, *Poonjar* and *Mundakkayam*.

The study reveals that the community has little entrepreneurial and managerial skill, which is evidenced from the fact that self-employed persons constitute only less than two percent of the population. None in the *Poonjar* and the *Mundakkayam* settlements are self-employed. It is to be noted that those who are categorized as self employed are mostly owner-cum drivers of autorikshaws and taxis and small shopkeepers. Except the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Poonjar* who are all agriculturists around 10 percent of the Malai Arayan population is engaged in private sector enterprises and work as teachers, accountants, office staff, salesmen, etc. Semi governmental employment is as high as 33 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*. However, semi government employment constitutes nearly five percent of the population in all other segments.

On the whole unemployment is still a great problem. As much as 52 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* is unemployed and the dependency ratio too is very high. In other segments, except among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* more than 20 percent of the population is unemployed. This can be chiefly attributed to the alienation of land and educational backwardness.



**Table 5.4 Status of Employment**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	No Job	Casual Labour/ Coolie	Agriculture	Self employed	Private employment	Semi govt. Employee	Govt. Job
Melukavu	X	6	--	20	9	7	6	52
	H	51	--	30	--	6	3	10
Moonnilavu	X	22	6	22	--	4	4	42
	H	30	11	22	7	15	--	15
Mundakayam	X	16	10	21	--	10	33	10
	H	9	0	33	--	10	5	43
Parathodu	X	18	31	31	--	16	2	2
	H	26	--	26	5	3	--	40
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	25	12	46	--	4	4	9
	H	24	--	57	--	--	2	17
Thalanadu	X	22	11	27	--	4	--	36
	H	20	6	50	2	6	--	16
<b>Total</b>		<b>224</b>	<b>7.3</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>7.1</b>	<b>4.9</b>	<b>24.3</b>

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

## 5.5 Land Holdings

The Malai-Arayans were traditional agriculturists who once owned 18 *malas* ranging from *Illickan* in the present Kottayam district to *Karimala* in the district of Pathanamthitta. However, they were driven out of their traditional habitation in course of time. A few families in *Poonjar Thekkekara*, *Moornilavu* and *Thalanadu* excepted, they have no ancestral land holdings.

The study reveals that the majority of the Malai Arayans are marginal land holders. About 73 percent of the households own less than two acres of land. An exception to this is case of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara*. More than 92 percent of them have an average holding of more than two acres. More than 61 percent of them hold more than five acres each. The Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Moornilavu* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakayam* hold only less than two acres of land each.

The landless among the Malai Arayans is only two percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Moornilavu*. The percentage of those possessing less than 10 cents is also comparatively very low whereas there is none belonging to this group among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, *Moornilavu*, *Mundakkayam*, *Parathodu* and *Poonjar Thekkekara* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu*. Among the rest the percentage ranges from nine to 19. However, it is to be noted that among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*



**Table 5.5 Land Holdings Among Respondents**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Landless	Land in possession (1-10 cents)	10 – 50 cents	50 cents – 1 Acre	1-2 Acre	2-5 acre	Above 5 acre
Melukavu	X	--	9	29	26	26	10	--
	H	--	--	--	34	66	--	--
Moonnilavu	X	2	10	21	11	31	19	6
	H	--	--	--	40	60	--	--
Mundakayam	X	--	19	27	18	36	--	--
	H	--	--	--	14	27	26	33
Parathodu	X	--	35	25	9	26	5	--
	H	--	--	12	33	22	11	22
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	--	18	27	9	28	18	--
	H	--	--	--	0	8	31	61
Thalanadu	X	--	--	--	28	28	16	28
	H	--	5	5	10	38	18	24
Total		0.16	8	12.16	19.33	33	12.83	14.5

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

(*Edakkannom* settlement) 35 percent of the families possess only less than ten cents. Among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* 34 percent hold at least 50 cents of land and 66 percent are in possession of more than one acre. But there is none holding more than two acres. The landless among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* is nil, but nobody is in possession of more than five acres of land in that settlement. Similarly none among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Moonnilavu* and Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakayam*, *Parathodu* and *Poonjar Thekkekara* possess more than five acres of land. While the settlers of *Mundakayam* hold property without title deeds, the residents of other Panchayat areas hold valid title deeds.

#### **5.6 Mode of Land Acquisition**

We have already discussed the situation regarding the land holdings of the Malai Arayans in the previous section. These land holdings were acquired through inheritance, purchase and in some cases by encroachment. In this respect, there is considerable difference between the Malai Arayans and the other tribals across the country. They have not been the beneficiaries of any government rehabilitation programme so far. Table (5.6) illustrates this point.

Eighty-five percent of the land holdings were acquired through inheritance. The entire land holdings of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Moonnilavu* and those of both the sections of *Parathodu* and *Poonjar*



**Table 5.6 Mode of Land Acquirement**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	By inheritance	By deed	By encroachment	By inheritance of encroached land	By allocation
Melukavu	X	63	37	--	--	--
	H	100	--	--	--	--
Moonnilavu	X	84	16	--	--	--
	H	100	--	--	--	--
Mundakayam	X	34	66	--	--	--
	H	62	--	38	62	--
Parathodu	X	100	--	--	--	--
	H	100	--	--	--	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	100	--	--	--	--
	H	100	--	--	--	--
Thalanadu	X	100	--	--	--	--
	H	73	27	--	--	--
Total		84.66	12.16	3.16	5.16	--

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

*Thekkekara* descended through inheritance. The same is the case with those of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu*. Land acquisition through purchase comes to nearly 12 percent. None among the land holders of *Parathodu* and *Poonjar Thekkekara* acquired land through this means. However, 66 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*, 37 percent of their counterpart in *Melukavu*, 27 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* and 16 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Moonnilavu* acquired the landed property through purchase. Land acquirement through encroachment confines only to the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* and this constitute only three percent of the total holdings. However, it is to be noted that 62 percent of the land holdings of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* were ancestrally encroached lands, for which pattas have not been issued yet.

A striking feature of the Malai Arayan community revealed in this survey is that none of them have received any portion of land as allotment from the government or any other agency as part of the rehabilitation or housing project.

### **5.7.1 Land Alienation**

Land alienation is a serious problem, faced by the tribals all over India. In spite of innumerable agitations and a series of legislations, the condition of the tribals as a whole is still miserable. The Malai Arayans are no exception. The extent of land alienation and the ways through which they were alienated are given in the table 5.7.1.



Table 5.7.1 Means of Land Alienation

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	No. of persons alienated		Lost during former generations	By Deed	By Lease	By guarantee	By encroachment
		Community wise	Settlement wise					
Melukavu	X	63	40	37	37	13	7	6
	H	17		--	100	--	--	--
Moonnilavu	X	52	60	26	56	18	--	--
	H	67		25	25	25	--	25
Mundakayam	X	54	52	43	28	--	29	--
	H	50		--	100	--	--	--
Parathodu	X	73	56	42	42	4	8	4
	H	38		--	100	--	--	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	73	52	45	27	18	10	--
	H	31		--	100	--	--	--
Thalanadu	X	56	52	20	80	--	--	--
	H	47		43	57	--	--	--
Total		52	52	23.4	62	7	5	3

C - Community, X - Christians Malai Arayan, H - Hindu Malai Arayan

The study further reveals that 52 percent of the households lost their landed property in course of centuries. Alienation is as high as 73 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* and *Parathodu*, 63 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and 67 percent among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Moonnilavu*. Reported cases of alienation are lowest among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* (17 percent). The study brings to lime light that the principal source of land alienation as much as 62 percent is through outright sale. The Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, *Mundakkayam* and *Parathodu* lost their land entirely through this process. Among the respondent nearly 23 percent lost their property in the distant past during the days of their ancestors. Land alienation due to lease guarantee and encroachment is negligible, with seven, five, and three percent respectively.

### **5.7.2 Recovery of Alienated Land**

In recent years the Malai-Arayans have become aware of the question of land alienation. They have begun to look for means to regain their lost property. However, the laws of the land are much too inadequate to meet the need.

The study has revealed that 85 percent of the Malai Arayans who lost their property have not yet applied for recovery. This may be due to the fact that they were out of the purview of the provisions of the Act entitling them for litigation in so far as the transactions had been made long before the period envisaged by



**Table 5.7.2 Attempts to Recover the Alienated Land**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Never attempted	Applied for	Among the applied		
				Succeeded	Failed	Decision Pending
Melukavu	X	78	22	--	--	100
	H	71	29	--	--	100
Moonnilavu	X	85	15	--	--	100
	H	75	25	100	--	--
Mundakayam	X	100	--	--	--	--
	H	67	33	100	--	--
Parathodu	X	100	--	--	--	--
	H	100	--	--	--	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	80	20	--	100	--
	H	80	20	100	--	--
Thalanadu	X	80	20	--	--	100
	H	100	--	--	--	--
Total		85	15	37.5	12.5	33

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

the said Legislation. Only 15 percent of the erstwhile landholders had applied for recovery. Out of those who had applied for recovery, only 37.5 percent were successful in their litigation, whereas 12.5 have lost their case. About 50 percent of the complaints is still pending disposal.

### **5.8 Annual Income**

Owing largely to the considerable progress attained by the Malai Arayans during the last one hundred years, the percentage of population below the poverty line is lower than the State and National averages for the tribals. However, it varies from 100 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* to only six percent among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*. Fifty percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and 60 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* are also Below Poverty Line. The table 5.8 shows the annual income of the respondents.

The data reveal that among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* the percentage of marginal income group is comparatively low (three percent and six percent respectively). Among the rest the percentage of people of marginal income varies from seven to seventeen percent with the exception of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* with a 25 percent. Those with an annual income of Rs.20,000 to Rs.54,000 are so widely scattered that there is no uniformity their percentages in the various Panchayat areas of our study. It varies from zero percent to 69 percent. Among



the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, *Moonnilavu*, *Thalanadu*, *Poonjar Thekkekara* and *Mundakkayam*. It is 10 percent or below while 33 percent of the respondents among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Mundakkayam* and 22 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* belong to this group. The upper strata of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* falls in this category. Rs.50,000 – 100,000 income group comprises only 12.5 percent of the total population. On an average 18 percent of the respondents belong to Rs.100,000 – 150,000 income group. 40 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu*, 39 percent of their counterparts in *Melukavu* and 36 percent of that of *Mundakkayam* belong to this group. 11.5 percent the Malai-Arayans are income tax payers. This includes 31 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*, 29 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of the same panchayat and 18 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*. Among others their percentage varies from three to 11, the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* being the lowest range in the scale. What crystallizes from the above data is that the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* are financially very poor and that the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, *Moonnilavu* and *Thalanadu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* are better off.



**Table 5.8 Level of Annual Family Income**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	BPL	10,000 to 20,000	20,000 to 50,000	50,000 to 100,000	100,000 to 150,000	Income Tax payee
Melukavu	X	16	3	11	13	39	18
	H	50	17	33	--	--	--
Moonnilavu	X	18	15	11	15	26	15
	H	17	17	33	16	17	--
Mundakayam	X	14	7	7	7	36	29
	H	6	6	6	19	32	31
Parathodu	X	100	--	--	---	--	--
	H	11	22	22	22	12	11
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	60	10	10	--	10	10
	H	8	8	69	8	--	7
Thalanadu	X	19	10	10	10	40	11
	H	39	25	6	19	8	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>29.83</b>	<b>11.66</b>	<b>18.16</b>	<b>10.75</b>	<b>18.33</b>	<b>11.16</b>

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan, BPL – Below Poverty Line

## 5.9 Nature of Residential Buildings

The Malai Arayans of ancient days lived in 'Anamadams' erected in treetops in order to escape from the attacks of wild animals. During the survey the researcher happened to come across a young man in the Malai Arayan settlement of *Mannom* in *Poonjar Thekkekara*, who along with his friends has erected an 'anamadam' for recreation. Although there were no elephants or other wild animals the structure was a replica of the structures of old as depicted by Samuel Mateer (1883).

The table 5.9 shows the nature of houses of the respondents.

Three and a half percent of the respondents have no permanent house of their own. As many as 30 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* belong to this group. Six percent of the respondent live in thatched houses. While there is none living in a thatched house among both the sections of the Malai Arayan families of *Melukavu*, *Poonjar Thekkekara* and *Mundakkayam* Panchayats 33 percent of the Christian Malai Arayan families of *Parathodu* panchayat are sheltered in thatched houses of poor quality. In the Hindu Malai Arayan settlement of *Pazhumala (Parathodu)* there is hardly any thatched house. 20 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Moonnilavu* and six to Nine percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* and four percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Moonnilavu* also live in thatched houses. As high as 67 percent of



**Table 5.9 Nature of House Building**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Small Huts	Thatched	Tiled	Concrete	Marbled/Granite
Melukavu	X	--	--	44	35	21
	H	30	--	70	--	--
Moonnilavu	X	4	4	70	18	4
	H	--	20	80	--	--
Mundakayam	X	--	--	64	36	--
	H	--	--	56	33	11
Parathodu	X	5	33	62	--	--
	H	--	--	66	34	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	11	--	45	44	-
	H	15	--	77	8	--
Thalanadu	X	--	6	87	7	--
	H	3	9	82	6	--
Total		5.66	6	66.91	18.41	3

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

Malai Arayans of all the six panchayats live in tiled houses. Their percentage varies from 44 among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* to 87 among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu*. None of the respondents from among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Moonnilavu* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* has a concrete house. A considerable number of the respondents from among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* (35 percent) *Moonnilavu* (18 percent) *Mundakkayam* (36 percent) and *Poonjar Thekkekara* (44 percent) and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* (34 percent) and *Mundakkayam* (33 percent) dwell in concrete houses. It may be noted that a considerable number (21 percent) among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* have posh double storied houses with granite or marble flooring. The same is true with a few among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Moonnilavu* (four percent) and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* (11 percent).

#### **5.10 Availability of Infrastructure**

Regarding social infrastructure the Malai Arayans are in a much better position because of the geographical position of their settlements. Most of the Malai Arayan settlements in the district are connected well by roads and electric lines. No Malai Arayan settlements more than 4km away from the nearest bus stop, the highest being a four km distance in the Hindu Malai Arayan settlements of *Thalanadu* and *Moonnilavu*.



Regarding educational facilities nearly 40 percent have a higher secondary school within half a kilometer of their settlements and 80 percent have a school within two km. All of them have a college within a distance of less than 20 kms. Regarding hospital facilities also they are in better position compared to the other tribals in the State. They have primary health centres as close to them as their High Schools. Apart from a number of government hospitals in the immediate vicinity, they have access to a number of private hospitals in the area. However, the nearest medical college is 50-60 kms away from their Settlements.

The survey further shows that the Malai Arayans are not exceptions to the general development pattern of Kerala, that is a low percapita income coupled with an incompatibly higher standard of living. About 48 percent of the Malai Arayans have their own wells and many other have easy access to pure drinking water, at least ten months a year either from natural reservoirs, tube wells, pipelines or wells of the neighbours. Ofcourse, there are centres of tribal habitation with severe scarcity of water as in the case of *Thalanadu* Panchayat.

As regards the supply of electricity, on an average 71 percent of the Malai Arayan families have the facility, although it is a very recent achievement. Right from the ancient times the Malai Arayans have had a high sense of hygiene. About 60 percent of the respondents have toilet facilities. Coming to the field of communication, about 65 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans and 68 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans own radio sets. More than 60 percent of the



Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, *Moonnilavu* and *Mundakkayam* panchayat have the television sets while among the Hindu Malai Arayans with the exception of those in *Mundakkayam* (62 percent) and *Poonjar Thekkekara* (54 percent) only 34 percent have it installed. The Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Moonnilavu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* and *Mundakkayam* are comparatively far ahead in the case of communication facilities as the percentages of those possessing telephone among the respondents are 45, 33 and 55 percent respectively. It is even higher (62 percent) among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*. But at the same time, there is none with a telephone among their counterparts of *Melukavu*. The percentage of telephone subscribers is comparatively very low among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu*, the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* and marginal among the Hindus of the same Panchayat and *Moonnilavu*.

Above 50 percent of the respondents from among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* admitted that they had at least a vehicle while 14 percent of the respondents from the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Thalanadu* and 27 percent of the respondents of Christian Malai Arayans of *Moonnilavu* possess four wheelers. The striking disparity among the members of the community may be confirmed from the fact that while 7 percent of the respondents of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* are in possession of



**Table 5.10 Availability of Infra-Structure**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Well	Electricity	Toilet	Radio	TV	Phone	Fridge	Two wheeler	Car	None of the above	Computer
Melukavu	X	58	72	62	58	61	45	38	27	14	--	7
	H	--	50	13	50	38	--	--	--	--	25	--
Moonnilavu	X	61	89	60	72	66	33	34	28	27	--	2
	H	60	80	60	60	40	40	20	20	--	--	-
Mundakayam	X	60	70	80	70	60	30	30	30	10	--	--
	H	88	100	75	88	62	62	62	38	50	--	--
Parathodu	X	48	71	43	57	19	9	--	--	--	14	--
	H	42	47	41	32	31	21	10	11	10	4	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	55	77	56	67	22	11	11	--	--	--	--
	H	62	62	77	92	54	55	--	--	7	--	--
Thalanadu	X	29	100	85	85	43	14	14	5	14	3	--
	H	12	85	65	70	26	5	5	3	--	11	--
Total		47.91	75.25	59.75	66.75	43.5	27.08	18.66	13.5	11	4.75	0.75

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan



personal computers 25 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of the same panchayat and 14 percent of the Malai Arayans of the same community in *Parathodu* panchayat do not have access to such basic needs as drinking water, toilet and electricity.

### **5.11 Family Relations**

The study reveals that about 95 percent of the respondents are happy with their family relations. Malai Arayans of ancient days were endogamous and so concerned about their clan or *illom*. Marriage relationship was restricted to the particular *Illom*. However, this led to lack of mobility of the population not only in the economic sense but also in its social aspect. Evangelization among a considerable section of Malai Arayans under the leadership of the Church Mission Society paved the way for intercultural marriages with non-tribals. Since the Church of South India consisted of both Orthodox Christians and the newly Christianized tribals of Kottayam, a number of such marriages took place. Accordingly a good number of non-tribals (Orthodox Christians from other parts of the state) were enthusiastically admitted to this tribal community. A liberal interpretation of a tribe by the authorities including the Apex Court entitled the descendents of such non-tribals also to the special privileges including reservation of jobs in the government. It gave a boost to such alliances. This intermingling of tribals and non-tribals is greater among Christian Malai Arayans than among their Hindu brethren. The table (5.11.1) shows the details.



The data reveal that none among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* Panchayat married to non-Malai-Aryan. The percentage of endogamous marriages among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Moornilavu*, *Thalanadu*, *Parathodu*, *Poonjar Thekkekara* and *Melukavu* is also very high with an average of 80.2 percent, while the average percentage of exogamous marriages among the Christian Malai Arayans of all the six panchayat is 66.5. The number of endogamous marriages is considerably high with 56 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* while among the same community of *Melukavu*, it is 45.

As regards exogamous marriages, only among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, marriages with other tribals have been noticed in the survey and the percentage of such marriages among respondents is only 13. Marital alliance with members of the Scheduled Castes communities is very rare (1.6 percent) and no such relationship has been reported from *Melukavu*, *Moornilavu* and *Mundakkayam* panchayats. Among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* and *Parathodu* there are a few such marriages and their percentage is eight and seven respectively. Only a low percentage of such marriages has been reported from among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* (3 percent) and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* (2 percent). It is to be noted here that the Malai Arayans of ancient days considered such as *Pulayas* and *Parayas* as far inferior in status and always kept away from them in all respects (Krishna Iyer,



1937:177). Marriage alliance with other backward communities are also comparatively few as the highest percentage recorded is only 12 among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* and *Parathodu*. No such alliances have been reported from the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* and both the sections of *Mundakkayam*. It is interesting to note that only one case is reported about a Muslim marrying a Malai Arayan woman. In such a case their children are not treated as tribals either by the members of the husband's community or by themselves.

Concerning marriages with Caste Hindus, although such marriages are not prohibited, they are few and far between with an average of 2.8 only. Most of the exogamous marriages in all the Settlements are between tribals and Orthodox Syrian Christians, mostly non-Catholics.

There are a few incidents of exogamous marriages with Syrian Catholics, who belong to the upper strata of the Christians of Kerala. The Christian Malai Arayan Settlement at *Edakkunnom* in *Parathodu* panchayat reported the highest percentage of exogamous marriages with upper class Christians, their counterparts at *Melukavu* and *Poonjar Thekkekara* coming next in order. At *Edakkunnom* the percentage of such marriages is 45 while that of *Poonjar Thekkekara* is 38 and that of *Melukavu* is 33. It is a striking peculiarity of Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* that 13 percent of their marriage relations are not



**Table 5.11 Number of Exogamous Marriages (with non-Malai Arayans)**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	With other tribals	With SCs	With OBCs	With Hindus	With Syrian Christians	Endogamous marriages
Melukavu	X	--	--	4	8	33	55
	H	13	--	6	--	13	68
Moonnilavu	X	--	-	5	5	18	72
	H	--	---	9	--	--	91
Mundakayam	X	--	--	--	--	14	86
	H	--	-	--	--	--	100
Parathodu	X	--	3	3	-5	45	44
	H	--	7	7	--	--	86
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	--	--	8	--	38	54
	H	--	8	12	8	--	72
Thalanadu	X	--	--	--	6	6	88
	H	--	2	12	2	--	84
Total		1.08	1.66	5.5	2.83	13.91	75

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

only exogamous but also with Syrian Christians, while not even a single case of such marriage alliance has been reported from the Hindu Malai Arayans of other Panchayat areas within the ambit of this study.

#### **5.11.2 Size of the Family**

The mobility of population is directly related to the number of children in a family. The survey revealed that there is a positive relationship between the number of children and exogamous marriages.

As the table shows a majority (50.8 percent) the Malai Arayan families have one or two children. The number of such cases is as high as 70 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* and 67 percent among the same community in the *Poonjar* panchayat. However, a considerable number (33 percent) of Malai Arayan families have three to four children. It may be noted that in all the Panchayats among both the Hindus and the Christians the majority of the Malai Arayan house-holds belong to these two categories coming to an average of 83 percent of the total number of families.

In tune with the general character of the present day Kerala Society, large families are scarce among the Malai Arayans also. There is hardly any respondent who has more than 4 children from among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* and *Mundakkayam*. Similarly the percentage of families above six children is nil among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Moornilavu* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* and among both the sections of the



*Parathodu* panchayat. However, 40 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* have seven children or more.

The study reveals that there are inter and intra differences in the socio-economic profile among the various sections and settlements of the Malai Arayans in all the six panchayats. The Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu*, *Moonnilavu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* are far ahead of others in this respect. They very much resemble the other sections of the Kerala Society in every respect and it is very difficult to identify them. At least, a small section of them is averse to revealing their identity even while enjoying all the privileges due to Scheduled Tribes. However, the plight of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* is quite miserable, even though the Malai Arayans in the other segments are comparatively better off. This might be primarily attributed to the fact that avenues of modern education were open to the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* from 1850 onwards and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* were in possession of fertile agricultural land. We cannot ignore the impetus provided by the catalyst role played by the Church of South India in *Melukavu* and the *Malai Araya Mahasabha* of the Hindu segment in *Mundakkayam* in creating a cultural awakening. Later these two centres emerged as the role models for others. However, others were not successful in following either of the models for lack of external assistance and internal resources.



**Table 5.11.2 Size of Family**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	1-2 children	3 – 4 children	5 – 6 children	7 and above
Melukavu	X	37	47	6	10
	H	40	20	--	40
Moonnilavu	X	50	28	11	11
	H	50	33	17	--
Mundakayam	X	70	30	--	--
	H	50	25	13	12
Parathodu	X	59	32	9	--
	H	43	43	14	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	67	33	--	--
	H	58	25	8	9
Thalanadu	X	29	43	14	14
	H	57	37	3	3
Total		50.83	33	7.91	8.25

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

Early access to education enabled them to capitalise on the reservation policy offered by the government. A large number of the elder generation were thus absorbed in government services. The younger generation of educated Malai-Arayans cannot hope for such a privileged position on account of the progress achieved by the other tribal communities in recent years. The chances for them to turn to agriculture are also bleak. Although the proportion of the landless is infinitesimally small (0.16 percent) 40 percent of them hold only less than one acre, which is too small for subsistence.

Land alienation in various ways has been going on since 1789. The much acclaimed legislation of 1975 is totally inadequate to undo the injustice done to them. Although the governmental measures to reallocate agricultural land have failed to achieve the desired end, new schemes to provide electricity, drinking water, housing and educational assistance have proved to be a real blessing to the community in general.

Exogamous marriages have played a significant role in achieving greater social mobility of the Malai Arayan population. But that the *Malai Araya Maha Sabha* and some other social organizations now advocate endogamous marriages for re-establishing their ethnic identity does not bode well for them.



**CHAPTER VI**

**TRIBAL DEVELOPMENT : A BENEFICIARY  
ASSESSMENT**



## 6.1 Introduction

The disparities existing among the same section of the Malai-Arayans in different regions of the same District raise some questions. Do the Malai Arayans have any excuse for their own sad state of affairs? Has the role of the Church been overestimated? Do government measures play a pivotal role in their uplift? What role did the social capital play in the process? What caused the disparities among Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Parathodu*, whose evangelization and modernization started in the same period by the same missionaries? These are pertinent questions pertaining to the development process of the Malai Arayans. In this regard an attempt has been made to register their assessment of the impact of various schemes launched by the government and to solicit their views regarding the major problems confronting them.

## 6.2 Severe Problems Confronting the Community

When the respondents were asked to identify the most serious problem confronting them, the response of a considerable number of them to the questionnaire gave a pleasant surprise to the researcher (23 percent). They asserted that they did not have any such problems of hunger, employment, financial crisis, family unrest, social discrimination, disease, etc. It goes to the credit of the community that no one is considering social discrimination as a serious problem, although 13 percent of the respondents from among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* avered that they had bitter experiences in



the past. It may be noted that the Malai Arayans of yester years enjoyed a better social status as they were called “*Vazhiars*” and “*Vazhathiyars*” by other tribals and castes of the locality (Krishna Iyer 1937: 171). The table 6.1 gives the details of the serious problems threatening the community at present.

The study reveals that about 44 percent of the respondents identified unemployment as their most serious problem. This includes 57 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans and 53 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of the *Thalanadu* and 51 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Moornilavu*. This problem is experienced in all the settlements. Even among the well off Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Moornilavu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* the rate of unemployment is 32 percent, 51 percent and 45 percent respectively. About 20 percent of the respondents say that financial crisis is their major problem. Its intensity is high among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* (41 percent) and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* (38 percent each). Thanks to the god fearing nature of the members of this community, only a small number of family problems are reported (only from the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* and the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*). One of the vital problems facing the community at present is the vulnerability of its members to various diseases. 30 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and



**Table 6.1 Severe Problems Confronted by Respondents**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	No problem	Unemployment	Financial Problem	Diseases	Family unrest	Hunger	Social discrimination	Total no. of respondents
Melukavu	X	44	32	11	13	--	--	--	110
	H	12	50	38	--	--	--	--	6
Moonnilavu	X	7	51	28	14	--	--	--	113
	H	--	40	30	30	--	--	--	9
Mundakkayam	X	44	33	11	12	--	--	--	8
	H	28	45	9	18	--	--	--	112
Parathodu	X	--	38	38	8	10	6	--	8
	H	50	38	12	--	--	--	--	16
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	6	47	41	--	--	6	--	11
	H	40	40	7	--	13	--	--	13
Thalanadu	X	43	57	--	--	--	--	--	19
	H	16	53	18	13	--	--	--	25
Total		24.16	43.67	20.25	9	1.91	1.00	0	451

C – Community X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan



18 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* have complained that they are suffering from serious health problems. The percentage of such persons is not lower in other places also.

### **6.3 Assistance Sought in Case of Trouble**

The citizens of a matured civil society directly approach the civil authorities in case of trouble. Reliance on power brokers and agents is a sign of dependency. Malai Arayans as a rule, are able to identify the seat of authority and the way to approach it directly. The data collected from among the members of the community reveal positive trends in this regard. This together with the advent of Panchayati Raj institutions has effected a salutary change in the entire scenario. The details are given in the table (6.2).

Seventy three percent of the entire Malai Arayans approach either elected representatives or the police in case of trouble. This is indeed a welcome change from the traditional belief among them that settlement of disputes belonged to the province of the tribal chieftain, the parish priest, a local elite, or party leaders. Those approaching the Parish Priest or community leader for redress of grievances constitute only 22 percent. Politics and political parties do not seem to influence their social matrix to any remarkable extent. Only four percent of the respondents approach political party leaders for the redress of their grievances. The number of those approaching a local elite for the purpose is rather too small (1.16%).



**Table 6.2 Assistance Sought in Case of Trouble**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Police	Elected Representatives	Parish Priest/ Community leaders	Political party leaders	Local elite
Melukavu	X	56	24	20	--	--
	H	50	50	--	--	--
Moonnilavu	X	43	57	--	--	--
	H	67	33	--	--	--
Mundakayam	X	57	--	29	14	--
	H	50	--	38	12	--
Parathodu	X	13	43	35	9	--
	H	50	--	50	--	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	12	11	55	11	11
	H	15	71	14	--	--
Thalanadu	X	40	40	20	--	--
	H	17	74	6	--	3
Total		39.16	33.58	22.25	3.83	1.16

C -- Community, X -- Christians Malai Arayan, H -- Hindu Malai Arayan



#### **6.4 Decision Making at the Family Level**

The status of women is a true index of the social empowerment of the community. This is best manifested in the decision making process at the family level. Traditionally there was domestic gender equality among the Malai Arayans even though they followed the patriarchal family system. However, the women folk have to keep an apotropanic distance from religious rituals. With the passage of time there has been a tremendous change both in their outlook as well as in their practices. The table (6.3) shows the latest trends.

Eighty four percent of the respondents claimed that all decisions were taken collectively by the members of the family. Only 5.2 percent of the respondents admitted that they take unilateral decisions without consulting their spouse. In nearly 11 percent of the families husband and wife jointly take decisions for the entire family.

#### **6.5 Participation in Political Activities**

The Malai-Arayans of Kerala are politically conscious. Social reformers like Late Shri Raman Mettor pioneered the formation of the All Kerala Malai-Arayan Sabha (Rajeevan 1990:32) Late Shri. T.J.Joshua (former President of *Moonnilavu* Panchayat and leader of the Christian Malai Arayans) contested from the *Poonjar* (general) constituency in 1980 as an independent candidate and polled a sizable number of votes, roughly more than double the strength of the



total dalit votes in the constituency. Malai-Arayans hold the Presidentship of the *Erattupetta* Block Panchayat and the Standing Committee Chairmanship in the Kottayam Zilla Panchayat. Now there are 14 Panchayat members besides the Presidents of the *Moonnilavu* and *Melukavu* Panchayats, belonging to the community.

To assess the extent of their political participation the respondents were asked to classify themselves under the following categories – (a) active member (b) party sympathizer and (3) indifferent to politics. Although a considerable number of respondents refrained from revealing their stance in this regard one could safely infer their real affiliation. The table (6.4) gives the details.

About 41 percent of the respondents are active members of various political parties. The distribution is as high as 85 percent among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara*; 66 percent among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* and 63 percent among their counterparts in *Parathodu*. There are party sympathizers among all the segments. They constitute 22.67 percent of the total population. Apathy towards political parties and their activities is also there among a considerable number of Malai Arayans (36 percent). This is very high among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* (80 percent), the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* (63 percent) and among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*.



**Table 6.3 Decision Making at the Family**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Husband and wife collectively	All members collectively	Wife/Husband is not consulted
Melukavu	X	18	75	7
	H	--	100	--
Moonnilavu	X	5	95	--
	H	--	100	--
Mundakayam	X	13	74	13
	H	22	78	--
Parathodu	X	5	66	29
	H	13	87	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	11	78	11
	H	8	92	--
Thalanadu	X	33	67	--
	H	3	94	3
Total		10.91	83.83	5.25

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

**Table 6.4 Participation in Political Parties**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Membership in Political parties	Party Sympathizers	Indifference to Politics
Melukavu	X	14	38	48
	H	0	20	80
Moonnilavu	X	47	27	26
	H	40	20	40
Mundakayam	X	20	30	50
	H	38	38	24
Parathodu	X	36	50	14
	H	63	13	24
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	60	10	30
	H	85	8	7
Thalanadu	X	25	12	63
	H	66	6	28
Total		41.17	22.67	36.16

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

## 6.6 Acquaintance with Local Administration

Social awareness and political participation of a community can be better assured by measuring their acquaintance with the local administration and leadership. In States like Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, a large part of the citizenry among the tribal population are ignorant of the very names of their Panchayat Surpanch and MLA (Roy 2002). At the same time, among the Malai Arayans a personal rapport with the MLA and MP is evidenced in the survey. Since the members of this tribal group are not occupying a scheduled area, they enjoy accessibility to nearby township, which naturally widened their social and political contact (see the map). The working of non-governmental agencies since 1850s has contributed a lot to the development of such relations. The following data (6.5) provide the details of the acquaintance with the elected representatives.

About 71 percent of them know at least either the MLA or the Panchayat President in person and 52 percent of them claim personal knowledge and acquaintance with both the Panchayat President and the MLA. About 19 percent of them have personal contact with only one of them. However, this proportion is not uniform among the different settlements. This may be due to the disparity in the popularity of the elected representatives. Those who do not know even the name of their elected representatives are only less than 1.5 percent, whereas 26 percent of them at least know their names.



**Table 6.5 Acquaintance with the Panchayat President and MLA**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Do not know by name	Knows by name both	Knows in person both	Knows in person only the Panchayat president
Melukavu	X	--	16	71	13
	H	--	17	66	17
Moonnilavu	X	--	10	85	5
	H	--	30	40	30
Mundakayam	X	--	31	46	23
	H	--	33	42	25
Parathodu	X	9	35	23	33
	H	--	11	77	12
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	8	31	31	30
	H	--	25	50	25
Thalanadu	X	--	38	50	12
	H	--	36	43	21
Total		1.42	26	52	19.16

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan



## 6.7 Participation in Grama Sabha

The *Grama Sabha* is the basic unit of participatory governance under the Panchayat Raj System. The participation of the Malai Arayans in the *Grama Sabhas* helps them reap the fruit of democratic decentralization. The table (6.6) gives their participation level in the *Grama Sabhas*.

About 61 percent of the Malai Arayans regularly attend the *Grama Sabhas*. Their share is above 80 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Moonnilavu*, the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* and both the sections of *Parathodu*. In contrast, 23 percent of the Malai Arayans never attended the *Grama Sabha* even though they are well aware of it. The ratio of such persons is high among the Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* (47 percent). This can be attributed to the fact that those Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* are economically better off and consider the *Grama Sabha* as futile. The Hindu Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* in contrast, abstain themselves from attending the *Sabha* as their voice is not heeded. However, all the Malai Arayans are fully aware of this constitutional machinery.



**Table 6.6 Awareness About Grama Sabha**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Not even heard the name (Not aware)	Heard the name but never attended (Disinterested)	Attended once or twice	Attends regularly
Melukavu	X	--	54	5	41
	H	--	40	20	40
Moonnilavu	X	--	15	5	80
	H	--	17	17	66
Mundakayam	X	--	25	13	62
	H	--	22	12	66
Parathodu	X	--	13	4	83
	H	--	10	10	80
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	--	20	30	50
	H	--	9	9	82
Thalanadu	X	--	13	13	74
	H	--	17	8	75
Total		--	23.3	12.16	66.75

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

## 6.8 Access to Reservation to Government Jobs

Reservation to government jobs is one of the most effective means of tribal development in India. Among the tribals of Kerala the Malai Arayans constitute the largest section of the beneficiaries of the reservation system. In fact, the socio religious transformation of the community during the 19<sup>th</sup> century provided the necessary background for educational development, which later enabled them to take advantage of the reservation policy. Table (6.7) shows the details.

The survey revealed that about 46 percent of the families at least once availed of the reservation facility. About 19 percent of them availed of reservation more than once and all the eligible members of 12 percent families availed of the same. We can single out the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* as the prime beneficiaries of the reservation policy as 29 percent of them availed of it at least once and 47 percent of them availed of the same for all the eligible members of the family. Although 29 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* also availed of reservation at least once, only 25 percent of them could avail of it for all the eligible members of the family. About 25 percent of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* also availed of reservation at least once and 50 percent of them enjoyed it more than once.



**Table 6.7 Access to Reservation in Government Jobs**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Do not aware	Aware but not yet availed in the family	Got once	Got twice or more	Got government job to all eligible ones
Melukavu	X	--	14	18	21	47
	H	--	57	28	15	--
Moonnilavu	X	--	44	11	28	17
	H	--	60	--	40	--
Mundakayam	X	--	64	--	9	27
	H	--	13	50	12	25
Parathodu	X	--	95	5	--	--
	H	--	50	25	13	12
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	---	88	12	--	--
	H	--	69	8	23	--
Thalanadu	X	--	25	12	50	13
	H	--	74	11	15	--
Total		--	54.45	15	18.83	11.75

C - Community, X - Christians Malai Arayan, H - Hindu Malai Arayan

Those Malai Arayans who got this privilege just once constitute 15 percent of the families. However, about 50 percent of the families have not benefited by the reservation policy at all. Their percentage is as high as 95 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*, 88 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Poonjar Thekkekara* and 74 percent among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu*. However, all the respondents are aware that they are entitled to this privilege.

### **6.9 The Effectiveness of the Tribal Development Schemes**

In section 3.7 we have discussed the various development schemes introduced by the government. In this section we are attempting an evaluation of the effectiveness of such programmes. The table (6.8) provides the details.

About 29 percent of the respondents believe that the government programmes have been effectively implemented. This includes 66 percent of Christian Malai Arayans in *Poonjar Thekkekara*, 50 percent among the Hindu Malai Arayans in *Parathodu* and 40 percent among the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Moonilavu* and 40 percent among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*. However, only five percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Thalanadu* feel satisfied about the implementation. Nearly 33 percent of the respondents are of the view that such programmes have not reached the deserved ones. They have cited many instances of wrong choices, nepotism, red-tapism, favouritism and



**Table 6.8 Effectiveness of Tribal Development Schemes**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Effectively Implemented	Not reaching the desired ones	Poorly implemented	Mere waste	No idea
Melukavu	X	38	34	23	--	5
	H	20	60	--	--	20
Moonnilavu	X	23	41	27	--	9
	H	40	40	20	--	--
Mundakayam	X	40	30	30	--	--
	H	10	30	50	--	10
Parathodu	X	12	30	39	--	19
	H	50	25	25	--	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	66	14	20	--	--
	H	27	27	27	9	10
Thalanadu	X	18	36	36	10	--
	H	5	27	47	5	16
Total		29.08	32.83	28.67	2	7.42

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan



corruption as reason for the failure. About 29 percent of the respondents are of the view that such schemes are not properly implemented and two percent are of the opinion that these schemes are not useful at all and a mere waste of resources. Seven percent of them have no idea of what it is all meant for.

#### **6.10 The Agency for Tribal Development**

Tribal development has drawn the special attention of different quarters such as government departments, local governments, the Church and various social forums and NGOs. The activities of these groups seem to be mutually complementary in achieving the socio-economic targets. However, the Malai Arayans do not have enough faith in all these agencies. This is evident from the table (6.9).

About 40 percent of the respondents consider the Tribal Welfare Department, the clientele organization for the Scheduled Tribes, as their most devout saviours. About 19 percent of them, however, consider that other Government Departments are more dependable. Another 18 percent prefer the Local Self Governing Institutions to others. A notable fact revealed from the study is that there is a considerable erosion of faith in the Church and the NGOs. Only 3.5 percent of the respondents want them to be nodal agencies for implementing development programmes. Nearly 20 percent of them do not have any faith in any of these agencies.



**Table 6.9 The Most Beneficial Agency for Tribal Development**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Local self governing institutions	Government Department	NGO	None of these	Dept. of Tribal Welfare
Melukavu	X	16	43	6	22	13
	H	--	17	--	17	66
Moornilavu	X	20	40	--	10	30
	H	50	17	--	--	33
Mundakayam	X	--	44	--	33	12
	H	--	25	12	38	25
Parathodu	X	4	--	--	13	83
	H	12	--	--	22	66
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	33	--	11	33	23
	H	4	--	--	14	72
Thalanadu	X	34	22	11	11	22
	H	35	16	2	23	24
Total		18.16	18.66	3.5	19.66	40.02

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

### **6.11 Approaches to Exogamous Marriages**

The Malai Arayans were traditionally a secluded exclusive society and they followed endogamous marriages. The *Malai Araya Maha Sabha* and other social organisations even today advocate such marriages. However, the survey revealed that majority of the Malai Arayans do not subscribe to this view. About 58 percent of them are in favour of exogamous marriages and even 22 percent have marriage alliances outside the community. Only 21 percent reflect the orthodox mind. Another 21 percent of the respondents are indifferent to this debate as evident from the table (6.10).

### **6.12 Instances of Social Discrimination**

Elimination of social discrimination is considered as the ultimate aim of tribal development. Over the years, they have been subjected to discrimination of diverse ramifications. However, in the survey, the Malai Arayans themselves testified that such instances are steadily on the decrease. This indeed is a welcome sign. The table (6.11) shows the details.

About 78 percent of the Malai Arayans admitted that they have not experienced any kind of discrimination. About 12 percent have felt discriminated occasionally and 10 percent have had to face it once or twice in their life. It is to be remembered that the Malai Arayans of yester years enjoyed a dignified social status and they themselves considered other tribals such as *Ulladans* and *Ooralis* far inferior to them (Thurston 1909).

**Table 6.10 Approach to Exogamous Marriages**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Those against	Those for *	Indifferent	Those who practised
Melukavu	X	5	77	18	31
	H	8	61	31	30
Moonnilavu	X	6	60	34	23
	H	17	50	33	17
Mundakayam	X	--	67	44	23
	H	75	54	12	--
Parathodu	X	2	80	13	39
	H	62	57	0	15
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	7	85	13	33
	H	19	38	24	19
Thalanadu	X	22	56	11	12
	H	30	13	16	23
Total		21.08	58.17	20.75	22.09

\* Those include both who are in favour and those who practised exogamous marriages

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

**Table 6.11 Instance of Being Socially Discriminated**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Never	Occasionally	Once or twice
Melukavu	X	84	13	3
	H	100	--	--
Moonnilavu	X	84	5	11
	H	83	--	17
Mundakayam	X	60	20	20
	H	77	11	12
Parathodu	X	81	14	5
	H	22	55	23
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	70	20	10
	H	93	--	7
Thalanadu	X	85	--	15
	H	94	--	3
<b>Total</b>		<b>77.75</b>	<b>11.75</b>	<b>10.58</b>

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan



### **6.13 Alcoholic Consumption Among the Malai Arayans**

Rev. Henry Baker (Jr), the Philanthropic missionary who pioneered the evangelization process, had long ago identified addiction as the chief bottleneck in their development (Daniel 1990:66). He launched a massive campaign against this evil and a whole generation was liberated from the addiction. The older generation of the Christian Malai Arayans believe that abstinence from liquor played a significant role in their advancement. However, the younger generation of Christian Malai Arayans and Hindu Malai Arayans in general do not hold this view and only 33 percent of them are free from this vice. Almost 67 percent of the respondents drink alcohol and 30 percent drink it regularly. They consume all types of liquor and about 20 percent drink Indian made foreign liquor as evident from the table (6.12.1 & 6.12.2).



**Table 6.12.1 Alcoholic Consumption Among Respondents**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Never	Occasionally	Daily
Melukavu	X	52	24	24
	H	61	19	20
Moonnilavu	X	46	18	36
	H	11	28	61
Mundakayam	X	8	77	15
	H	18	47	35
Parathodu	X	38	29	33
	H	--	73	27
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	41	33	28
	H	50	25	25
Thalanadu	X	34	41	25
	H	32	39	29
Total		32.58	37.75	29.67

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan



**Table 6.12.2 Nature of Alcoholic Consumption Among Respondents**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Foreign liquors	Local made	Any Liquor	Toddy
Melukavu	X	13	20	55	12
	H	14	14	63	9
Moonnilavu	X	11	7	72	10
	H	18	10	60	12
Mundakayam	X	29	3	55	13
	H	32	18	45	5
Parathodu	X	15	15	60	5
	H	32	11	48	9
Poonjar Thekkkara	X	20	4	63	13
	H	15	12	67	6
Thalanadu	X	23	22	47	8
	H	25	10	53	12
Total		20.58	12.16	57.76	9.5

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

#### 6.14 Contentment of Respondents with the Present State of Affairs

When they were asked whether they were happy with the existing state of affairs none has stated that they are fully satisfied. Similarly, none of them is totally dissatisfied. However, about 14 percent of the respondents are satisfied with the present state of affairs while 64 percent are not fully satisfied. About 22 percent are dissatisfied with their lot as evident from the table (6.13).

At this juncture we cannot attribute a particular factor to the disparities in the field of education, employment, availability of infrastructure and the general well-being among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and *Parathodu*. But we can infer certain factors which caused such divergences. The Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* failed to maintain the tempo of the educational progress started with the setting up of an English school at *Edakunnom*, even before the founding of such an institution at *Melukavu*. While the educational institutions started at *Melukavu* have grown into a first grade college with several subsidiary institutions in and around, the school started at *Edakkunnom* did not survive beyond 50 years. In due course *Melukavu* became the Head Quarters of East Kerala Diocese of the CSI Church while a large section the Christian Malai Arayans in *Parathodu* migrated to other places. Those who remained there were very small in number and were quite alienated from their headquarters at *Melukavu*, being surrounded by other communities. The succeeding generations of the Malai Arayans hated to be called as tribals and pretended to be Syrian



Christians. This turned out to be fatal as they could not claim reservation facilities and other privileges extended to the tribals later.

Eventhough the Church has played a significant role, the extent of Church activities was not the same in all places. This was due to the fact that unlike the Christian Malai Arayans in the adjacent panchayats of *Melukavu*, *Moonnilavu* and *Thalanadu*, those in the other far – off settlements were small in number and surrounded by other communities with whom they mingled freely. The major changes initiated by the Church did not filter into such settlements. So it is improper to areas the role of the Church on the basis of the progress achieved by the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* and *Poonjar*. Although the Church was the first torch-bearer of the development process of the tribal community, the governmental measures electrified the entire field. Governmental measures particularly the reservation policy enabled the Malai Arayans to reap the fruits of education, pioneered by the Church. It is to be noted that the main reason for the comparative backwardness of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* and *Poonjar* lies in their failure to avail of the reservation benefits.

What the Church brought to the Christian Malai Arayans at *Melukavu* was far greater than what the social movements such as *Akhila Thiruvithancore Mala Araya Maha Sabha* could provide for the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*. The social cohesion brought about by such movements boosted their morale high enough to demand for more rights.



**Table 6.13 Level of Satisfaction with the Present State of Affairs**

(Numbers are in percentage)

Panchayats	C	Very much satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied to some extent	Dissatisfied	Totally dissatisfied
Melukavu	X	--	32	52	16	--
	H	--	--	60	40	--
Moonnilavu	X	--	11	79	10	--
	H	--	20	40	40	--
Mundakayam	X	---	9	82	9	---
	H	--	14	64	22	--
Parathodu	X	--	5	62	33	--
	H	--	25	50	25	--
Poonjar Thekkekara	X	--	12	44	44	--
	H	--	--	92	8	--
Thalanadu	X	--	20	70	10	--
	H	--	17	74	9	--
Total		--	13.75	64.08	22.07	--

C – Community, X – Christians Malai Arayan, H – Hindu Malai Arayan

**CHAPTER VII**  
**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**



This thesis virtually seeks to evaluate the process of the evolution of the Malai Arayan society during the last one and a half century. The research has striven to identify the positive and negative facets of their societal progression. It begins with a theoretical investigation into the concept of development. Development is neither a static nor a uniform concept. The gamut of developmental perceptions ranges from traditional to liberal-materialist to Marxian to Gandhian to modern. Though used synonymously, there is a sharp distinction between growth and development. Yet they are complementary to each other. After differentiating endogenous and exogenous development a distinction between economic and political development is attempted. A brief survey of the different approaches to development leads to a detailed inquiry into the Gandhian concept of development. The Gandhian concept of development can be epitomized thus: the development of the whole man and all men. The father of the Nation stressed the need for rural development of which the development of the most down-trodden is the central point. According to Gandhi the whole process of development must begin with the grass roots (Young India 1921:329). In this respect tribal development deserves our utmost attention.

The third chapter attempts a general profile of the tribals in India and the problems that confront them. The current tribal situation in the country is the result of the continuum of historical, social and economic forces at work over the centuries. Ever since the alienated and marginalised sections of the Indian society



were included in a separate schedule of the constitution, they have been designated as Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. Consequently, the term 'tribe' has assumed a special connotation in the Indian context. The tribal situation in Kerala is analysed from different perspectives. With a view to bringing the subaltern populous to the national main stream the fathers of the constitution have incorporated special provisions in the fundamental law of the land. Accordingly the Union Parliament and the State Legislatures have enacted a series of legislations for the actualization of the sublime ideals of our Republic. Various schemes have been launched by the Central and State Governments as well as by the local self-governing institutions for the uplift of the tribals. A brief survey of the various development schemes and a note on the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes also form parts of the chapter. Various approaches to the problem of tribal development including the ten commandments instituted by Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India are also discussed.

The next chapter provides an enquiry into the origin, growth and transformation of the Malai Arayans. It is a historical investigation of the identity of the Malai Arayans in Kerala. Attempts are also made to view the subject under investigation from a sociological, teleological as well as anthropological perspective. The legends and myths surrounding the origin of Malai Arayans are examined. Two controversial hypotheses relating to their hilly habitation are



evaluated. It has been found that they do not stand scientific scrutiny. Drawing copiously from the earlier writings, the physiognomy, habitation, occupation, sartorial customs, diet and kinship of the Malai Arayans are briefly discussed here in. The isoterical moves, typical of the Malai Arayans, with respect to child birth, rites of passage, marriage and obsequies are analysed in detail. The Malai Arayan faith with its similarities and differences with Hinduism and its historical association with the *Sabarimala Deity* are also noted.

The Malai Arayan religion is usually described as animism or spiritism. Nonetheless, remarkable resemblance to the Hindu creed exists in many respects. Worship of Rama, chanting of *Ramanama* at death, *Ganapathypooja* observance at *Onam* and *Vishu*, Pubertorial rites of passage, the use of ritualistic ingredients like *Tulasi*, *Paddy*, *Coconut* etc. are but a few of the observances common to both. Untouchability, *archanas* and abstinence from bovine meat are found in both these communities. Burial of the dead, construction of dolmen, worship of clan Gods, the predominance of the sacred wood, etc. give the Malai Arayans a separate identity. The conversion of a major section of the Malai Arayans to the protestant persuasion and the concomitant dichotomy of the community are dealt with.

The Malai Arayans occupy a unique position in the tribal echelon of Kerala. They were settled agriculturists holding large areas of land. Their harvest festival was a lavish gala affair often lasting for six months beginning from the



month of *Chingam*. They enjoyed the luxury of living in large wooden mansions. A *padipura* stood at the entrance to the front yard of each house. The married couples slept in the privacy of the nuptial chamber even in the hoary past. Absence of beggars and agricultural labourers is a noteworthy feature. They never carried a burden on their bare head. Their eco-consciousness was far ahead of the times. They hunted with the gun and practised magic. Their social position was on a par with that of the Jewish Diasporas in Kerala.

But the Malai Arayans fell on evil days when they were diverted of the ownership of the forests following a proclamation by the Maharaja of Travancore in 1789. Having been reduced to a state of infamy, they approached Rev. Henry Baker (Jr) of Kottayam, who Christianized a large section of Malai Arayans. This brought about a sea change in their life. The Church provided them with education, social security, a sense of motivation and freedom from vices. These early chapters provide the necessary background to examine our first hypothesis that the Malai Arayans have achieved remarkable progress during the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The fifth chapter concerns a socio-economic profile of the Christian and the Hindu Malai Arayans. That the Malai Arayans made rapid strides in the realm of education right from the beginning of the last century has crystallized from the study. Although the statistics about the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* is in conformity with our hypothesis that the Christian Malai Arayans are



comparatively more advanced in every respect the data collected from *Mundakkayam* and *Parathodu* point in the opposite direction. The Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* are far more advanced than the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* in several respects. So it is incorrect to conclude that the socio-economic advancement of Malai Arayans is directly related to their religious persuasion. There are other factors also which have been instrumental in the relative advancement and backwardness in various settlements. The study has revealed that the availability of forest land for encroachment and cultivation was the main reason for the economic advancement of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*. Similarly, isolation from the rest of the Church was the chief contributory factor for the backwardness of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*. However, the primary hypothesis that Malai Arayans made remarkable socio-economic development during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is vindicated by the data garnered from all the settlements.

It also reveals the fact that the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* and the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* are educationally more advanced than their compatriots. The flip side is the educational backwardness of the Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu*. It might have been one of the inevitable consequences of the closure around 1900 AD of the English school started by Henry Baker himself, way back in 1848.



Technically speaking, the percentage of the landless among the Malai Arayans is infinitesimal. However, the landless among the Malai Arayans is considerable when we take into account the fact that marginal landholders are also counted as such. The findings that about 20 percent of the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam* hold more than five acres of land are quite striking indeed. As most of the land alienation occurred a couple of generations ago, a true picture is not reflected in the survey. Hence the act of 1975, which provides for the recovery of the alienated land is inadequate to address the issue. Notwithstanding the fact that a large number of respondents of the upper strata may have under-assessed their annual income, the yawning occupational and financial inequity among the members of the community has come to light. While income taxes payees comprise a small section among both the Christian and the Hindu Malai Arayans there are a large number of families belonging to both the communities live below the poverty line.

The current position of the Malai Arayans is presented through a systematic evaluation of the data collected. The data were collected separately from the two major sections of the Malai Arayan community, Christians and Hindus. The collection of data for the evaluation of the socio-economic advancement of the Malai Arayans has been guided by different parameters. Education, landholdings, employment, occupation and annual income of each family, nature of house building and availability of infrastructure facilities have



been the main criteria. Taking into consideration the problem of land alienation, still a lively issue in the state of Kerala as well as in other parts of the county, the mode of land acquirement, gravity of land alienation and the steps taken for reinstating the alienated land have been specially enquired into.

The study has revealed that the Malai Arayans of both the sections living in different settlements have achieved educational progress in the present generation. Among the Christian Malai Arayans of *Melukavu* region the former generation also attained a minimum formal education. But technical education among the Malai Arayans is more an exception. However, the educational advancement of the Christian Malai Arayans is confined to the *Melukavu* region. The Christian Malai Arayans of *Parathodu* and *Poonjar* are in this respect far below their brethren at *Melukavu* and not on a par with the Hindu Malai Arayans of *Mundakkayam*.

The study reveals that the old practice of building *Anamadam* and small huts on hilltops is now a thing of the past. A large majority of the Malai Arayans of both the sections live in tile-roofed houses. The percentage of concrete houses is considerable. Ofcourse there are some multistoried posh houses in the *Melukavu* area. But in this respect also there is a striking disparity even among the Christian Malai Arayan community itself. Those who live in *Parathodu* and *Poonjar* do not own a single posh house. Moreover, many of the households have only one or two rooms and thatched roofs. As regards the availability of



infrastructure facilities there are a few households possessing personal computers and all other modern facilities of an affluent social life. But there is yet another group among both the sections who lack even the bare necessities of life.

The following chapter considers how the Malai Arayans address themselves to their problems and how they respond to the various systemic institutions intended to bring social security and prosperity to their community. This is essential for a realistic assessment of the problems and challenges the community is now facing. The self evaluation of the Malai Arayans themselves gives the researcher a proper perspective of the Malai Arayan scenario. With this end in view special data have been collected based on the questionnaire, prepared with a self evaluative approach. The respondents were asked to identify their gravest problem and the modus operandi they usually follow in the case of an exigency. Political participation of the community was assessed on the basis of answers to the questions regarding acquaintance with elected representatives such as the MLA and the Panchayat president, awareness of and involvement in the *Grama Sabha* and their political activism.

To make a direct evaluation of the various development schemes launched by the governments, a detailed assessment of the development programmes and the extent of reservation availed of by the respondents were also recorded. Moreover, the most effective agency for tribal development was identified. Social mobility and family relationship were accurately assessed by way of the indirect



method of ascertaining their view on the decision making process in the family, exogamous marriages and alcohol consumption of individuals and by seeking a direct comment on the present state of affairs.

As the study progressed several inferences concerning the subject were arrived at. The deeper the researcher delved into the field, the vaster its scope and sweep seemed to develop. Only the most conspicuous of the conclusions arrived at in the course of this investigation are explicated lest this work should turn unwieldy and cumbersome.

### **Findings of the Study**

The tree is known by its fruit-so goes the proverb. No effort can be said to be successful unless and until it has produced tangible results.

1. The study, which has been conducted on the basis of available literature on the subject and through field investigation proves that the Malai Arayans of Kottayam made tremendous progress in education, financial status, social standing and the standard of living in the twentieth century. Thus the results of the probe confirms the first hypothesis, sought to be verified by the investigation. It should be noted at the same time that the progress achieved by the community is not uniform as it varies considerably from settlement to settlement. The main factor that paved the way for this brilliant achievement can be traced to the exposure to



education the Malai Arayans received, way back in the second half of the nineteenth century. It is true that the upward trend thus started in the nineteenth century got a boost through the twentieth century but it began to produce tangible results only after Independence when along with some other communities they were chosen for preferential treatment through what has come to be known as reservations embodied in the Indian Constitution, the fundamental law of the land.

2. The study does not wholly concur or corroborate with the second hypothesis that the Christian and Hindu Malai Arayans are at different levels of development and the Hindu Malai Arayans are relatively less developed than their Christian counterparts. While the first part of the hypothesis is confirmed by the study, the second part is at considerable variance with the findings of the present investigation. Some of the Christian Malai Arayans especially those who live at *Edakannom* are less advanced in every respect than many flourishing Hindu Malai Arayans.
3. The Church has been instrumental in winning for the community such basic requirements for a decent living as education, motivation and social security. The Christian missionaries set up schools and other centres of learning in the Malai Arayans settlements. With missionary zeal they lighted the torch of modernization among them. Modern education brought about changes in every field of human activity. As a result, the



infrastructure for their socio-economic development was laid during the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since then the urge for the revival of the lost glory was rekindled in them. They were now aware of the exploitation and repression they were subjected to. The Missionaries helped them liberate themselves from their oppressors. They now began to get reasonable prices for their cash crops on the one hand and consumer goods at a reasonable rate on the other. Thus they extricated themselves from the vicious debt trap. The concerted efforts of the dedicated missionaries helped to create an awareness among the Malai Arayans of the injurious nature of alcoholism, a long afflicted social menace among the members of the community. Once they were freed from the curse of alcoholism, nothing could stand in their way to advancement and progress. The newly embraced faith also helped to liberate from many a superstition to which they had been victims for generations.

4. It is found that the proselytisation of the Malai Arayans proved beneficial to the community in an indirect way, perhaps not even originally intended by the Missionaries themselves. The conversion of many of them to the Christian faith led to exogamous marriages with non-tribals who belonged to the Church of South India and other Christian denominations. This paved the way for the greater mobility of the Malai Arayan population. When they came into close contact with the non-tribal urban population,



they assimilated many of the social practices of the non-tribal society. The English schools and Sunday schools provided them education, motivation and competitiveness. Majority of them became literates in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and they sent their children to school. Their education stood them in good stead when the Malai Arayans were brought within the ambit of the reservation policy. When large number of young men migrated to cities for the purpose of employment, the mobility of the population increased further among these tribal community.

5. The proselytisation work, already referred to, triggered off similar efforts for reformation among the Hindu segments of the Malai Arayan community, which ultimately helped them to progress by leaps and bounds. The organizations thus formed to foster communal solidarity helped them to work together and fight for social and economic justice and created an awareness in them of the various welfare measures of the governmental agencies. As they shed their slavish mentality, which has impeded in their progress for long, they were able to get into the mainstream of the society.
6. It has been further noticed that many of the Hindu Malai Arayans were forced to leave their traditional habitats and take refuge in the *Mundakkayam* forests. This proved to be a blessing in disguise, for, the forest officials took pity on them and helped them settle down in that area.



Later they came to be treated as the lawful settlers in their own respective land, which yielded good income and enabled them to lead a prosperous life.

7. The study has revealed that the enviable progress made by the Malai Arayan community has been mainly due to their own hardwork. It could be clearly understood that the government has done little in rehabilitating the Malai Arayans of the Kottayam district. Unlike most other tribal communities, the Malai Arayans have not at any time pressed the government for allotment of land nor has the government gratuitously given them any.
8. Another important fact that the study has revealed is that the Malai Arayans are a peace loving people. Never have they resorted to violence of any kind for the purpose of getting any of their grievances redressed or any of their rights granted. They seem to have imbibed the Gandhian approach in resolving their problems and as a result they always have a smooth passage through sustained progress and development.
9. In racial traits the Malai Arayans remind us of the Kurichiars of North Malabar, who have a fair complexion unlike most other tribals. It is quiet possible that the Malai Arayans were once the inhabitants of the plains and lived the life of a plain dweller engaged mainly in agriculture. Foreign incursions at some time might have driven them to hilly regions for



reasons of safety and security. This might have caused great changes in their life style as they were forced to adapt themselves to the new surroundings. The fact that they have made astounding progress with in the short span of a generation indicate that they must have originally belonged to a superior race.

10. The inability to take initiative, lack of entrepreneurship, disunity and intra-group rivalry are the chief baneful traits in the character of the present Malai Arayan society. The benefits of reservation are mostly availed of by the creamy layer of this tribal population. This might be due to the ignorance and inability of the less fortunate ones among them to make use of the opportunity.
11. The study contradicts with the prevailing notion that the religion of Malai Arayans of Kottayam can be termed as animism. Many of the legends relating to the origin of the Malai Arayans are related to Hindu Dieties and Rishis such as *Rama, Siva, Hanuman, Agastya* and *Sastha* to mention but a few of them. The Malai Arayans are found giving offering to deities with such articles as *Coconut, Thulasi*, etc. identical to those offered in Hindu Temples. From this it is safe to conclude that their religion is a crude form of the Hindu faith. They have been found making pilgrimage to *Sabarimala* in exactly the same way the Hindus do. This custom



prevailing among the community reconfirm the surmise of their Hindu affinity.

12. An analysis of the responses of the Malai Arayans in the questionnaire reveals that unemployment is the greatest problem that they face at the moment.
13. Closely intimate family ties exist in the families of the Malai Arayans as a whole with the sole exception of those Christian Malai Arayan families at *Edakunnom*.
14. The Malai Arayans as a whole seem to take considerable interest in politics, as they are found keeping a close acquaintance with the elected representatives in the region.

### **Recommendations and Suggestions**

Torn between two equally bitter alternatives and caught between Scilla and Charybdis the tribal community in Kerala is passing through a most critical phase in its history which, if left to take its own course, may once for all obliterate its identity, which has always remained a contributory factor in the rich multiracial society that this great nation is so much proud of. The crux of the problem that cankers this unique section of India's population is that owing to a member of occurrences beyond its control its strong traditional commitment to a forest – orientated pastoral pattern of life was broken, and was lured largely by



the promise of a life of ease and comfort offered by the instruments of modernity. But, sad to say, it has failed to secure an enthusiastic welcome into the mainstream of life, beset by prejudices and preferences inherent in a caste-dominated hierarchical setup institutionalized over tens of centuries. The research scholar makes no pretence for such infallible wisdom as to prescribe a universal panacea for the manifold ills which the down trodden community currently suffers from. All the same, as a fellow citizen, whose destiny is inextricably bound with the fate of India as a whole, and that of Kerala in particular, he cannot be blind to the perils that threaten the very existence of the multifaceted tribal population and shirk his responsibility to explore ways to help avert the impending disaster by cutting a feasible way out from such a dilemma. An elaborate enquiry into the tribal situation in Kerala with a special focus on one of its most predominant constituents the Malai Arayans with their concentrations in six specific geographical areas has yielded some compelling conclusions, which he sincerely believes to be of immense help in working out solutions to many of the vexatious problems in the field of tribal rehabilitation in general and in particular in achieving a healthy re-orientation of the Malai Arayan Community on which this investigation has placed a special emphasis. With the said avowed goal in mind the author of this research work is pleased to propose the following suggestions and recommendations.



1. The accent of development must be internal, not external. The policies and programmes of the government do not take into consideration the latent talents of the tribal people. There is no gainsaying the benefits received in the form of free rationing, free housing, free implements and job reservation. But they won't serve long term purposes. What is more important is the spiritual and intellectual enlightenment of the tribals. Self discovery, self knowledge and self reliance are the natural corollaries of enlightenment. So education must be designed so as to light up self knowledge. And herein lie the seeds of self empowerment.
2. A judicious restructuring of the reservation policy is a categorical sociological imperative. A scientific categorization of the tribals based on their present social status is to be effected. Reservation shall be limited to two generations. Otherwise, those who have never been able to avail themselves of the benefits are likely to be neglected for ever. It is time, the very concept of tribal status is redefined on the basis of the present social and economic condition and not of hereditary factors.
3. One of the criteria for selection of beneficiaries of various social welfare schemes should be financial. Doling out free provisions to the creamy layer is a national waste.
4. Exogamous marriages will go a long way in bringing the tribals to the national mainstream. In order to encourage such marriages reservation and



other benefits may be extended to the progeny of exogamous couples for two generations irrespective of financial status.

5. Indigenous knowledge and folklores are being lost all around the world. They are part of our historical heritage. The State may take up the matter and meet all the expenses for their promotion and preservation. A special machinery for the purpose may be set up. In this process the active participation of the tribals is to be ensured.
6. At present there is no special provision for the uplift of the lowest stratum of the tribal community. The reservation policy may be restructured so as to ensure priority to them in all matters in the interest of greater justice.
7. Various schemes are being implemented for the uplift of tribals. But the absence of an agency to monitor their effectiveness is a problem to be addressed by the government. It should be made mandatory on the part of the officials concerned to be responsible for the effective utilization of funds released by the government for tribal development. The voluntary agencies committed to the cause of tribal development can do a lot in this regard.
8. A rethinking on the entire tribal development projects is quite desirable in the present context. So the Government of India may appoint a commission to study the problem in all its aspects.



9. A detailed probe into the origin and evolution of the Malai Arayan community from the anthropological angle is most likely to shed light on the whole truth about the much mooted (also disputed) question of the Adivasi situation in this sub-continent.
10. An earnest attempt is to be made by all concerned to identify the positive values of the social systems of the tribals, which are more in conformity with nature.

Tribal development is a subject with an enormous scope for both extensive and intensive research. Nonetheless, this research study has been sought to be made as comprehensive as possible, ofcourse remaining within the confines of its inherent limitations, posed chiefly by the dearth of reliable material on the subject now available. It is hoped that this study will inspire further academic inquires in the field.



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## APPENDICES



## A CASE STUDY OF MALAI ARAYANS IN KOTTAYAM DISTRICT

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

1. Name :
2. Religion :  Hindu  Christian  Any other
3. Age :  Below 21  21 – 30  31 – 50  
 Above 50
4. Sex :  Male  Female
5. Marital Status :  Single  Married
6. Type of family :  Joint  Extended  Nuclear
7. Educational Attainments :  Literate  VII Standard  Matriculate  
 Graduate  Above graduation/Technical
8. Occupation :  Unemployed  
 Agriculture/Self employed  
 Private sector employment  
 Semi-government Job  
 Government Job
9. Your monthly income :  Below 500  500 – 1000  
 1000 – 3000  3000 – 10,000  
 Above 10,000
10. Your monthly family income :  Below 1000  1000 – 5000  
 5000 – 10,000  10,000 – 25,000  
 Above 25000
11. (a) Do you own land :  Yes  No  
(b) If yes, how many acres :  Below 10 cents  10 – 1 acres  
 1 – 2 acres  2 – 5 acres  
 Above 5 acres
12. (a) Are you engages in agriculture :  Yes  No  
(b) If yes, what are the major crops :  Paddy  Rubber  Spices  
 Coconut  Any other
13. (a) Did you or your ancestors lost land through alienation :  Yes  No  Don't know  
(1) If yes how many acres :  Below 5 acres  5 – 10 acres  
 10 – 20 acres  20 – 50 acres  
 Above 50 acres



- (2) Mode of land alienation :  Lease  Bondage  Deed  
 Encroachment  Any other
- (3) Did you make any attempt to regain it :  Not applied  
 Application pending  
 Application rejected  
 Planning to apply
14. Whether your house is electrified :  Yes  No
15. Do you have a telephone connection :  Yes  No
16. Do you own :  Radio  Television  Refrigerator  
 Washing machine  Two wheeler  
 Personal Computer  Four Wheeler
17. Do you have a toilet at your home :  Yes  No
18. Source of water :  Own well  Govt. Supply  
 Natural Source  Neighbour's well  
 Any other
19. Distance between your home and the nearest
- (1) Bus stop :  5 mins walk  10mins walk  ½hr walk  
 1 hour walk  Above 1 hour
- (2) School :  below 5 km  10 km  20 km  
 25 km  Above 25 km
- (3) College :  below 5 km  10 km  20 km  
 25 km  Above 25 km
- (4) Hospital :  below 5 km  10 km  20 km  
 25 km  Above 25 km
20. (a) Do you have a bank account :  Yes  No
- (b) If yes, what is the nature of your relationship with the bank :  Depositer  Loanee  Share holder  
 Employee  Other services
21. Whom do you prefer to bank with :  Commercial bank  Post Offices  
 Co-operative banks  Private financiers  
 Local Money lender
22. Do you approach private finance companies in case of emergency :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
23. Do you have an LIC Policy :  Yes  No
24. Are you an income tax payee :  Yes  No
25. (a) Do you read news papers daily :  Yes  No

- (b) If yes, do you have the subscription of the same at your home :  Yes  No
26. Do you normally caste your vote in the election :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
27. Do you have any role in the election/ campaigning of any of the candidate :  No role at all  Not very much role  
 Some role  Big role  
 Neutral
28. Do you personally know  
(1) M.P :  Not at all know  Heard the name  
 Know, but no personal relations  
 Know very well
- (2) MLA :  Not at all know  Heard the name  
 Know, but no personal relations  
 Know very well
- (3) Panchayat president :  Not at all know  Heard the name  
 Know, but no personal relations  
 Know very well
29. Your acquaintance with political parties :  No relationship  Well wisher  
 Member  Active member  
 Office bearer
30. Do you attend political meetings :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often
31. (a) Did you attend any political rally and strike :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
- (b) If yes, what was the inspiration for that :  Sympathy for the cause  Persuasion  
 Coercion  Remuneration  Any other
32. Do you attend Grama sabhas :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
33. Are you a member of any co-operative society :  Yes  No
34. Whom do you approach in case of trouble :  Local Elite/ Tribal Leader  
 Political parties  Religious leader  
 Police  Elected representatives
35. What is your opinion about tribal development programmes :  Not at all useful  Not very much useful  
 Some what useful  Neutral  
 Very much useful
36. Are you a beneficiary of such programmes :  Yes  No

37. Do you believe that middlemen stole the benefits of such programmes due to you :  Strongly disbelieve  Disbelieve  
 Neutral  Believe  Strongly believe
38. Does any one in your family got govt. jobs through reservation :  Yes  No
39. If No, what do you think as the reason for it? :  Not qualified  Tough competition  
 Corruption  Not aware  Any other
40. Who, do you believe best serve your interested :  State Government  Panchayat  
 Tribal Welfare Department  
 Church  Any other agencies  
 None of them
41. Do you like to be known as a Malai Arayan :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
42. Are you proud of your Malai Arayan Identity :  Not at all proud  Not very much proud  
 Some what proud  Neutral  
 Very much proud
43. Do you support exogamous marriages :  Strongly oppose  Oppose  Neutral  
 Support  Strongly support
44. Did you have any experience of social discrimination :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often
45. How do decisious are taken at the family level :  Head of the family  Husband and Wife  
 All Members  Any other manner  
 Accept the decree of the clan leader
46. Do you celebrate festivals like Onam and X'mas :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
47. Do other communities co-operate with you on occasions like marriage, death etc. :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
48. Do you consume liquor :  Never  Rarely  Sometimes  
 Very often  Always
49. If yes which brand :  Toddy  Arrack  Home made  
 Foreign Liquor  All
50. What is the most serious problem confronter your family :  Unemployment  Poverty  
 Social backwardness  Diseases  
 Any other
51. Are you satisfied with your present state of affairs :  Very dissatisfied  Some what dissatisfied  
 Satisfied  Some what satisfied  
 Very much satisfied

## LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED

Most Rev. K.J. Samuel,	The first Malai Arayan to become the Moderator of Church of South India.
Rt. Rev. Michael John,	the first Malai Arayan to become a Bishop of the Church.
Shri M.S.Joseph. I.A.S (Rtd.)	the first IAS among the Malai Arayans and Former State Election Commission.
Smt. C.K. Janu,	Chairperson Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha
Rev. P.D. John,	Senior Malai Arayan Parson and co-author of Christian Encyclopaedia.
Late Shri. T.J. Joshua	The first Malai Arayan to become President of a Grama Panchayat.
P.K.Sajeev	Author of "Raman Mettor" (1995)
P.K. Rahavan Master	President. Akhila Tiruvithamcore Malai Araya Sabha
K.R. Bhasi Edakunnon	Ex-President, Akhila Tiruvithamcore Malai Araya Sabha
K.R. Janardanan	Secretary, Akhila Tiruvithamcore Malai Araya Sabha
Rev. Dr. K.G. Daniel	Author of Conversion of the Hill Arraians of Kerala (1995).
Shri. M.K. Narayanan Poochapra	Secretary, Senior Leader, Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha
Shri. I.C.Chacko Kulathikanadam	Melukavu mattom, author of <i>Araya charitham</i> (mal)
Shri. C.C. Jacob	Member Syndicate, M.G. University, Kottayam.
Rev. P.V.Joseph	The first Malai Arayan to become the Principal of a first Grade College.



Shri Kallapally Sukumaran	Poonjar, Malai Arayan Social worker
Shri. Kunjikutton Punchavayal	Former President, All Kerala Malai Araya Sabha.
A.J.Issac	Malai Arayan Leader and Formerly Member of the Zilla Panchayat, Kottayam
V.I. Samuel	President, MASS
K.N. Prabhakaran, Kannathu	Chief Editor & Publisher <i>Aarannya Nadam</i> (monthly)
T.N. Sajeevan	President, Kerala Adivasi Ekopana Samithi, Idukki
P.A. Sukumaran	Malavasi Mahajana Sangham.
Pallipuram Balan	General Secretary, Kerala State Adivasi Union
Karimban Jose	Tribal mission Idukki District
Edakkal Mohan	Wayanadu Adivasi Vikas Parishath
P. Sadasivan Kani	President <i>Kerala Giri Varga Kani Sangam</i>
Choman Moopan	Adivasi Samrakshana Samithi Wayanad
KT. Kunjikannan	Adivasi Samakshana Samithi Kozhikode
T.K.Krishnankutty	Adivasi Samakshana Samithi (CPIML)
Shri. Ayyappan Koruthi	Secretary, Punchavayal Library, Punchavayal
P.S. John I.A.S	I.G. Registration, Thiruvananthapuram (The first Malai Arayan to occupy the post)
T.J. Mathew IAS	District Collector, Idukki (The first Malai Arayan to occupy the post)
P.S. Enos IAS	District Collector, Pathanamthitta (The first Malai Arayan to occupy the post)
O.J.John	Tribal Development Officer, Chalakkudy and Leader of MASS
K.Joseph Mathew	The first Malai Arayan to become the Chief Engineer of Kerala



Sam George	Malai Arayan Leader and District Panchayat Member Idukki
Baby Mundapally	Malai Arayan Leader and President, Block Panchayat, Idukki.
Samuel Haiskkiyel	Malai Arayan Leader and President, Melukavu Grama Panchayat.
K.N. Geethakumari	Malai Arayan Leader and Vice President, Thodupuzha Block Panchayat.
Prof. M.Kunhaman	Expert in Tribal affairs and Professor, University of Kerala, Thiruvananthapuram
Dr.P.K.Sukumaran Nair	Director (KIRTADS), Kozhikode.



## TRIBAL POPULATION IN KERALA

Name of Tribe		Total population
1	Adiyan	9690
2	Arandan	196
3	Eravallan	3139
4	Hill Pulaya	2851
5	Irular/Irulan	21836
6	Kadar	2021
7	Kammara	123
8	Kanikaran/Kanikkar	16464
9	Kattunayakan	12155
10	Kochuvelan	36
11	Kondakapus	5
12	Kondareddis	442
13	Koraga	1651
14	Kota	36
15	Kudiya, Medakudi	751
16	Kurichihan	28287
17	Kurumans	23444
18	Kurumbas	1820
19	Mahamalesar	36
20	Malai Arayan	24949
21	Malai Pandaram	2939
22	Malai vedan	6331
23	Malakkuravan	547
24	Malasar	1061
25	Malayan	7542
26	Malayarayar	5495
27	Mannan	7085
28	Marati	26042
29	Muthuvan, Mudugar, Muduvan	17378
30	Palleyan	236
31	Palliyan	1518
32	Palliyar	155
33	Paniyam	67948
34	Ulladan	14846
35	Uraly	10335
	All	320967

Source: Census report 1991

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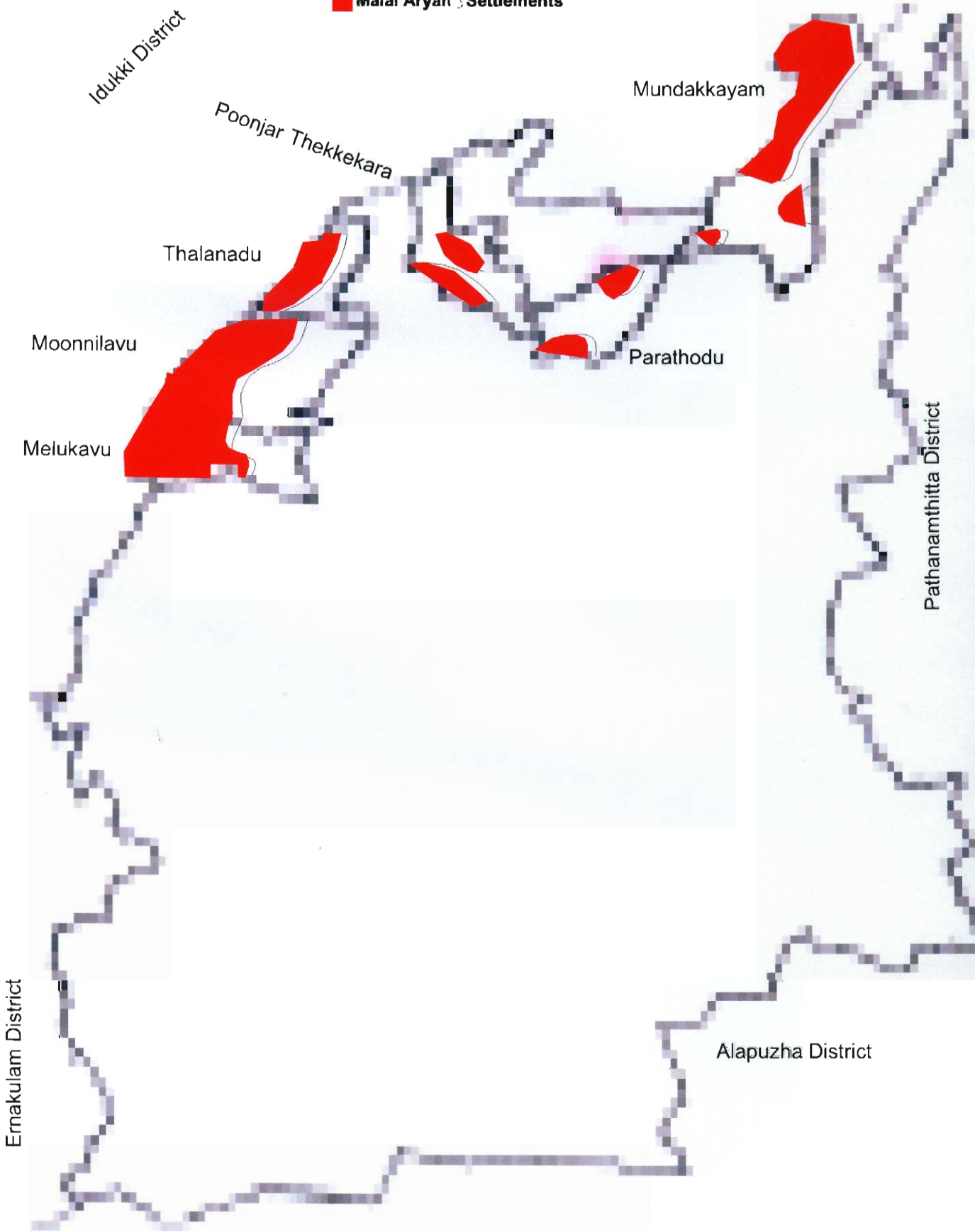
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# MAP OF KOTTAYAM DISTRICT SHOWING MALAI ARYAN SETTLEMENTS

■ Malai Aryan Settlements



Source : C.S.O. Thiruvananthapuram

