REVISITING SLAVERY: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ADIYAS AND PANIYAS IN KERALA

PARVATHY P

THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY

HYDERABAD- 500 007

DECEMBER 2022

REVISITING SLAVERY: A CULTURAL HISTORY OF THE ADIYAS AND PANIYAS IN KERALA

PARVATHY P

Supervisor

PROF. K. SATYANARAYANA

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies

Department of Cultural Studies

School of Interdisciplinary Studies

THE ENGLISH AND FOREIGN LANGUAGES UNIVERSITY

HYDERABAD- 500 007

DECEMBER 2022

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the dissertation titled **"Revisiting Slavery: A Cultural History of the Adiyas and Paniyas in Kerala"** submitted to the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad in partial fulfilment of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies** is a record of original research work done by me under the supervision of **Prof. K. Satyanarayana**, Department of Cultural Studies, and that the dissertation has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree/ Diploma/ Associateship/ Fellowship or any other similar titles.

Place:

Date:

Parvathy P

Doctoral Research Student

Department of Cultural Studies

The English and Foreign Languages University

Hyderabad- 500 007

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation titled **"Revisiting Slavery: A Cultural History of the Adiyas and Paniyas in Kerala"** submitted to the English and Foreign Languages University, Hyderabad, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of **Doctor of Philosophy in Cultural Studies** is a record of original research work done by **Parvathy P** during her period of study 2017- 2022 in the Department of Cultural Studies, The English and Foreign Languages University, under my supervision and guidance and the dissertation has not formed the basis for the award of any Degree/ Diploma/ Associateship/ Fellowship or any other similar titles.

Place:

Date:

Prof. K. Satyanarayana

Research Supervisor

Department of Cultural Studies

The English and Foreign Languages University

Hyderabad- 500 007

Dedication

To My Grandparents… in Loving Memory

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study was made possible with the help and support of a number of people. I would like to extend my gratitude to them and acknowledge each and every one of them for constantly being with me throughout this journey.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Prof. K. Satyanarayana for giving me unfailing guidance, motivation and support throughout my research work. Prof. Satyanarayana has guided me at every stage of my research work. This thesis developed from a number of discussions with him. I also owe a lot to him for my development as a critical thinker throughout my career as a researcher in EFLU. His help was of immense importance in shaping my research questions and critiquing my own observations. It was an immense privilege for me to work under such an eminent scholar and a compassionate human being for five and half years. Thank you, Prof. Satyanarayana, for guiding me without failure.

I thank Prof. Satish Poduval, Head of the Department, and a member of the advisory committee, for his insightful comments regarding my project throughout my career in EFLU. Discussions with him allowed me to approach my research questions from various theoretical perspectives. Prof. Poduval's feedbacks were absolutely invaluable in completing my thesis.

The faculty members in the department helped in my academic growth. I thank all the teachers in the department of Cultural Studies. I was able to develop critical thinking and widen my research interests by auditing various courses offered by Prof. Madhava Prasad, Prof. Dilip. K. Das, Dr. Uma Bhrugubanda and Dr. M. Parthasarathi.

I thank Dr. Sanal Mohan, a historian of modern Kerala, for his valuable comments during the initial phases of my research work. He was kind enough to guide me through the archival research required for my project. Dr. Mohan discussed with me various techniques to read the archival materials as well. He also introduced certain important archival sources related to my thesis which would have otherwise remained unknown to me.

Prof. T. M. Yesudasan and Prof. M. Dasan helped me with their timely suggestions on how to go about with my research topic while I was clueless about the theoretical

understandings required for the same. Their expertise in the field of subaltern studies in Kerala helped me a lot during my meetings with them.

I acknowledge the University Grants Commission for funding my research project for five years under the JRF/ SRF scheme.

I also acknowledge the British Council and the Charles Wallace India Trust for giving me timely fellowships. The Charles Wallace India Trust Fellowship allowed me to access valuable archival materials in the UK which were crucial in shaping my research project. I would not have accessed some of these materials, had I not been in the UK. My visits to London and Oxford enabled me to access the British Library, SOAS library and Weston Library.

I thank Prof. Barbara Harris- White for hosting me at Oxford for half a month in 2019. She was kind enough to share her views related to my research questions. She has been a wonderful and kind human being and made me feel at home in the UK.

I thank Dr. George Kunnath for sharing with me valuable photographs related to my topic. Moreover, Dr. Kunnath has been a benevolent host to me in the UK.

I extend my gratitude to Prof. Alpa Shah and Dr. Jens Lerche, who agreed to meet me at their offices in London, in spite of their busy schedule. Their suggestions were invaluable for me to reframe and modify my research questions.

I thank Dr. K. V. Syamprasad and his family for hosting me at London and Winchester. I would not have made it if not for them.

Dr. Alena Kulinich, Dr. Maryam Aslany, Julie Dayot and R. C. Sudheesh at Oxford were kind enough to share their thoughts related to my project. They also helped me to get familiarised with the resources at the Weston Library in Oxford.

I thank my teachers P. J. Thomas and Jose Jacob Mullakkariyil for orienting me to pursue academics since my Bachelor's degree at SB College, Changanassery.

I thank the staff at India office Records at the British Library, SOAS Library and the Weston Library in the UK.

I thank the librarians and other staff at Ramesh Mohan Library, EFLU, Indira Gandhi Memorial Library, HCU and Anveshi Library, at Hyderabad for helping me access both online and offline research materials.

I thank the librarians and staff at various libraries in Kerala- MG University Library, Calicut University Library, Kerala University Library, and State Central Library- for helping me to access vernacular materials (books and archival resources) related to my project.

I thank the staff at KIRTADS, Calicut for allowing me to access their library. The staff at KIRTADS helped me to record and closely observe the adivasi cultural performances during the tribal festival 'Gaddika' in 2018 and 2019.

I thank the staff at Tamil Nadu State Archives, Chennai and Kerala State Archives, Calicut for their patience and time in helping me to extract the archival materials related to this research project.

I would like to extend my thanks to historians and literary figures in Wayanad who agreed to meet me in spite of their busy schedules. K. J. Baby, E. T. Raju, Mundakkayam Gopi, M. R. Pankajakshan, Krishnaveni Aiyappan, Kunjikrishnan Master, C. Divakaran and Vinod Vellamunda shared with me valuable insights on the culture and history of adivasis in Wayanad. Discussions with them helped me to complicate my notions regarding 'adivasi.'

I thank Eachome Gopi for helping me navigate through Valliyoorkkavu temple festival. It would have been difficult for me to access valuable field data without his support as a temple trustee.

I thank Shebin Mooparuveedu, for sharing with me valuable digital materials related to my project. He was kind enough to discuss with me the details regarding the traditional rituals of the Adiyas and Paniyas.

I remember and extend my gratitude to a handful of adivasi friends who helped me to cut through the inhibitions that an ethnographer would encounter in the field. Vinu Kidachulan, Sukumaran Chaligadha, Manglu Sreedhar, Leela Santhosh, K. P. Madhu and C. K. Binu spent hours with me to help me reframe some of the commonsensical

understandings regarding the Adiya and Paniya culture. I thank them not only for their valuable suggestions regarding my research questions, but also for treating me as family.

I thank G. Harilal, my uncle, who has been a constant companion and guide during my field trips in Wayanad. I would not have executed this project without his kind support throughout five years.

I thank Dr. Divya Muraleedharan, Dr. Ganesh Chilke Nagorao and Atheeta Clare George, my friends, for editing my chapters and inspiring me to push beyond limits.

I thank the school secretary Prasanna and office staff Jyothi Amma for their help and support.

My uncle Bijukumar M.G and aunt Asha Bijukumar made me comfortable during my stay at Hyderabad since 2017. Their family has been a home away from home for me. I thank them for supporting me.

I thank my neurologist Dr. Deepak Devarajan for enabling me to come back into academics after struggling with severe migraine attacks, stress and anxiety.

I thank Susan Mathew, for giving me constant support, courage and hope in dark times to move ahead with my research project.

I thank Savitha Girish, my sister and friend for checking on my family while I was away from home for several years.

Last, but not the least I thank my mother for her perseverance and courage in single handedly raising me. She has been with me in ups and downs and taught me to be resilient during difficult times throughout my research career. I owe much to her for showing me that life is worth living.

ABBREVIATIONS

BLSA 1975 - The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (1975)

BLSA 1976 – The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (1976)

CPI - Communist Party of India

CPI (M)- Communist Party of India (Marxist)

CPI (ML)- Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist) Liberation

EIC- East India Company

ILO - International Labour Organisation

IOR- India Office Records

KSKTU- Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union

PRDS- Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha

PRSI - Papers Relative to Slavery in India

RILC- Report of the Indian Law Commissioners

SOAS- School of Oriental and African Studies

GLOSSARY

Attali - A Paniya shaman and also a hymnist. He is supposed to memorise the post-burial ritualistic hymn called *penampattu* of the Paniyas. He presides over the death ritual in a family.

Arattu - Ritualistic procession.

Chemmam - A term denoting 'family' among the Adiyas.

Cherumas- A term used to denote the agrestic slave castes in Malabar.

Fanam- A unit of currency issued by the Madras presidency until 1815. It is also called *panam*. 1 fanam equals 1/7th of a Rupee.

Gaddika - The ritualistic practice of exorcising evil spirits that has affected a sick person along the Adiyas.

Hobbly- A revenue circle.

Jenmi/ Thampuran - A native landlord.

Jenmom- Supreme and absolute property rights possessed by a jenmi over a piece of land and labourers.

Kambalam/ Kambalappani/ Kambalanatti - An exploitative labour practice where the agrestic labourers of Wayanad were asked to work on the fields for two to three days without any breaks.

Kambalanritham- A group dance that the agrestic labourers of Wayanad performed on the fields to relieve themselves of the tiresome job.

Kambalappattu - Songs that accompanied kambalanritham.

Kanom - A tenancy where the land is mortgaged from a jenmi for a particular period of time.

Kanomkar - A kanom tenant.

Kavu - A shrine.

Keeyurlokam - A Paniya concept which denoted the 'netherworld,' where they would work under the landlords even after death.

Kudian/ Kudiar/ Kudikidappukar - The actual cultivating population who were held by the *jenmom* rights.

Kundal - Paddy advanced by an adivasi labourer from a landlord during the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair.

Kundalkarikkan - Incentives that the labourers got in kind during Onam and Vishu, the agricultural festivals of Kerala.

Kuzhal/ Cheeni - A traditional wind instrument used by the Adiyas and Paniyas that accompanied their ritualistic hymns and fun songs.

Manam- A measurement equalled to one and half litres.

Manram - An Adiya concept which denoted a 'clan.'

Mettiyil Kettal - A practice where the landlord tamed a Paniya into subjugation forcefully.

Mooppan - An adivasi chieftain who was a judge and a priest.

Nippupanam/ Valloorpanam - Advance money given to an adivasi labourer by a landlord during the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair. Nippupanam made the adivasi bonded to the landlord for a year.

Penampattu - the post- burial ritualistic hymn of the Paniyas.

Pena/ Nekal - Literally translated as 'shadow.' This Paniya concept denoted the spirit of the dead person who frequently visited the living.

Pothi - One pothi equals 6 kgs.

Pula - Post- burial ritual of the Adiyas and Paniyas.

Pulappattu - The post- burial ritualistic hymn of the Adiyas.

Poonam - Shifting cultivation done by the adivasis of Wayanad.

Ser - A measurement which equalled 75 gms.

Thammadi - An Adiya shaman who presides over Gaddika.

Theyyamkettal - A ritual where the gods and ancestors visit the Adiyas and Paniyas through a shaman.

Thina - A raised platform in a Paniya household where the dead ancestors symbolically reside.

Thudi - A percussion instrument used by the Adiyas and Paniyas, used along with kuzhal.

Uchronia - A parallel universe with an imaginary timeline used by oral historians to talk about the possibility of a different unfolding of historical events.

Valli - Vernacular term for wages given in kind to the agrestic labourers of Wayanad. The term also denoted the bamboo cup that was used to measure wages for the labourers. One valli equalled 75 gms.

Vallippani - Agrestic labour provided by the Adiyas and Paniyas, receiving wages in kind or valli.

Vallisamaram - A strike led by the Adiyas and Paniyas in the 1960s asking for increased wages for agrestic labour.

Vattakkali - A traditional dance form performed by the Paniyas during birth, marriage and death rituals.

A NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

All translations from the languages of the Paniya, Ravula and Malayalam into English are mine. In transliterations of the Paniya and Ravula languages, which do not have scripts, I have followed my ears during ethnographic interviews with the informants. No diacritical marks are used in transliterations.

Abstract

In this dissertation titled "Revisiting Slavery: A Cultural History of the Adiyas and Paniyas in Kerala," I have attempted to write a cultural history of the Adiya and Paniya communities in Kerala. The Adiyas and Paniyas are two distinctive adivasi communities who inhabit Wayanad, a hilly district in north- east Kerala. The Adiyas and Paniyas were historically subjected to agrestic labour in the wetlands of Kerala and this local labour system was called *vallippanni*. The major issue that I am examining in this thesis is the colonial discursive construction of the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'praedial slaves' and *vallippani* as 'slavery.' In other words, the colonial administrative documents constructed an image of the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'slaves.' Moreover, colonial anthropology/ ethnography stereotyped the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'cattle-like,' 'less- than- humans,' 'criminals' and 'beggars.' This denial of agency and will to the Adiyas and Paniyas in turn allowed the imperial regime to validate the 'slave identity' of the Adiyas and Paniyas. This colonial administrative policy of fixing identity to the Adiyas and Paniyas had far reaching consequences. I have suggested that the identity of a 'slave' continued to haunt the Adiyas and Paniyas in the contemporary times. Moreover, the ascription of fixed identities to the Adiyas and Paniyas denied them agency and subjectivity in history. Given this hindsight, I have tried to rewrite the cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas, foregrounding an adivasi perspective. I have suggested that the Adiya and Paniya perspective on their cultural history highlighted the multiplicity of their identities. This claim to plural identities allowed the Adiyas and Paniyas to critique and resist the colonial image of the adivasi as a 'slave.' I have shown that the Adiyas and Paniyas ascribed themselves with varied identities at different historical conjectures. It was in the 1960s that the Adiyas and Paniyas organised as an agricultural labour class and made a claim for dignity at the paddy fields. This moment of renewed consciousness was the moment of *valli* strikes or wage strikes. The Adiyas and Paniyas asserted themselves as autonomous agriculturalists during the *valli* strikes. The *valli* strikes forced the then ruling front in Kerala (Communist Party of India (CPI)) to investigate the issue of 'bondedness' among the adivasis. The Kerala state enacted legal measures to abolish the 'bonded' status of the Adiyas and Paniyas. Thus, the Adiyas and Paniyas strategically made use of the category of 'bonded labourer' to claim the status of a free wage agricultural labourer in the post- independent times. Thus,

while the modern state represented the Adiyas and Paniyas as ‘bonded labourers,’ the adivasis asserted themselves as independent agriculturalists.

Apart from this shift in the identity of the Adiyas and Paniyas from a ‘slave’ to an ‘independent agriculturalist,’ I further argue that these communities imagined themselves as ‘shifting cultivators,’ ‘food gatherers’ and ‘hunters.’ Such an imagination is made possible through their cultural materials. Another major argument that I make in this thesis is that the Adiyas and Paniyas used their memories, rituals and commemorative ceremonies to aspire for liberation from slave identity. Thus, I have argued that the adivasi imagination of multiple identities made the community aware of their slave experiences in the agricultural fields. Rather, I have realised that the memories regarding slavery, which is very much palpable in the Adiya and Paniya cultural realms, engage and negotiate with the history of colonial modernity. The mythical and folk worldviews envisioned through their cultural realms are employed by the Adiyas and Paniyas to remember their routes of subjugation. In this process, the Adiyas and Paniyas claim that the colonial state policies were complacent with feudalism in Kerala to subjugate the adivasis. Cultural historians from the West, including Paul Gilroy and Saidiya Hartman, discussed the potential of cultural realms to reimagine slave pasts for the African- American plantation slave diaspora. Gilroy and Hartman suggested that the plantation slave history is part of the project of modernity as well. The African diaspora used their cultural materials to revisit slave identity of the past and to reclaim spaces of equality in the contemporary times. Sanal Mohan, a historian in India, drew from Gilroy to suggest that remembrance of slavery became liberational for the Dalit community of Kerala. Similarly, my argument is that memorising slavery in the cultural realms instilled new aspirations among the Adiyas and Paniyas to reclaim spaces of equality in the contemporary times.

Since my research questions are about the plurality of the Adiya and Paniya identities, I have collected the primary resources from a variety of disciplines. My primary sources include archival/ historical, textual, literary and cultural materials. As I am attempting an alternative cultural history of the adivasis, I want to foreground the plurality of the Adiya and Paniya identity. But this multiplicity of the adivasi identity was not readily accessible from the existing archives as the colonial documents froze the Adiya and Paniya identity in history. Nor were the anthropological accounts

available on the Adiyas and Paniyas sufficient to answer my questions. The existing anthropological/ ethnographic works dealt with the traditions and rituals of the Adiyas and Paniyas without analysing the specific meanings that these communities attributed to such ceremonies. Studies in history also perceived the Adiyas and Paniyas as ahistorical slaves. Literary works on the Adiyas and Paniyas presented them as subjugated humans amidst the non- adivasis of Wayanad. Therefore, my research methodology required a combination of textual analysis, discourse analysis, and ethnography. In other words, this methodology could be called 'ethnographic history.' I have attempted a re- reading of the colonial archives, a discursive analysis of certain cultural sites of the Adiyas and Paniyas and an interpretation of their cultural memories. Thus, my attempt in writing a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas could also be considered broadly as an attempt at writing subaltern history. Many subaltern historians including David Hardiman, Shail Mayaram, Ajay Skaria, Nandini Sundar, Alpa Shah and Archana Prasad have critiqued the state-imposed stereotypes on the subaltern communities including the adivasis. Subaltern historians presented a parallel reading of the colonial archives and the adivasi memories to write a history from below and to retrieve the agency of the subaltern. In my thesis, I have also re- read the colonial archives to foreground the Adiya and Paniya agency in their cultural history. Moreover, I revisit the memories of the Adiyas and Paniyas (through their myths, legends and commemorative rituals) to highlight the multiplicity of adivasi identities. The larger argument of the thesis is that the Adiyas and Paniyas had plural identities at different historical conjectures. They were 'food gatherers,' 'shifting cultivators,' 'hunters,' 'praedial slaves,' 'bonded labourers' and 'free wage agriculturalists' at different moments in history. Thereby, I was able to write an alternative history for the adivasis which would free them from the stereotype of a 'slave' and 'savage.' Therefore, my attempt in writing a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas is set against those tendencies in the dominant history to fix identities for the adivasis.

I have divided this dissertation into four chapters.

In the first chapter titled "Tribes as Agrestic Slaves: The Colonial Classification of the Adiyas and Paniyas," I try to critique the colonial discursive construction of the Adiyas and Paniyas as agrestic slaves. I have further argued that the colonial administration employed the category of 'slavery' to describe the local system of

agrestic bondage amongst the Adiyas and Paniyas. Colonial administrators like T. H. Baber and H. S. Graeme called this local system of bondage as *vallippani* or *valli* system and called the labourers as *vallippanikkars* or *valli* labourers. Thereby, the *valli* labourers, including the Adiyas and Paniyas were attributed the identity of a 'slave.' The colonial administration portrayed the work environment of the *valli* labourers as similar to and at times worse than the plantation slaves of the Europe. The colonial state initially used the category 'slavery' to define the labour practice of *vallippani*. This move was intended to highlight the colonial abolitionist stand. I have also shown in this chapter that the administrative ethnography and anthropology stereotyped the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'slaves,' 'savages,' animists,' 'criminals' and 'beggars.' Moreover, these reports compared and contrasted the Adiyas and Paniyas to the plantation slaves of Africa. Such anthropological observations on the adivasis legitimised the civilizational mission of the imperial regime. This civilizational mission, I have argued, was to extend the colonial dominion to the hills and forests where the Adiyas and Paniyas moved freely. Thus, I have suggested in this chapter that the colonial regime consolidated the Adiya and Paniya identities as 'agrestic/ praedial slaves.' An indirect impact of these identities as slaves was that the Adiya and Paniya issue attracted global attention. But the global debates on the colonial abolitionist policies did not lead to the emancipation of the Adiyas and Paniyas in the nineteenth century. Rather, I have suggested that the imperial regime was complicit with the native landlords who attributed hereditary slavery to the Adiyas and Paniyas, by linking *vallippani* to the 'the custom of land.' This custom of the land was called as *deshachary* by the colonial administrators like T. H. Baber. However, the custom of the land, according to the colonial administrators was nothing but the caste system that naturalised the subservience of the agrestic labourers and the dominance of the landlords. I have further noted that the colonial administration stopped short of abolishing slavery due to economic and political reasons. What the colonial administrators argued was that the slaves should be emancipated gradually as the colonial policy regarding the *valli* slaves was also aimed at civilizing them. Therefore, I also suggest in this chapter that the *vallippani* is a system of modern labour bondage, which is directly related to the colonial state regulations. In other words, the colonial state legitimised slavery among the Adiyas and Paniyas. Thus, the larger argument of this chapter is that the colonial regime in Malabar is a watershed moment in the cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas. This is because of two reasons. One is that the colonial regime fixed slave identity for the Adiyas and Paniyas. The second is

that the colonial rule was the moment when the Adiyas and Paniyas received global attention. The imposition of identity affected the Adiyas and Paniyas in the contemporary times as they continued to be stigmatised as slaves.

In the second chapter titled "Revisiting the *Valli* Strikes: The Emergence of the Adiyas and Paniyas as Agricultural Labourers," I analyse the emergence of the Adiyas and Paniyas as independent agriculturalists through their attempts to break away from the identity of a slave. This political awakening among the *valli* labourers happened in the context of the post- independent Kerala. In this chapter, I have identified the historical time period between the 1950s to the 70s as another watershed moment in the transformation of the *valli* labourers. I have argued that the Adiyas and Paniyas who were categorised as 'slaves' in the nineteenth century began to be redefined as 'bonded labourers' by the administrative discourses of Kerala in the 1950s. I have also argued that the category 'bonded labourer' was strategically used by the *valli* labourers to claim for political rights in the 1960s. I have identified certain historical conjectures that led to the empowerment of the *valli* labourers. One is the Communist Party of India's (CPI) ascent to power in Kerala during 1957 and their introduction of the land reformation bill in the same year. The land reformation bill declared for the first time that the actual cultivator was also a rightful claimant of the land ownership. The next moment was the publication of K. Panoor's administrative ethnography titled *Keralathile Africa* in 1963. Panoor argued that the actual cultivators of Wayanad including the Adiyas and Paniyas were slaves even in the 1960s. Panoor's claim was revolutionary as the colonial administration had already exhausted the category of 'slavery' to define the *valli* labourers by the abolition of slavery in 1843 in Malabar. Panoor reintroduced the issue of adivasi slavery in the domain of modern Kerala state. The next important moment was the *valli* strikes led by the adivasi labourers of Wayanad in the 1960s. Empowered by the pro- peasant policies of the Communist government, the *valli* labourers, especially the Adiyas of North Wayanad organised as a peasant class. I have selected P. K. Kalan (an Adiya chieftain and a CPI (M) leader) and A. Varghese (a CPI (M) leader) as two prominent figures who organised the *valli* labourers under the Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU), the peasants' union of the Communist party. I have suggested that the *valli* strikes gave dignity to the Adiyas and Paniyas as peasants. Moreover, the *valli* strikes enabled the Adiyas and Paniyas to ask for a wage raise and dignified work environments. The next important historical moments are the

introduction of a Land Reformation Act in 1969 and the implementation of the Abolition of Bonded Labour in Kerala during 1975. These moments saw the state effectively responding to the 'bonded' status of the Adiyas and Paniyas by implementing legislative measures. Thus, in this chapter, I have identified certain historical conjectures to argue that the post- electoral phase in Kerala saw the emergence of the *valli* slave as an agricultural labourer with human dignity. Moreover, I show that the Adiya and Paniya history could not be reduced to their history as slaves. Rather, their identities are redefined based on their labour practice. One is the state ascribed identity of the 'bonded labourer' and the other an adivasi identity of 'autonomous agricultural labourer.'

Having analysed the historical trajectories that led to the transformation of the slaves (*valli* labourers) as agricultural labourers with dignity in the first two chapters, in the third chapter titled "Imagining the *Uchronic* Spaces of Equality: The Cultural Realm of Myths and Ritual Performances of the Adiyas," I would argue that the Adiyas reinvented their memories (both mythical and historical) to offer counter- narratives to the stereotypical ascriptions of the colonial regime. In order to understand the Adiya outlook on the routes of bondage and emancipation, I mostly draw from ethnographic data. I have identified two cultural sites- Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani*, where the Adiyas were historically subjugated to slave labour. The Valliyoorkkavu temple fair is historically known for slave transactions whereas *kambalappani* is an exploitative labour practice where the *valli* labourers were forced into excruciating labour situations. However, the Adiyas reinvented their memories to claim that these cultural sites were once sites which rehearsed Adiya celebrations. They could thus memorise the ways in which such sites were appropriated by the landlords. I also critically read in this chapter the ritualistic hymns of Adiyas called *pulappattu* and *gaddika*. I have shown that both these hymns remember certain mythical spaces where the Adiyas led a life of freedom as shifting cultivators. While *pulappattu* narrated the loss of cultivable lands by the Adiyas due to encroachments from the non- adivasis, *gaddika* narrated the indispensability of Adiyas as agriculturalists on the paddy fields of Wayanad. Thus, by a strategic reading of Adiya memories, I would argue in this chapter that the Adiyas had an independent imagination to remember the loss of resources. The Adiyas were thus able to present an alternative history to the colonial history that imagined the Adiyas as slaves. I would further argue in this chapter that the Adiyas

resorted to popularising their mythical memories on the secular stages of Kerala in the contemporary times. I would argue that the attempts by the Adiya community to popularise their ritualistic realms was to claim equality as citizens in the modern Kerala state. Thereby, the Adiyas were able to create cultural spaces to challenge the stereotypes attributed to them by the colonial administrative regimes.

In the fourth chapter titled "Cultural Memory as History: The Paniya Social Imaginary of their Slave Past in the Colonial Context," I have focused on the Paniyas as a community with a unique imagination of their own cultural history. I have revisited the Paniya memories regarding the practice of *vallippani* in this chapter. By revisiting the Paniya memories of *vallippani*, I have argued that Paniyas opposed the project of civilization offered by colonial modernity and reinvented counter- histories. I have again revisited the common adivasi cultural sites of Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani* to understand the Paniya imagination regarding these sites. I have argued in this chapter that the Paniyas reinvented multiple narratives regarding these sites. In such counter- narratives, the Paniyas memorised these sites as those which were closely related to the food gathering and hunting expeditions of the Paniyas. I have argued that such sites of celebration became scenes of subjection when the landlords appropriated these sites. I have also analysed the mythical and folk memories of the Paniyas in this chapter. I have critically read *penampattu*, a ritualistic hymn of the Paniyas here. I have argued that *penampattu* narrated the various stages of Paniya enslavement using metaphors and symbols. Colonial policies like forest reservations and land revenue implementation are approached from a Paniya vantage point in this hymn. *Penampattu* as I have suggested in this chapter discussed the loss of resources and the enslavement of the Paniyas as they were forced out of the forests. *Kambalappattu* or *kambala* songs, is another Paniya folk tradition that offered a counter- narrative to colonial modernity. I have argued in this chapter that while the colonial administration presented *kambalappani* as a celebratory occasion for the Paniyas, *kambalappattu* discussed the rigours of slavery and the adverse effects of various administrative policies on the food gathering Paniyas. In this chapter also, I have tried to bring out the contemporaneity of the Paniya memories by highlighting the attempts by Paniya folk artists to popularise their mythical memories. I would look at the improvisations of the Paniya cultural forms like *kambalappattu* on the popular stages of Kerala by Paniya bands. I suggest that such secular performances of Paniya folk and mythical traditions are attempts to

claim that the Paniyas are very much part of modernity. Art thus became a medium for the Paniyas to repudiate the stereotypical ascriptions regarding them.

In the concluding section, I have briefly recapitulated the main arguments of my thesis along with its scopes and limitations. Here, I have reiterated that the Adiyas and Paniyas effectively used their cultural realms to resist the slave identity imposed on them. Moreover, I have suggested here that I have not exhausted all the archival materials- including the colonial documents and the native newspaper reports- while writing a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas. Moreover, I have hinted at the limitations that I faced at the field as an ethnographer. I was not able to witness certain commemorative ceremonies completely as the community members identified my presence as an interruption to the sacred nature of their rituals. Moreover, the conclusions that I drew from my ethnographic fieldwork are limited by the disciplinary boundaries of cultural studies and the nature of inquiries that I made. I have also suggested here in this section that my research work could be used as a preparatory study to critically examine other adivasi questions in Wayanad. In other words, my research work could be extended to understand the issue of adivasi women labourers in Wayanad, the migrations of the Adiyas and Paniyas as seasonal labourers to Coorg and the contemporary land struggles led by the adivasis under the banner of indigeneity.

Introduction

Four years have passed since the occurrence of an unfortunate incident in which an adivasi man called Madhu was beaten up and killed by the mob in Attappady, a tribal taluk in Palakkad district, Kerala (Naha). Madhu, a thirty year old man, belonged to the Kurumba adivasi community who inhabited the forest areas in Attappady. On the fateful day of 22 February, 2018, Madhu was captured by a group of non- adivasi men, from a cave near the forested area of Silent Valley national park. Madhu was accused of frequently stealing rice from a nearby grocery shop. He was beaten up by the mob with sticks, his hands were tied up using a cloth, and was paraded half- naked from the forests till Mukkali, a junction which served as an entrance to the forested area. Madhu was handed over to the police after these ordeals. *En route* to the police station, Madhu collapsed and was declared dead at the Government hospital in Agali.

There are sixteen men who are accused of lynching and murdering Madhu. Madhu belonged to a particularly vulnerable tribal group in India. However, the accused walk scot-free even today. Madhu's mother Malli and his sister Sarasu, who live at Chindakki adivasi hamlet at Attappady are fighting a case in which justice is not delivered yet. Malli and Sarasu resented that the mob targeted and intentionally lynched Madhu even though he had mental health issues. The murder of Madhu for an alleged petty theft reopened an issue which the democratically elected governments of Kerala have been grappling with since the formation of modern Kerala state. This is the issue of the adivasi as a stereotyped figure- a 'slave,' a 'thief' and a 'savage.' The state government has implemented various developmental schemes and welfare measures to improve the social and economic backwardness of the adivasis. Tribal development departments and research institutes were established to map the particularities of various adivasi communities in Kerala. Notwithstanding such efforts, the adivasi is a figure who is living at the verge of threats and encroachments in contemporary times. The mob at Attappady did not think twice to accuse an adivasi man of stealing though there was no evidence to prove the same. Moreover, the mob decided to penalise Madhu before he was handed over to the police. This is a situation where humanity was denied to Madhu and. In other words, the mob decided that Madhu did not have honour and dignity as he was an adivasi. Thus, the adivasi has always been imagined as a wild animal who foraged on the home-grown crops. This incident where an adivasi man was brutally

beaten to death forced me to think about the discursive constructions that allowed the mob to take a fellow being's life. What I realised from the incidents that led to Madhu's death was that the adivasi is a stereotyped 'other' to the Malayali public. Madhu's unfortunate death is not an isolated event in the history of adivasis in Kerala. The adivasis were historically the subjects of suspicion, speculation and subjugation in Kerala.

My dissertation is also about the adivasi question in Kerala and particularly about the adivasis of Wayanad.[1] Wayanad is a hilly district in north- east Kerala and is home to the largest number of adivasis in Kerala.[2] In this dissertation, I have tried to write a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas, two adivasi communities inhabiting Wayanad. I found it significant to write a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas from an adivasi perspective because they were also historically stigmatised. The Adiyas and Paniyas have a history of agrestic slavery in the wetland cultivation of Wayanad under the native landlords. Their labour practice was locally called *vallippani* or v*alli* labour and the adivasi labourers were called *vallippanikkars* or *valli* labourers. In the contemporary times, the Adiyas and Paniyas are no longer slaves. However, the stigma of being a slave in the past is still haunting these communities. The Adiyas and Paniyas are stigmatised as slaves and primitives by the Malayali public sphere. Therefore, I try to write a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas to present an adivasi perspective on the agricultural bondage called *vallippani*. In this process, I came across various research questions. One of the confusions that arose at the beginning of my research work was whether the Adiyas and Paniyas were actually slaves or not. This question led me to further inquire into the nature of the labour practice of these communities. This inquiry regarding the nature of *valli* labour threw the field open to various possibilities to perceive the identity of the Adiyas and Paniyas. I have realised that the Adiyas and Paniyas were subjects of colonial stereotyping and stigmatising in the nineteenth century. The Adiyas and Paniyas were in fact subjected to slavery. But the colonial discursive domains naturalised slavery among the Adiyas and Paniyas by calling them racially inferior. My further inquiries into the discursive construction of the Adiyas and

[1] For this dissertation, I have followed the *MLA Handbook: Ninth Edition* (2021) for all the citations.

[2] The total population of adivasis in Wayanad is 151443, according to the 2011 census.

Paniyas revealed that the post- independent times saw a shift in the way in which these adivasis were perceived. There was a shift of the Adiya and Paniya from being a 'slave' to a 'bonded labourer.' While I was grappling with the closely related identities of the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'slaves' and 'bonded labourers,' I came across certain provincial documents of the colonial period that reminded that the Adiyas and Paniyas were 'hill cultivators,' 'hunters' and 'food- gatherers.' Therefore, the conclusion that I arrived at from the available documents on the Adiyas and Paniyas was that the category 'slave' was used to fix the identity of these agrestic labourers, while downplaying their plural identities. The stigma of a slave identity is persistently recurrent in the contemporary lives of the Adiyas and Paniyas.

Through the process of writing a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas, I came across a particular moment in history where these adivasi communities asserted themselves as agricultural labourers. This moment was the *valli* strikes or wage strikes of the 1960s. *Valli* strikes was a moment when the adivasis rejected the stereotypes attributed to them. This assertion took place within the domain of the modern Kerala state. The moment of adivasi assertion in Kerala forced the ruling fronts to identify the 'bonded' status of the adivasis and to implement policies to liberate them from bondage. Thus, the Adiyas and Paniyas adopted the identity of 'bonded labourers' to aspire for a liberatory identity of the 'free wage agriculturalist.' Trajectories that led to the Adiya and Paniya assertion are clear instances to argue that they had an independent imagination and cultural history which was not exhausted by the colonial stereotyping. This trajectory led me to further inquire into the imagination and memories of the Adiyas and Paniyas. In this effort, I was introduced to the adivasi cultural realms which imagined plural identities for them, thereby rejecting the colonial ascription of a slave identity. The cultural sources of the Adiyas and Paniyas revealed an altogether different history of these communities. The Adiya and Paniya cultural histories offered them plural identities as 'food gatherers,' 'shifting cultivators,' 'agrestic slaves,' 'bonded labourers' and 'agriculturalists.' The adivasis thereby fought the stigma of being a slave through their cultural contestations. But this does not mean that the Adiya and Paniya cultural imagination is free of slave experiences. Remembrance of slave suffering is very much part of the Adiya and Paniya resistance to slavery. By imagining the multiplicity of their past, the Adiyas and Paniyas constantly try to break free from the slave identities and to assert that they were agriculturalists. Therefore, what made me

analyse the Adiya and Paniya situation together, notwithstanding their cultural specificities, is their history of slave labour, subjection to colonial stereotyping and constant attempts by these communities to break free from bondage.

Throughout my research, I have come across a number of works; both in English and Malayalam; that dealt with the Adiya and Paniya question. I have categorised them as broadly belonging to the domains of administrative sociology, ethnography/ anthropology, history and literature. Administrative reports on the Adiyas and Paniyas since the nineteenth century portrayed these communities as primitive and barbaric. Thereby, the administrative documents created the image of the adivasi as the 'other,' who should be subjected to civilizational projects.[3] Anthropological- cum- ethnographic accounts on the Adiyas and Paniyas tried to build a cultural knowledge regarding them (Aiyappan; P. Nair; Thulasidharan; Karunakaran). But these works adopted the strategy of giving elaborate discussions on the rituals and traditions, without closely enquiring the reasons why certain commemorative ceremonies were conducted. Works that belonged to the genre of adivasi history mostly adopted a Marxian perspective to discuss the slave/ bonded situation of the Adiyas and Paniyas (Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal*; M. Gopi; Mathur). These works argued that the adivasi became a slave/ bonded labourer due to the land dispossessions caused by invasions and migrations into Wayanad at various historical moments. Literature was yet another domain where the Adiyas and Paniyas found representation. Most of these literary works represented the destruction of the adivasi life amidst encroachments from the non- adivasis to Wayanad (Pottekkatt; Valsala; T. John). There were some literary works that highlighted the richness of Adiya and Paniya culture. All these resources, which belonged to different disciplines were of immense use to me to have a preliminary understanding of the Adiya and Paniya culture and history.

However, none of these works provided an adivasi perspective on their cultural history. Works in adivasi history and culture that I mentioned existed parallelly. But the historical dispossessions of the adivasis were not read within the context of their culture and traditions. In other words, there exists a gap between those works that dealt with the history of the Adiyas and Paniyas and those that dealt with their cultural traditions.

[3] I will discuss these administrative reports in the first chapter in detail.

Strict disciplinary binaries that these works held while dealing with the Adiya and Paniya question failed to answer my research questions. Another reason which makes my study significant amidst the profusion of works on the Adiyas and Paniyas is that none of these works highlighted and asserted the multiple identities of the adivasis. In this scenario, my study is significant and relevant as I have attempted to bridge the gap between the history and culture of the Adiyas and Paniyas. I have tried to foreground the adivasi perspective to write their cultural history by re- reading the Adiya and Paniya cultural realms.

The Ethnographic Field: A Brief History of Wayanad

The Adiyas and Paniyas mostly inhabit Wayanad, a hilly district in north-eastern Kerala. Wayanad is set atop the Western Ghats. The western and southern parts of Wayanad are surrounded by the plains of Malabar. To the east of Wayanad, is the Nilgiri mountains, to the north- east is the Mysore plateau and to its north west, is Coorg, a district in Karnataka. Wayanad belonged to Malabar, one of the administrative districts of the erstwhile Madras presidency in the nineteenth century. Wayanad has the largest population of adivasis in Kerala. The district is home to 1, 51,443 adivasis according to the 2011 census.[4] C. Gopalan Nair, a native administrator of Wayanad during the colonial period observed that the name 'Wayanad' signified 'the land of forests.' The correct name of Wayanad as observed by C. Nair is 'Vana- nad,' which meant 'forest country' and by the passage of time, 'Vana- nad' began to be pronounced as 'Wayanad' (3). Grigg, an assistant commissioner to the Nilgiris, in the manual of Nilgiri district observed that Wayanad derived its name from *Bailu*, a word in Canarese, which meant 'a field having water sustainable for growing rice' (1).

The history of Wayanad and its people is intrinsically linked to various migrations to this countryside beginning with the Jain migrations in the thirteenth century (M. Gopi 72). This migration of the agricultural populations of the Jains is followed by the invasions of the clan of Kottayam Rajas and allied landlords into

[4] The total population of Kerala is around 3.48 crores. The census report of 2011 registered a slight increase in the tribal population from 3, 64,189 to 4, 84,839. The total population of Wayanad is 8, 17,420 of which 1, 51,443 are tribals and they constitute 18.5 percent of the total tribal population in the district.

Wayanad. O. K. Johnny, a historian of Wayanad, observed that during the 1800s, with the rule of the East India Company (EIC) in Wayanad, the countryside saw another series of migrations, which is of the Muslim merchants. Again, in the 1940s, Wayanad witnessed another series of migrations of the Syrian Christians. I suggest here that migrations during different phases to Wayanad systematically affected the adivasi population of the countryside in terms of their access to inhabitable and cultivable lands. Each era of migrations pushed the native adivasi away from inhabitable lands. Most of the colonial documents on Wayanad traced the political history of the country from the reign of the Kottayam clan.[5] The reign of the Kottayam clan came to an end with the death of the native chieftain Pazhassi Raja in 1805. However, Johnny observed that as far as Wayanad and its adivasi population is concerned, it is important to understand a legend associated with the conquest of Wayanad by the Kottayam Rajas. According to this adivasi legend, prior to the Kottayam clans, Wayanad was ruled by adivasi chieftains. These chieftains were called the 'Vedar kings,' Johnny observes. This mythical history of the Vedar kings was officially recorded by the district court of North Malabar on 28 Nov, 1810 (Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal* 74). C. Nair, in an account of the ancient history of Wayanad discussed about a mythical time when the Vedar kings enjoyed supremacy over Wayanad until their defeat by the kings of Kshatriya clan. The legend says that the Vedar kings were defeated by the Kumbala Raja and his allies- the Kottayam Rajas and the Kurumbranad Rajas.[6] In this process, Wayanad came under the regime of the Kottayam clans.

It was during the reign of the Kottayam Rajas that a settled form of government was introduced into the country. Available lands were brought under the control of local chieftains during this time. Wayanad was divided into *nads* (districts) and Nair chieftains were appointed as administrators of this area. Wayanad was then divided into different divisions like Muthornad, Ellornad, Wynad, Porunnanur, Nallurnad,

---

[5] These documents included the *Mackenzie Manuscripts* (1753- 1821), *Madras Manual of Administration* in three volumes published between 1885- 1893, the *Nilgiri District Manual* (1880) and the *Malabar Gazetteer* (1908). These documents were compiled by various commissioners appointed by the EIC to the Madras presidency to create a concise history of the countryside they have conquered.

[6] See G. Nair 10- 12 and Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal* 74- 75 for a detailed description of this legend.

Kurumbalanad, Edanatasakur, Tondernad, Muttil,Pakkamdesoms and Veliyambam (Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal* 78).These *nads* were further divided into *amsoms* or villages under different Nair chieftains. These Nair chieftains were the final authority in the civil and criminal jurisdiction of their villages. Most of the cultivable lands belonged to the Nair chieftains, who paid their allegiance to the Kottayam Raja. Given this history, I would suggest that the process of land alienations from the adivasis of Wayanad could be traced to the establishment of sovereignty over Wayanad by the Kottayam Rajas. Pazhassi Raja, who belonged to the Kottayam clan, ruled Wayanad from 1786- 1805. This was also the time when Wayanad witnessed a series of attacks from the Mysorean rulers Hyder Ali and Tippu Sultan. During the 1790s, the East India company (EIC) also tried to establish their sovereignty over Wayanad. Various attempts by Pazhassi Raja to resist foreign invasions came to an end in 1805. The Raja was captured and shot dead by the British troops led by T. H. Baber (the then northern division sub collector of Malabar) on 30 November 1805.

Johnny suggested that the Pazhassi rebellions were a response to various administrative reforms implemented by the EIC. Most of these administrative policies had a direct impact on the agricultural communities of Malabar. William Logan, in *The Malabar Manual* observed that by the 1800s, the administration of Malabar district was transferred from the Bombay presidency to the Madras presidency. The district of Malabar was divided into numerous revenue circles for the extraction of revenue (Logan 421). Captain Joseph Watson was appointed to organise an army of officers to collect revenue from the revenue circles of Malabar. It was decided that one principal collector along with three subordinate collectors would rule the revenue circles under Malabar. Major William Macleod became the first principal collector of Malabar and Stratechy, Hodgson and Keet were the sub collectors. Major Macleod ordered the collection of 35- 40% of profit from agricultural labourers as revenue (Logan 429). Thomas Warden, in 1804 revised revenues imposed by Macleod and a systematic revenue system was established in Wayanad by 1806. These administrative regulations which imposed heavy duties on the natives led to the Pazhassi rebellions in the 1790s. Logan also suggested that the price of rice increased in Wayanad as the production cost increased. One of the main reasons for the increase in the production cost, according to Logan was the implementation of the Abolition of Slavery Act in 1843. The Abolition

of Slavery in the provinces of Malabar in 1843 led to an increase in the expense of labourer cost, according to Logan.[7]

Johnny draws from Logan to point to yet another instance of rebellions in Wayanad during 1812. This rebellion was led by the Kurichya and Kuruma adivasis. It is significant to note that the adivasis rose in rebellion in Wayanad against the company administration in the nineteenth century. Johnny observed that the highhandedness of the British administration in collecting revenue from the poor agriculturalists resulted in the adivasis rising in rebellion (*Wayanad Rekhakal* 96). Such an adivasi rebellion in the nineteenth century is evidence to the fact that the adivasis of Wayanad were aware of their status as agriculturalists. One of the correspondences of the Judicial department that I had consulted, revealed that the adivasi rebellion of 1812 was one of the earliest anti- colonial strikes led by the adivasis in South India. In this judicial correspondence, Baber observed that Kurichyas and Kurumas of the *hobblies* (revenue circles) of Nalloornad, Elloornad and Kurumbala rose in rebellion resisting the payment of revenue demanded by the administration (Measures Taken to Suppress 164). These adivasi cultivators declared that they had no means to pay the supposed revenue. However, the imperial regime suppressed this rebellion in six months and the colonial rule established itself in Wayanad without any challenges thereafter. Nevertheless, the landlords continued to enjoy their land rights under the colonial rule.

Along with the implementation of revenue for cultivation, another important development during colonial rule was the establishment of the forest reserves in Malabar by the 1870s. The colonial move to survey the forest lands and to bring them under control began as early as 1805. Captain Watson was appointed as the Chief conservator of Forests in Malabar in 1806. The conservator of the forests was entrusted with the duties to prevent shifting cultivation inside the forests and to promote the growth of timber trees like Teak and Hemp (Letter to Captain Watson 17). Thus, the natural growth was wiped out and the timber trees were grown to "meet maritime purposes and for building broad gauge and metre gauge sleepers" (Francis 24). Moreover, correspondences of the forest department revealed that tax was levied on

[7] I would later argue in the first chapter that the abolition of slavery act in 1843 did not emancipate the agricultural labourers like the Adiyas, Paniyas and *Cherumas* from the landlords.

felling trees and collecting forest produce (Francis 34; Bell 154; Farish 52). Implementation of the forest regulations had a dire impact on the adivasi populations of Wayanad. They were prevented from doing shifting cultivation practices or breaking up of land or any other purposes by the Madras Forest Act V of 1882 proposed by the Fort. St. George.[8] This law also regulated the cutting and removing of timber and also prohibited hunting in the reserved forests. Any person involved in such acts was deemed to be penalised.

The next important measure to extend the control over existing lands was the establishment of tea and coffee plantations. Mundakkayam Gopi, in his historical study on Wayanad observed that by the 1840s, Nair landlordism began to diminish. As the economy shifted to a monetary one, the Nair *jenmies* had to pay high revenues. To meet this demand, the Nairs began to forfeit their monopoly over vast areas of lands to the British who were in search of lands to establish plantations (M. Gopi 226). Joshy Mathew, a historian on the British plantation economy in Kerala, noted that during the time period between the 1830s and 1840s, the first coffee plantation was established in Mananthavady (730). Mathew observed that the British capitalists bought lands from the native proprietors on various tenures. Tea began to be planted in various estates in Wayanad from 1892 onwards. Cash crop cultivation including pepper, rubber and cinchona followed tea and coffee cultivation in Wayanad (Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal* 106). Thus, the European planting industry added to the prosperity of the Wayanad country and provided jobs to many labourers (G. Nair 47). However, I want to point here that the establishment of the plantation industry and forest regulations deprived those adivasi communities of Wayanad who depended on shifting cultivation and food gathering practices for sustenance. These communities had to either move as labourers to the plantations or remain as slaves under their *jenmies*. Francis Ford, in a report on the Wayanad planting industry observed that the adivasi communities including the Paniyas were part of the coolie labour system in the plantations (50). Thus, the introduction of modern forms of administration in Wayanad had a serious impact on the native inhabitants including the adivasi communities. Renewed land revenue policies, forest conservation measures and the introduction of plantation economy in Wayanad

[8] See The Madras Forest Act 9-28, 30- 35, 204- 210.

during the nineteenth century affected the symbiotic relationship that the adivasis shared with the land and forests of Wayanad.

These developments were followed by another episode of migration to Wayanad from Southern Kerala during the 1930s due to the prospects of vast availability of lands. Joy Varkey, a historian from Kerala, stated that the migrants to Wayanad during the 1930s were majorly Syrian Christians from Travancore. These rich agricultural communities obtained lands from the landlords and started both paddy and tapioca cultivation. Varkey also observed that often adivasi slave labourers including the Adiyas were transferred along with these lands (205). Thus, what I found significant in the history of invasions and migrations to Wayanad is the systematic enslavement of the adivasi communities and the loss of their independent cultivation practices. However, with the end of colonial rule in Malabar, the adivasis emerged as an agricultural labour class, with a renewed consciousness of the alienations and estrangements they faced.[9]

I find it significant at this point to have a discussion on my usage of the terms 'tribe' and 'adivasi' in this dissertation. Authorities on adivasi studies in India including Virginius Xaxa and G. N. Devy suggested that the category 'tribe' has a colonial legacy. In other words, 'tribe' is an administrative category introduced by the colonial regime. Xaxa suggested that the colonial regime employed the term 'tribe' in two senses. The first sense in which 'tribe' is employed is to denote the descent of a group of people from a common ancestor. The other sense is linked to the colonial perception of the category 'tribe' as a group of people living in primitive or barbarous conditions (Xaxa 14). Thus, 'tribe' has an implication that the people under the ambit of this term are in a relatively less advanced stage of social formation. However, the category 'tribe' gained administrative function in the post- independent India and the term has sociological significance. The term 'adivasi,' for Xaxa, is used to denote those groups of people who remained outside civilization and those who suffered marginalisation. For Devy, both the categories 'tribe' and 'adivasi' are pointers to the history of colonial modernity. The tribe/ adivasi according to Devy, are those communities who lost their customary practices of living with the imperial regime. Devy suggested that there are two

[9] I will discuss in detail this renewed political consciousness among the adivasis of Wayanad in the second chapter.

temporalities that marked the emergence of the ‘adivasi.’ One is the mythological time in the collective memory and oral histories of the adivasis which point to their origin. The other is the historical moment of their encounter with colonialism (Devy).

Recently, the term ‘indigenous’ is used interchangeably with the terms ‘tribe’ and ‘adivasi.’ The International Labour Organisation (hereafter ILO) made a distinction between ‘tribe’/ ‘adivasi’ and ‘indigenous.’ According to the ILO convention of 1957, the category ‘tribe’ denotes a group of people who are at a less advanced stage of development than the other sections of the national community. But the category ‘indigenous’ denotes a group of people who were the original inhabitants of a geographical region during the colonial conquest (ILO Convention, 1957). Xaxa suggested that the indigenous inhabitants of a geographical region could not necessarily be categorised as ‘tribe’/ ‘adivasi’ because the ‘indigenous’ need not be marginalised in all the instances. Daniel. J. Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta argued that the term ‘adivasi’ is a more inclusive category as it captures the subjective positions of both ‘indigeneity’ and ‘subalternity’ (6). They further suggested that the term ‘adivasi’ could be used to denote various subjectivities of the marginalised at different historical conjectures. These subjectivities included the formation of community consciousness during the anti- colonial resistance movements, the contestation of nationalist historiography, the creation of a collective memory regarding resistance, and the social and cultural performances of this collective memory. Thus, I would suggest that the term ‘adivasi’ has a political connotation to it. This term is also linked to the colonial and post-colonial history of the marginalised. Therefore, in this thesis, I prefer to use the term ‘adivasi’ over ‘indigenous’ as the term ‘adivasi’ captures the multiplicity of the Adiya and Paniya identities at various historical moments. The term ‘adivasi’ also denotes the emergence of a political consciousness among the Adiyas and Paniyas. However, I also use the category ‘tribe’ in the first chapter to address the Adiya and Paniya issue under the colonial regime. Since the colonial administrative documents used ‘tribe’ to denote the Adiyas and Paniyas, I also use this term more frequently in the first chapter to avoid confusion. I would now briefly discuss the Adiyas and Paniyas, as adivasi communities of Wayanad.

The Adiyas

The word *Adiya* means 'serf' in Malayalam. M. R. Pankajakshan, in his compilation of adivasi hymns and songs observed that the Adiyas were called by the name as they were the slave population under the native landlords of Wayanad. The people from the Adiya community claim that they should be rightly called as 'Ravulas,' a term which meant 'human.'[10] The language spoken by the Adiyas is also called Ravula. Ravula language is a mixture of Kannada and Malayalam and it does not have a script. However, the term 'Adiya' has been used to denote the community in most of the provincial administrative and anthropological studies on them. Therefore, I would also use the term 'Adiya' to denote the community for practical reasons. According to the 2011 census, the Adiya population was 11,526. They form only 7.31 % of the total adivasi population in Kerala. Prominent anthropological inquiries into the Adiya culture suggested that the Adiyas originally belonged to Coorg district in Karnataka. These works hinted at the migration of the Adiyas from Coorg to Wayanad along with the migrant landlord castes like Gounders and Chetties (G. Nair 97; Pankajakshan 263). However, there is no substantial evidence to claim that the Adiya might have migrated from Coorg to Wayanad. K. Panoor, in his ethnographic observations on the Adiya community suggested that the Adiyas inhabited those areas in Wayanad which are close to Coorg (22). P. K. Kariyan, an Adiya elder and the then chieftain of the community in Kaithavally Adiya colony observed that they worked as agricultural labourers for the landlord castes of Gounders and Chetties. Kariyan too hinted at the possibility of Adiya migration from Coorg to Wayanad. However, it could not be concluded that the Adiyas belonged to Coorg. But it is very likely that the Adiyas, prior to the demarcation of administrative divisions by the British rule, moved freely between Coorg and Wayanad. Thus, the inconsistency found in the observations regarding the nativity of the Adiyas point to the migratory habits of this community until the colonial rule.

With the colonial rule in the nineteenth century, the Adiyas settled around wetland cultivation in northern Wayanad. Thereby, the Adiyas began to work under the landlord castes of Brahmins, Gounders, Chetties, Embrasans, Varriers, Pattars and Namboothiris. Adiyas are settled in the areas including Thirunelli, Thrissilery,

[10] Personal interviews with Kariyan (20 May, 2018) and Chaligadha (23 March, 2021).

Appappara, Pakkam, Payyambilly, Vemom, Koyileri, Neervaram, Kattikkulam, Cherukattoor, Panamaram, Anjukunnu, Kurukkanmoola, Valliyoorkkavu, Arattuthara, Panavalli, Venmana and Pulppalli. They also inhabit Coorg and the regions that border Mysore district. The Adiyas claim that they used to practise shifting cultivation of crops like ragi on the large hill tracts of Wayanad even while they were engaged in plain cultivation.[11] Adiyas claimed to have owned large tracts of lands prior to the Syrian Christian migrations. However, it could not be assumed that the Adiyas held land ownership documents at any point in history. As observed by the political economists Darley Jose Kjosavik and N. Shanmugaratnam, adivasi communities like the Adiyas did not have the concept of property ownership in the modern sense. For the adivasi communities, land and forest was the common wealth and all the community members had equal rights to the lands (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 1192- 1194). Thus, the Adiya affirmations regarding their land ownership prior to migrations and state policies only pointed to their freedom to practise shifting cultivation in the vast forest areas of Wayanad and Coorg. Moreover, they were involved in hunting and fishing in the forests. The Adiyas became aware of the land alienations once they began to find a shortage of cultivable lands for themselves with the colonial interventions and the evictions they faced from the migrants. The Adiyas then were forced to enter the wetland cultivation totally as shifting cultivation was no longer a viable option for them for survival. Thus, historically, the Adiyas are identified as bonded labourers under the landlord castes of Wayanad. Bonded labour is not found among the Adiyas now, with the interventions of the Bonded Labour Abolition laws. However, the Adiyas even in the present times work as paddy field labourers and as daily wage labourers in the houses and fields of upper caste communities in Wayanad. Moreover, young men and women are now engaged as seasonal labourers in the ginger plantations in Coorg district of Karnataka.

Adiya hamlets are collectively called *kuntu*. The individual homesteads are called *kullu*. *Kuntus* are under the guidance of a *mooppan* or chieftain who is called *kanaladi* or *peruman*. *Kanaladi* has the right to make decisions in all matters related to jurisdiction and religiosity (Pankajakshan 264). The *kanaladi* is a person who is adept in

[11] Personal interviews with M. Kalan and Sukumaran Chaligadha in 2021.

all the traditions and rituals of the Adiya community. The *kanaladi* is also the reservoir of the mythical memories and ritualistic hymns of the community. The Adiyas are an oral community and they transfer memories and histories orally to the younger generations. A *kanaladi* imparts the vast reservoir of mythical and cultural histories orally to the next generation. A person who could acquire these traditional knowledge systems from the *kanaladi* would inherit the post. For instance, Kariyan, an Adiya chieftain, was against the idea of even recording certain ritualistic hymns in the contemporary times as he believed that the youngsters should be able to memorise the traditional knowledge systems. Azeez Tharuvana, a cultural historian of the adivasis of Wayanad discussed an Adiya myth where the Adiyas were denied access to scripts in a historical study on the adivasis of Wayanad. According to this myth, the God commanded that the Adiya knowledge system would be retained in memory and would be transferred orally (*Wayanattile* 87). This myth is a pointer to the importance that the Adiyas attributed to memorising knowledge systems instead of recording them.

The *kanaladi* presides over the rites of passage of a community member. These rituals include *kooliyattu* (a ritual done to exorcise the evil spirits that might attack a pregnant woman), *manjalneeradu* (the ritual to celebrate the menarche of a girl), *kalyanam* (marriage), *kakkepule/ kuntupula* (the post- burial ceremony). *Gaddika*, another rite of exorcism to treat a sick person from illness among the Adiyas, is presided over by *thammadi*, an Adiya shaman. Most often, the *kanaladi* of the *kuntu* would adorn the office of *thammadi* as well. Apart from presiding over the traditional rituals of the community, the *kanaladi* is also empowered to pass judgements regarding any disputes between individuals or families. *Kanaladi* could also prescribe penalties for committing mistakes against the customary laws of the community (Pankajakshan 268). Kariyan observed that until the 1960s, when the Adiyas were *valli* labour under the *jenmies*, the *kanaladi* or *mooppan* was selected by the *jenmi*. This *mooppan* was then entrusted by the *jenmi* to preside over the agricultural labour on his lands. It was this *mooppan* who organised the Adiyas under his *kuntu* for *valli* labour. However, in the present times, the *mooppan* is selected on the basis of a persons' expertise in the ritualistic traditions of the community.

The Adiyas have a vast reservoir of *pattus* or hymns for rituals and festivities. These hymns include *gaddikappattu*, *peyppattu*, *thirappattu* and *pulappattu*

(Pankajakshan 271). *Gaddika* hymns are performed to implore the Adiya deities to cure a sick person. *Peyppattu* is a hymn performed during *kooliyattu*, a rite of exorcism. *Peyppattu* is performed if a person has not recovered from illness even after the *gaddika* ritual. *Peyppattu* hymns are especially dedicated to the evil spirits like Shuvandi, Veeran, Chudalappey, Panippey, Kaliyan, Maliyamma, Pannippey, Kurumappey and Kurichyappey. The Adiyas claim themselves to be non- Hindus. Most of the festivals celebrated by the Adiyas are closely related to the harvest. *Thirappattu* is performed during the *thira* festival of the Adiyas. *Thira* is a festival conducted just after the harvest. It is performed to appease the deities for a rich harvest. *Pulappattu* is a hymn performed during *kuntupula*, the post- burial ceremony of the Adiyas. *Pulappattu* discusses the originary myth of the Adiya community. Almost all these hymns are accompanied with the traditional musical instruments *thudi* and *kuzhal*. Moreover, performance of these hymns is to assure a good harvest. Most of the Adiya hymns are pointers to an Adiya past life of freedom and mobility before interventions from non-adivasis.[12] This cultural history is reinvented every time a rite of passage is performed.

In *Wayattile Adivasikal*, Tharuvana observed that the literacy rate among the Adiyas is 66.18% (87). Though the Adiyas could not advance in terms of acquiring literacy, it is of significance that the Adiyas were a politically informed community since the 1960s. A number of people from the Adiya community had joined the undivided Communist party (CPI) in the 1960s. Some prominent leaders from the Adiya community include P. K. Kalan, P. K. Kariyan, C. K. Janu, C. K. Gulikan, Choman and Aravanazhi Rajan. Most of these leaders joined the CPI and the CPI (M) in the 1960s to mount resistance against the exploitations that the *valli* labourers faced. This strike came to be called the *valli* strike. O. K. Johnny, in his study on the Adiya women, observed that the Adiya women were sexually exploited by the native landlords and the migrants to Wayanad (*Nishabda* 72- 75). The Adiya comrades also united against the sexual exploitation that the women faced. Thus, the 1960s and 70s brought the case of the Adiyas into public attention with their participation in the *valli* struggles.

[12] I would discuss the cultural history of the Adiyas as revealed through *pulappattu* and *gaddika* in the third chapter.

However, as observed earlier, in the present times, the patron- client relationship that held the Adiyas bonded has transformed into other forms of labour exploitation in the ginger plantations at Coorg. Adiyas, along with the Paniyas now migrate to Coorg to work as coolie labourers. According to Daniel Munster, a social anthropologist, the Adiyas and Paniyas now work as seasonal migrant labourers in Coorg ginger plantations during the planting season until its harvest (105). Adivasi labourers are forced to stay in these plantations at temporary shelters and they eat, sleep and drink there. They are given a pittance of 250 INR daily and they return to their hamlets with no profits. Chaligadha suggested that the ginger plantations in Coorg were mostly owned by the migrant Christians from central Travancore. These migrant Christians would take vast lands for lease for ginger cultivation. They would then take men and women from among the adivasis along with them to these plantations. Chaligadha recollected that the temptation to visit an unseen land was the main drive for the youngsters to adorn the role of a seasonal labourer in Coorg. But in the plantations, they were given small sheds or old huts to live, which were abandoned by the natives (Chaligadha). Ten or eleven labourers would live in small sheds at a time. There would be around forty labourers in a camp. The men were paid 125 rupees per day and women were paid 50 rupees per day. Chaligadha observed that the men and women would often fall victims to alcohol there and thereby they would return with no savings. Luisa Steur observed in one her articles on the effects of capitalism on the adivasis, that labour practices in the plantations were exploitative. In this new form of exploitative labour, the plantation owners advanced money and alcohol to the labourers. Thereby the adivasis continued to be bonded labourers in the contemporary times (Steur, "An Expanded Class Perspective" 1344).

The Paniyas

Paniyas form the single largest adivasi community in Kerala. According to the census of 2011, the Paniya population is 88,450. Of these, 45,675 are women and 44,775 are men. The word 'Paniyan' is derived from the Malayalam word *pani*, which is translated as 'labour.' The word 'Paniyan' thus meant 'one who is a labourer.' Though the largest population of Paniyas are found in the district of Wayanad, they also inhabit the neighbouring districts of Kozhikode, Kannur and Malappuram. The Paniyas are historically a group of hunter- gatherers who used to inhabit the forested areas of

Wayanad hills. Mundakkayam Gopi observed that the Paniyas were dependent on their sustenance on fishing practices, catching crabs and gathering forest produce until the early decades of the nineteenth century (37). Paniyas also practised shifting cultivation in the vast hilly tracts of Wayanad. Thus, the Paniyas also have a similar trajectory like the Adiyas as far as their settlements around wetland cultivation in Wayanad is concerned. Thus, the Paniyas too have a cultural history of transformation from food gatherers to *valli* labourers. The Paniyas speak the Paniya language, which is a mixture of Malayalam and Tamil. The Paniya language also does not have a script. Places where the Paniyas settle down around fields for cultivation are called *padies* and a number of *padies* would form a *karumam* or village (Thulasidharan 153). The Paniya houses are called *pire* (Karunakaran 107). In north Wayanad, Paniyas inhabit the areas of Mananthavady, Thondernad, Peria, Thavinjal, Anjukunnu, Thirunelli, Payyampally, Panmaram and Edavaka and in South Wayanad, they inhabit the areas of Sultan Bethery, Mepady, Vaithiri, Pozhuthana, Ambalavayal, Chulliyod, Kalpetta, Porakkadi, Padinjarathara, Kuppadithara, Kottathara and Poothadi.

The Paniya elders during ethnographic interviews with me observed that until the 1960s, they used to live in *padies* or hamlets around the paddy fields of a landlord. Karunan, a Paniya elder, observed that the Paniyas never had a history of owning lands. It was only in recent times that the Paniyas began to inhabit concrete houses which were built with the welfare schemes from the government. However, the Paniya families, even in the present times, are identified with the names of the *jenmi's* family. The Paniya *valli* labourers were paid in kind until the 1970s for their agricultural labour. However, with the involvement of the Communist movement in the issues of *valli* labourers, the Paniyas also began to receive raised wages along with the Adiyas. Unlike the Adiyas, no prominent political leaders emerged from among the Paniyas. The Paniyas continued to be bonded to the *jenmies* until the abolition of bonded labour in Kerala in 1975.

The Paniya villages would usually be under an elder chieftain called *mooppan* or *chemmi*. During the feudal times, the *mooppan* was appointed by the landlord to supervise the labourers working under him. In the present times, the *mooppan* is the eldest one in the village. The Paniyas claim themselves to be non- Hindus and they worship their deities on a raised platform. Often the Paniyas erected stones to symbolise

the deities. These raised platforms where they worship the deities are called *thara*. The *thara,* along with the stone erections (often under a tree) is together called a *kavu* or shrine. The Paniyas worship deities like Gulikan, Kooli, Kattu Bhagavathi, Mari, Bhadrakali, Muthappan and Vallooramma. It is the *chemmi* who would preside over the rites of passage of a family member including birth, menarche, marriage and death. The *chemmi* is also a shaman who treated the sick persons using ritualistic hymns. The Paniyas believed that sickness was the result of an evil spirit possession. This ritual of the Paniyas of treating a sick person is called *theyyamkettal*, according to Karunan. Gods would possess the *chemmi,* who is also a shaman in this ritual. The *chemmi* revealed the reasons for illness and commanded the oblations (in money) that should be made to the deities for curing the illness.[13] Marriages are most often organised around the harvest in the Malayalam month of *Medam* (*Medam* falls between mid-April and mid-May). The Paniyas celebrate a festival called *ucharal*. *Ucharal* festival is celebrated for a week in the Malayalam months of *Makaram* and *Kumbham* (these months fall between December and January). The Paniyas consider *ucharal* as an occasion to celebrate the fertility of mother earth and they restrain from any agricultural activities for a week. Moreover, the Paniyas pay *kolu* or oblations to the deities during this time. The musical instruments *kuzhal* and *thudi* would accompany all these rituals. After *ucharal*, the Paniyas would start cultivating the fields of the landlord. A Paniya shaman called *attali* is especially entrusted to preside over the death rituals called *pula*. *Pula* ceremony is also conducted every year by the Paniyas to commemorate the deities and dead ancestors. For *pula*, the Paniyas organise a feast to the gods and dead ancestors. This feast is offered after the harvesting season of paddy so as to please the deities for better harvest in the future. The Paniyas too transferred their cultural history through memories. Dance and music form an important part of their cultural life. The Paniyas find solace from the back- breaking work on the paddy fields from music and dance. It is common to see the Paniya men and women singing and dancing while engaged in sowing and harvesting activities. The traditional dance form of the Paniyas is called *vattakkali*. V*attakkali* would be accompanied by the beats of *thudi* and the music of *kuzhal*. There are short songs that accompany this dance form and it is mainly marked by sounds of merriment. The Paniya community has a variety of songs which

[13] Personal interview with Karunan, 24 March, 2021.

they employ for various occasions. Vinu Kidachulan, a folk performer from the community, identified that the community has four kinds of songs. These songs include ritualistic hymns, fun songs or *kalippattu*, songs associated with harvesting and replanting and lullabies or *tharattupattu*. Ritualistic hymns include hymns like *Penampattu*, which is a reservoir of the mythical and cultural history of the Paniya community. Songs associated with harvesting and replanting include *kambalappattu* and *okkalpattu*. *Kambalappattu* is sung during *kambalappani*, which is the replanting of paddy saplings on the fields. *Okkalppattu* on the other hand is performed while threshing the paddy grains, with the help of cattle. This process of threshing paddy is called *okkal*. *Kambalappattu* and *okkalppattu* often discuss the common tasks in which the Paniyas are engaged in as *valli* labourers on the fields. Moreover, these songs describe the common life situations of the Paniyas. *Kalippattu* are sung for family gatherings during birth and marriages. These songs also discuss the daily life of. Lullabies are known as *makkaleurakkikinja pattu* or 'songs for rocking the child to sleep.'

Even though literacy mission activists are actively working among the Paniyas, the Paniya literacy rate is only 64. 72 % as suggested by Tharuvana (*Wayanattile* 87). The reason for low literacy rate among the Paniyas was that the Malayalam language imposed on them was almost foreign to the Paniyas. Young men and women from the community pursue education up to matriculation these days. And only a small percentage among them would pursue intermediate studies. In an edited volume on the Paniya life and culture, K. K. Surendran observed that the Paniya students would often drop out after primary school due to various stigmatisation they faced (51). Moreover, the syllabus, most often in the Malayalam language, would be difficult for a Paniya student to tackle. Though the bonded labour system of *valli* is now abolished, the Paniyas mostly work as daily wage labourers in wetland and dry land cultivation and as domestic helpers. The Paniyas like the Adiyas have now fallen prey to the exploitative labour in the ginger plantations at Coorg. Kidachulan observed that the migration from Paniya hamlets to Coorg started in the early decades of the 1990s.[14] Steur observed that the Paniyas had to work at these plantations for minimum wages which were much

[14] Personal interview with Kidachulan, 20 March, 2021.

lower than what was given in Kerala. As the Adiya labourer was given advances, the Paniyas were also given an advance of 500- 1000 INR by the labour contractors. This advance made them bonded. Steur suggested that the Paniyas worked at these plantations at high risk. Fatal accidents were common in the plantations at Coorg and the employers often evaded responsibility (Steur, "An Expanded Class Perspective" 1344). Moreover, the Paniyas had to face competition from the native workers and the migrant workers from other states. Thus, the Paniyas who were bonded labourers in wetland cultivation have become bonded labourers in the plantations. The plantation labour arrangement freed the employer from having any customary obligations to the labourer, while the Paniya labourers continued to be bonded in Coorg in the present times.

Primary Sources and Research Methodology

The major aim of my dissertation is to re-read the slave pasts of the Adiyas and Paniyas. My objective in revisiting the slave histories of these communities is to write a cultural history that would be plural and democratic for the Adiyas and Paniyas. This cultural history attributes the Adiyas and Paniyas with plural identities. Accessing a past where the adivasi is a figure with multiple identities is challenging for a researcher. This is because the plural identities of the Adiyas and Paniyas are not readily accessible in a coherent manner from any existing archives. Moreover, the Adiyas and Paniyas did not produce any written documents themselves. In order to gain access to histories from an adivasi perspective, I had to consult resources that belonged to various disciplines. No single disciplinary domain gave a complex picture of the Adiya and Paniya cultural history. The primary resources that I consulted included materials that belonged to the domain of archives, literature and cultural memory. As a starting point to write adivasi cultural history, re- reading and critiquing the existing dominant epistemologies was necessary. These resources belonged to the archival and literary domains. The archival documents are published by Fort. St. George, the administrative headquarters of the Madras presidency.[15] Most of these archival materials belonged to a time period between the 1800s- 1860s except for some newspaper reports and magazine articles

[15] Wayanad belonged to the Malabar district, which was part of the erstwhile Madras presidency during the imperial regime in India.

which were published in the post 1950s. I accessed the archival materials from various administrative departments of the Madras presidency including the Board of Revenue, Forest department, Judicial and Legislative departments. These documents are mainly state policy records, gazetteers, census reports, slavery papers, administrative manuals, administrative history, travelogues, memoirs, newspaper reports and anthropological accounts. The literary resources included novels, plays and historical accounts. The archival materials belong to the time period between the 1800s and the 1980s and are written from administrative points of view. The literary works also mostly projected a non- adivasi perspective on the Adiya and Paniya history.

Therefore, I found the rich cultural memory of the Adiyas and Paniyas as an important source to construct an adivasi viewpoint. I have tried to parallelly read the existing archival and literary understanding of the adivasis within the context of the cultural memory of the adivasis. Cultural memory acted as a powerful source to build an alternative history of plural identities for the adivasis. Memories of the Adiyas and Paniyas could only be accessed through various techniques in ethnography. This is because the Adiya and Paniya memories are circulated orally. Moreover, it is the commemorative ceremonies, in the form of rituals, that remind these communities of their pluralistic past identities. Memories of the Adiyas and Paniyas are accessed from personal interviews, myths, rituals and folk traditions. Memories regarding past subjection and ritualistic ceremonies offered the Adiyas and Paniyas a liberation from slavery and bondage symbolically. Thereby, this cultural realm of the adivasis became immensely useful for me as a researcher to rewrite the slave history of the Adiyas and Paniyas. I also want to make it clear that the memories of the adivasis are not of the past. But my fieldwork during the period between 2018- 2021 make these memories very much contemporary.

For the reason that my primary resources are of diverse nature, my research methodology is a combination of textual analysis, discourse analysis, archival/ historical methodology and ethnography. In other words, this methodology could be called ‘ethnographic history.’ Subaltern historians of South Asia have made use of the ethno-historic method to rewrite the history of the marginalised from below. David Hardiman, is a prominent subaltern historian who analysed the propitiation cults of the adivasis of South Gujarat against the colonial and nationalist histories regarding this community.

Shail Mayaram made use of the commemorative ceremonies of the Meo community to argue that the subaltern used their cultural realms to revisit state- imposed subjugation. Similarly, Ajay Skaria discussed the plurality and hybridity of the adivasi perception of their cultural history against the fixed identities imposed by colonial modernity. Nandini Sundar is another subaltern historian who juxtaposed the archival materials produced by the colonial regime with the memories of a peasant adivasi community. Sundar constructed a history of agency to the adivasis by strategically employing their memories. Alpa Shah, a cultural anthropologist, also made commendable contributions to subaltern history writing. Shah employed her ethnographic knowledge of the adivasis of Jharkhand to critique the colonial stereotypes on them. Archana Prasad, another historian, made use of the mythical traditions of the adivasis of Gondwana to argue that cultural memory acted as a political tool for the adivasis to resist marginalisation. I have engaged with the studies of Hardiman, Mayaram, Skaria, Sundar, Shah and Archana Prasad closely in the chapters. In this dissertation, I also attempt to write a subaltern history of the subjugated adivasis. For this purpose, I have conducted personal interviews and participant observation during my field visits to the cultural sites. The method of ethnography was absolutely necessary for me as the Adiyas and Paniyas spoke languages that did not have scripts. So, the gateway to the cultural memories was my personal interactions with the adivasis at the field. My ethnographic research was mainly done in the Southern and Northern Wayanad. I have done short term field visits to these sites- four months in the period between 2018- 2019 and another two months in 2021. The Adiyas mostly inhabit the northern parts of Wayanad, close to the borders of Mysore. I have identified two Adiya colonies in northern Wayanad, in Thrissilery. These are Chekot Adiya colony and Kundu Chekot Adiya colony in Kaithavally. Ethnographic observations regarding the Paniya community were done in four Paniya colonies- two in south Wayanad and the other two in north Wayanad. I have visited Chulliyode Paniya colony in Kolimoola and Armatt Paniya colony in Meenangadi in South Wayanad. In the north Wayanad, I visited Kavu Paniya Colony in Valliyoorkkavu, Mananthavady and Nachattil Paniya Colony in Padinjarethara.

As I have already suggested, memories regarding adivasi slavery was crucial to construct an alternative past. It was only through the recognition of their slave pasts that the liberation for the adivasis was possible. Two important figures in the West who wrote immensely on the ‘remembrance of slave past’ as liberational are Paul Gilroy and

Saidiya Hartman. Gilroy suggested that cultural remembrance of slavery offered a "politics of transfiguration" for the African diaspora. By "politics of transfiguration," Gilroy meant the creation of new aspirations by the African diaspora to claim equality and dignity by rejecting their slave identities. Hartman specifically made use of archival materials on the plantation slaves of the West to recreate a slave history. She highlighted the potential of the cultural materials of the African slaves to revisit historical and cultural sites of subjection. Sanal Mohan, an Indian historian and sociologist, made use of the slave pasts of the Dalits of Kerala to write a liberatory history for them. Mohan's study on the alternative religiosity of the Dalits is an interesting combination of historical and ethnographic techniques ("Narrativizing the History"). Therefore, one of my important suggestions in this thesis- slave memory as liberatory for the adivasis- could be argued only through ethnographic history. This is because memory was not easily accessible and this process required constant interactions with the community members. I also resort to thick descriptions of certain rituals of the Adiyas and Paniyas. Thick descriptions helped me to grasp the particular meanings that the community members attributed to their commemorative ceremonies.[16] Commemorative ceremonies are important resources also because they embody a sense of history. The adivasis are made aware of the collective memory of their break with the past through certain rituals.[17] This break with the past, in other words, is the transformation of the adivasis from being food gatherers, to shifting cultivators, agrestic slaves or bonded labourers. It is this collective memory of awareness that offer the subaltern an escape from their slave pasts.

Chapterisation

The larger argument of my thesis is that the Adiyas and Paniyas had plural identities at different historical conjectures. The Adiyas and Paniyas were stereotyped as slaves by the colonial administrative documents. But these agrestic labourers were

[16] Clifford Geertz, a cultural anthropologist, discussed the significance of thick descriptions within the context of Balinese cockfight. Geertz suggested that thick description made the ethnographer aware of the cultural meanings that the community associated with ceremonies and rituals.

[17] Pierre Nora, a French historian called such commemorative ceremonies that reminded a community of their break with the past as *lieu de memoir*.

able to assert an identity of independent agriculturalists in the post- independent modern Kerala state through various wage struggles. Moreover, the Adiyas and Paniyas created counter- histories to the colonial stereotypes through their cultural memories. Adivasi cultural realms offered the Adiyas and Paniyas with new possibilities to aspire for spaces of equality in the contemporary times as well. Thus, the identity of the Adiyas and Paniyas could not be reduced to a slave. Rather, they were seen as bonded labourers by the Kerala state and the adivasis imagined themselves to be autonomous agriculturalists. Therefore, my attempt in writing a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas is set against those tendencies in the dominant history to freeze identities of the adivasis.

I have divided this dissertation into four chapters.

In the first chapter titled "Tribes as Agrestic Slaves: The Colonial Classification of the Adiyas and Paniyas," I try to critique the colonial discursive construction of the Adiyas and Paniyas as agrestic slaves. I have further argued that the colonial administration employed the category of 'slavery' to describe the local system of agrestic bondage amongst the Adiyas and Paniyas. Colonial administrators like T. H. Baber and H. S. Graeme called this local system of bondage as *vallippani* or *valli* system and called the labourers as *vallippanikkars* or *valli* labourers. Thereby, the *valli* labourers, including the Adiyas and Paniyas were attributed the identity of a 'slave.' The colonial administration portrayed the work environment of the *valli* labourers as similar to and at times worse than the plantation slaves of the Europe. The colonial state initially used the category 'slavery' to define the labour practice of *vallippani*. This move was intended to highlight the colonial abolitionist stand. I have also shown in this chapter that the administrative ethnography and anthropology stereotyped the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'slaves,' 'savages,' animists,' 'criminals' and 'beggars.' Moreover, these reports compared and contrasted the Adiyas and Paniyas to the plantation slaves of Africa. Such anthropological observations on the adivasis legitimised the civilizational mission of the imperial regime. This civilizational mission, I have argued, was to extend the colonial dominion to the hills and forests where the Adiyas and Paniyas moved freely. Thus, I have suggested in this chapter that the colonial regime consolidated the Adiya and Paniya identities as 'agrestic/ praedial slaves.' An indirect impact of these identities as slaves was that the Adiya and Paniya issue attracted global attention. But

the global debates on the colonial abolitionist policies did not lead to the emancipation of the Adiyas and Paniyas in the nineteenth century. Rather, I have suggested that the imperial regime was complicit with the native landlords who attributed hereditary slavery to the Adiyas and Paniyas, by linking *vallippani* to the 'the custom of land.' This custom of the land was called as *deshachary* by the colonial administrators like T. H. Baber. However, the custom of the land, according to the colonial administrators was nothing but the caste system that naturalised the subservience of the agrestic labourers and the dominance of the landlords. I have further noted that the colonial administration stopped short of abolishing slavery due to economic and political reasons. What the colonial administrators argued was that the slaves should be emancipated gradually as the colonial policy regarding the *valli* slaves was also aimed at civilizing them. Therefore, I also suggest in this chapter that the *vallippani* is a system of modern labour bondage, which is directly related to the colonial state regulations. In other words, the colonial state legitimised slavery among the Adiyas and Paniyas. Thus, the larger argument of this chapter is that the colonial regime in Malabar is a watershed moment in the cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas. This is because of two reasons. One is that the colonial regime fixed slave identity for the Adiyas and Paniyas. The second is that the colonial rule was the moment when the Adiyas and Paniyas received global attention. The imposition of identity affected the Adiyas and Paniyas in the contemporary times as they continued to be stigmatised as slaves.

In the second chapter titled "Revisiting the *Valli* Strikes: The Emergence of the Adiyas and Paniyas as Agricultural Labourers," I analyse the emergence of the Adiyas and Paniyas as independent agriculturalists through their attempts to break away from the identity of a slave. This political awakening among the *valli* labourers happened in the context of the post- independent Kerala. In this chapter, I have identified the historical time period between the 1950s to the 70s as another watershed moment in the transformation of the *valli* labourers. I have argued that the Adiyas and Paniyas who were categorised as 'slaves' in the nineteenth century began to be redefined as 'bonded labourers' by the administrative discourses of Kerala in the 1950s. I have also argued that the category 'bonded labourer' was strategically used by the *valli* labourers to claim for political rights in the 1960s. I have identified certain historical conjectures that led to the empowerment of the *valli* labourers. One is the Communist Party of India's (CPI) ascent to power in Kerala during 1957 and their introduction of the land reformation bill

in the same year. The land reformation bill declared for the first time that the actual cultivator was also a rightful claimant of the land ownership. The next moment was the publication of K. Panoor's administrative ethnography titled *Keralathile Africa* in 1963. Panoor argued that the actual cultivators of Wayanad including the Adiyas and Paniyas were slaves even in the 1960s. Panoor's claim was revolutionary as the colonial administration had already exhausted the category of 'slavery' to define the *valli* labourers by the abolition of slavery in 1843 in Malabar. Panoor reintroduced the issue of adivasi slavery in the domain of modern Kerala state. The next important moment was the *valli* strikes led by the adivasi labourers of Wayanad in the 1960s. Empowered by the pro- peasant policies of the Communist government, the *valli* labourers, especially the Adiyas of North Wayanad organised as a peasant class. I have selected P. K. Kalan (an Adiya chieftain and a CPI (M) leader) and A. Varghese (a CPI (M) leader) as two prominent figures who organised the *valli* labourers under the Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU), the peasants' union of the Communist party. I have suggested that the *valli* strikes gave dignity to the Adiyas and Paniyas as peasants. Moreover, the *valli* strikes enabled the Adiyas and Paniyas to ask for a wage raise and dignified work environments. The next important historical moments are the introduction of a Land Reformation Act in 1969 and the implementation of the Abolition of Bonded Labour in Kerala during 1975. These moments saw the state effectively responding to the 'bonded' status of the Adiyas and Paniyas by implementing legislative measures. Thus, in this chapter, I have identified certain historical conjectures to argue that the post- electoral phase in Kerala saw the emergence of the *valli* slave as an agricultural labourer with human dignity. Moreover, I show that the Adiya and Paniya history could not be reduced to their history as slaves. Rather, their identities are redefined based on their labour practice. One is the state ascribed identity of the 'bonded labourer' and the other an adivasi identity of 'autonomous agricultural labourer.'

Having analysed the historical trajectories that led to the transformation of the slaves (*valli* labourers) as agricultural labourers with dignity in the first two chapters, in the third chapter titled "Imagining the *Uchronic* Spaces of Equality: The Cultural Realm of Myths and Ritual Performances of the Adiyas," I would argue that the Adiyas reinvented their memories (both mythical and historical) to offer counter- narratives to the stereotypical ascriptions of the colonial regime. In order to understand the Adiya

outlook on the routes of bondage and emancipation, I mostly draw from ethnographic data. I have identified two cultural sites- Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani*, where the Adiyas were historically subjugated to slave labour. The Valliyoorkkavu temple fair is historically known for slave transactions whereas *kambalappani* is an exploitative labour practice where the *valli* labourers were forced into excruciating labour situations. However, the Adiyas reinvented their memories to claim that these cultural sites were once sites which rehearsed Adiya celebrations. They could thus memorise the ways in which such sites were appropriated by the landlords. I also critically read in this chapter the ritualistic hymns of Adiyas called *pulappattu* and *gaddika*. I have shown that both these hymns remember certain mythical spaces where the Adiyas led a life of freedom as shifting cultivators. While *pulappattu* narrated the loss of cultivable lands by the Adiyas due to encroachments from the non- adivasis, *gaddika* narrated the indispensability of Adiyas as agriculturalists on the paddy fields of Wayanad. Thus, by a strategic reading of Adiya memories, I would argue in this chapter that the Adiyas had an independent imagination to remember the loss of resources. The Adiyas were thus able to present an alternative history to the colonial history that imagined the Adiyas as slaves. I would further argue in this chapter that the Adiyas resorted to popularising their mythical memories on the secular stages of Kerala in the contemporary times. I would argue that the attempts by the Adiya community to popularise their ritualistic realms was to claim equality as citizens in the modern Kerala state. Thereby, the Adiyas were able to create cultural spaces to challenge the stereotypes attributed to them by the colonial administrative regimes.

In the fourth chapter titled "Cultural Memory as History: The Paniya Social Imaginary of their Slave Past in the Colonial Context," I have focused on the Paniyas as a community with a unique imagination of their own cultural history. I have revisited the Paniya memories regarding the practice of *vallippani* in this chapter. By revisiting the Paniya memories of *vallippani*, I have argued that Paniyas opposed the project of civilization offered by colonial modernity and reinvented counter- histories. I have again revisited the common adivasi cultural sites of Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani* to understand the Paniya imagination regarding these sites. I have argued in this chapter that the Paniyas reinvented multiple narratives regarding these sites. In such counter- narratives, the Paniyas memorised these sites as those which were closely related to the food gathering and hunting expeditions of the Paniyas. I have argued that

such sites of celebration became scenes of subjection when the landlords appropriated these sites. I have also analysed the mythical and folk memories of the Paniyas in this chapter. I have critically read *penampattu*, a ritualistic hymn of the Paniyas here. I have argued that *penampattu* narrated the various stages of Paniya enslavement using metaphors and symbols. Colonial policies like forest reservations and land revenue implementation are approached from a Paniya vantage point in this hymn. *Penampattu* as I have suggested in this chapter discussed the loss of resources and the enslavement of the Paniyas as they were forced out of the forests. *Kambalappattu* is another Paniya folk tradition that offered a counter- narrative to colonial modernity. I have argued in this chapter that while the colonial administration presented *kambalappani* as a celebratory occasion for the Paniyas, *kambalappattu* discussed the rigours of slavery and the adverse effects of various administrative policies on the food gathering Paniyas. In this chapter also, I have tried to bring out the contemporaneity of the Paniya memories by highlighting the attempts by Paniya folk artists to popularise their mythical memories. I would look at the improvisations of the Paniya cultural forms like *kambalappattu* on the popular stages of Kerala by Paniya bands. I suggest that such secular performances of Paniya folk and mythical traditions are attempts to claim that the Paniyas are very much part of modernity. Art thus became a medium for the Paniyas to repudiate the stereotypical ascriptions regarding them.

In the concluding section, I have briefly recapitulated the main arguments of my thesis along with its scopes and limitations. Here, I have reiterated that the Adiyas and Paniyas effectively used their cultural realms to resist the slave identity imposed on them. Moreover, I have suggested here that I have not exhausted all the archival materials- including the colonial documents and the native newspaper reports- while writing a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas. Moreover, I have hinted at the limitations that I faced at the field as an ethnographer. I was not able to witness certain commemorative ceremonies completely as the community members identified my presence as an interruption to the sacred nature of their rituals. Moreover, the conclusions that I drew from my ethnographic fieldwork are limited by the disciplinary boundaries of cultural studies and the nature of inquiries that I made. I have also suggested here in this chapter that my research work could be used as a preparatory study to critically examine other adivasi questions in Wayanad. In other words, my research work could be extended to understand the issue of adivasi women labourers in

Wayanad, the migrations of the Adiyas and Paniyas as seasonal labourers to Coorg and the contemporary land struggles led by the adivasis under the banner of indigeneity.

Chapter 1

Tribes as Agrestic Slaves: The Colonial Classification of the Adiyas and Paniyas

The Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad have always appeared as 'slaves,' 'bonded labourers' or '*valli* labourers' in those vernacular studies that dealt with the history of Wayanad. Most of these historical accounts hinted at the existence of slave trade and slavery among the tribes of Wayanad from the beginning of the nineteenth century. For instance, O. K. Johnny, a noted historian of Wayanad, in his *Wayanad Rekhakal*, observed that Adiyas and Paniyas were slaves of Wayanad and that their labour practice was locally called *valli*. Johnny observed that they were transacted as goods among the landlords of Wayanad (*Wayanad Rekhakal* 160). Similarly, Mundakkayam Gopi, another historian of Wayanad, hinted at the identity of slave labourers belonging to different *hobblies* in Wayanad.[18] Mundakkayam Gopi suggested that these slave labourers belonged to the tribal groups of Adiyas, Paniyas, Pulayas, Mooppan and Naickans (186). Both Mundakkayam Gopi and Johnny argued that the *valli* bondage continued into the twentieth century. This was despite the fact that the abolition laws were proclaimed in the British Malabar. What is significant in both Johnny's and Mundakkayam Gopi's studies is that they depended on the colonial provincial documents to conclude that there existed slavery in Malabar. Thus, the colonial rule is a turning point as far as the local systems of bondage in Malabar is concerned. Wayanad, being a part of Malabar, was equally affected by the discourses that the administrative regime constructed around slaves and bondage in the nineteenth century. Though I agree with Johnny and Mundakkayam Gopi in their findings regarding slave labour among the Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad, both of these historians arrived at hasty conclusions. In other words, the archives that these historians used were scanty. A simplistic conclusion that the Adiyas and Paniyas were slaves in the nineteenth century does not allow one to look into the complexity of the issue.

[18] *Hobbly* is a cluster of villages which is administered together for the extraction of land revenue. A *hobbly* is also called as *nadu* in Malayalam.

Therefore, I would venture into a detailed analysis of the discursive construction of the Adiya and Paniya tribes as slaves during the colonial regime in Malabar. I argue in this chapter that the *valli* system, which is a local system of bondage in Malabar, retained the elements of plantation slavery. The colonial administration defined the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'praedial slaves'/ 'agrestic slaves' or 'slaves of the land' by the beginning of the nineteenth century. The imperial regime definitely had administrative agendas, while categorising the tribe as a slave. On the other hand, the imperial regime had played a role in presenting the situation of tribal labourers of Wayanad to a global audience in Europe. The nineteenth century was also the time when slavery in the colonies of Europe was debated on a global stage. Gaining prominence of the pro-abolitionist stands in Europe forced the administration in Malabar to implement slavery abolition laws in the 1840s. Categorisation of the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'praedial slaves' was concomitant with the introduction of abolitionist laws in Malabar. Thus, the colonial rule wanted to highlight their abolitionist/ liberal humanist stands on a global stage by using the category of slavery, a modern form of labour exploitation, to define the existence of the Adiyas and Paniyas. The intended colonial project of highlighting their abolitionist stand however made the local system of bondage in Malabar comprehensible to a global audience. In this chapter, I critically examine the colonial discursive construction of the tribe as a 'slave' and a 'savage.' I would depend on a number of colonial archival materials from the 1800s to the 1850s to understand the local system of bondage called *valli* in Wayanad. Provincial archival materials revealed that the Adiyas and Paniyas were absolutely slaves in the modern sense, though they were linked to the caste system of Malabar. Moreover, the archival resources are read seriously to see the colonial project of 'othering' the slave tribe. The implication is that the 'slave' should then be tamed and civilized. Therefore, I examine in this chapter whether the experiential realms of the Adiya and Paniya *valli* labourers could be equated and paralleled to that of the plantation slave. This chapter is broadly divided into two sections. The first section titled 'Slavery in the South Asian Context' is a discussion on the larger debates regarding slavery in South Asia. Historians of South Asian slavery argued that caste played a crucial role in complicating the story of slavery in India. These historians have pointed out that the colonial rule was complicit in systematising slavery in India, which is in turn linked to the caste system. The administrator here gave legitimacy to the caste system and concluded that the caste

system was impenetrable. Thus, even the abolition of slavery act in India could not terminate slavery and bondage in India. Given this hindsight, I move on to the next section titled 'The Colonial Discursive Construction of the Adiyas and Paniyas,' which is on the colonial images of the Adiyas and Paniyas as slaves and savages. This section is further divided into two subsections on the basis of the archival materials chosen. The first sub-section looks at various administrative documents through which the colonial administration constructed a slave identity for the tribes of Wayanad. I argue in this section that the Adiyas and Paniyas went through slave labour in Malabar. In the second sub-section, I attempt at a textual analysis of anthropological and ethnographic materials to see how the administration created a dehumanising discourse on the tribes who were already slaves in Malabar. The result was that the tribal agrestic slaves were portrayed as 'less- than humans' who are devoid of any will or agency to appreciate freedom.

1.1. Slavery in the South Asian Context

A number of historians on South Asian slavery have suggested that there was no single form of bondage in India. It has also been argued by historians on Indian slavery that the local systems of bondage that existed in India cannot be easily compared to the classical form of slavery in the Caribbean plantations. Though certain characteristics of the Atlantic form of slavery could be delineated in the South Asian slave transactions, the slaves of South Asia could not be easily paralleled to the plantation slaves. I would take a moment here to discuss some of the characteristics that defined the Atlantic slavery in the plantations. This discussion is important here as the studies on South Asian slavery often compared and contrasted the classical concept of slavery with the local practices of bondage. According to the Slavery Convention held at Geneva in 1926, slavery is defined as "the status or condition of a person over whom any or all of the powers attaching to the right of ownership are exercised" (Slavery Convention 1). Slave trade, according to the Slavery Convention included all acts involved in the capture, acquisition or disposal of a person to reduce him/ her to slavery. It also involved the acquisition of a slave with an intention to sell or exchange him/ her (Slavery Convention 1). Therefore, being a slave meant being deprived of one's freedom and will.

Orlando Patterson, a Jamaican historical and cultural sociologist, delineated certain distinctive features of the slave institution in his work *Slavery and Social Death*. *Slavery and Social Death* is one of the classic works that dealt with a comparative study of slave systems across sixty-six societies over time. Patterson argued that there existed universality in the structures and processes that lead to the formation of a slave institution. In this comparative study, Patterson mapped out the position of a slave relative to the society. Patterson identified that the slave is a "socially dead person" (5), who is under the violent domination of a master. Natal alienation is the key factor that led to the social death of the slave. Since the slave is a socially dead person, he/ she is devoid of any heritage, according to Patterson. The children of the slaves often inherited slavery as the slaves were under violent domination in an alien circumstance. Moreover, a slave is completely stripped off his/ her honour and the loss of honour in turn would affect the slaves' psyche (Patterson 10). Loss of honour also makes the slave powerless. Patterson observed that the loss of power depletes a slave of human dignity. A person devoid of human dignity does not have public worth (Patterson 10). Patterson also talked about the rituals that the slaves went through as he was acquired by a master. The slave is renamed, given clothing, language and body marks to claim ownership by the master (Patterson 8). Historians on slavery, including Patterson observed that the plantation form of slavery, particularly, resorted to the whipping of the slave as a method of punishment. Whipping, thus, was a crucial form of social control in the plantation slavery as it gave an impression to the slave that he/she was in fact a slave.

I would agree with Patterson here, when he observed that there are certain specific characteristics for a slave system to operate- and the primary one being the violent domination of a person. However, what is more important for me is Patterson's suggestion that there could be regional and cultural variations in the actual implementation of the slave system. This vanguard would be useful as I would discuss certain works that specifically look at South Asian slave contexts as against the classic, modern plantation slave system. It is often said that there is a marked variation arising in the South Asian contexts of bondage as opposed to the plantation slavery. This point of divergence in the bonded situation in South Asia arose from the caste system. Nicholas. B. Dirks, an authority on South Asian history and culture, observed that the caste system (and not the state) held Indian society together (57). Dirks emphasised that caste got rigid in the colonial era and that it was not so in the pre- colonial era when the

kings ruled. Caste, however, got legitimised and reasserted during the colonial rule in India. Thus, the colonial rule, according to Dirks, played a major role in the creation of a civil society, where religion transcended politics and the society resisted change (59). Thus, colonial rule, I would say, played an important role in fixing caste and thereby the *dharmas* (an individual's duty which are to be fulfilled according to the custom of Hindu religion) that are specific for each individual. There are certain significant works that deal with South Asian slavery in the context of the colonial rule in India. All these studies identified caste as the common factor that fettered certain groups of people to local practices of bondage. Historians who looked at the specificity of the South Asian slave systems include Indrani Chatterjee, Richard. M. Eaton, Andrea Major and Rupa Viswanath. These historians identified the relationship between caste, bondage and slavery in India by a strategic reading of the colonial archives on slavery in East India.[19]

Indrani Chatterjee and Eaton, in their edited volume on slavery in South Asia discussed the specificities of the slave systems in South Asia. In the introduction to *Slavery and South Asian History*, Eaton argued that there existed no single form of slavery in South Asian history (1). Each instance of slavery in India is the product of certain unique contingent factors, says Eaton. Therefore, the forms of slavery that existed in India could not be understood by separating it from the contingent factors and situations. Moreover, Eaton rejects the European idea of freedom as the antithesis of slavery. Slavery, its abolition and walk towards freedom is not the trajectory of slavery that existed in South Asia mostly (Eaton 2). Eaton observed that slave systems in India would not align with the Atlantic model of plantation slavery that emerged as the most widely discussed form of slavery as a model of study. Indrani Chatterjee, in one of her essays on slavery among the hill communities of South Asia in *Slavery and South Asian History*, talked about the colonial administration's diplomatic stand on local slave practices in India. Her discussions around South Asian slavery conclude that the British administration pursued the abolitionist stand by actually denying the existence of slavery. Indrani Chatterjee notes that the colonial administration failed to call a slave, a slave in their larger agenda to declare that slavery was not part of British India (32). She goes on to discuss the imperial influences on the censorship of vernacular terms

[19] 'East Indies' is used in a broader sense here to refer to South Asia. The term 'East Indies' is used also to compare and contrast it with the situation of plantation labourers in the West Indies.

that denoted local practices of bondage like the *bawi* system among the Burmese territories.[20] Indrani Chatterjee argues that the imperial rule began to manipulate the local names that existed to define slaves for administrative purposes. The local population fell victims to the "multiple projects of control and invisibilization" of the colonial government, "simultaneously leaving the meanings of many words unsettled" (I. Chatterjee 288). The implication of Indrani Chatterjee's argument is that the imperial rule dismissed local systems of bondage as slavery and claimed that there was no slavery in the British ruled territories.

Andrea Major's historical study on slavery, abolitionism and the colonial empire provides a useful framework to understand the ways in which the colonial administration defined slavery in India. Major's work elaborated on what Indrani Chatterjee and Eaton suggested regarding the British policy on local slave practices. Major observed that the colonial administration under the East India Company made a distinction between the West Indian plantation slavery and the systems of bondage in East Indies (5). Major notes that slavery in India was erased in the British public discourses when the Atlantic slave trade was gaining international acclaim. Indians were identified in two senses- one, as a servile class who assembled under the colonial domination and second, as autonomous peasant labourers who provided an alternative to the West Indian slavery. The East India Company (EIC) in the nineteenth century, Major suggested, was quick in building a discourse of free labour in India. EIC depicted the agrestic slavery (as Major calls it) in the southern parts of India as mild. The EIC arrived at this conclusion by arguing that the East Indian agrestic slaves were bound to the master (who is a native landlord) by the caste system. The customary practices of the caste system made the master a patron, on whom the slave could depend in times of distress. By attributing customary nature to the practices of bondage in East India, the administration spared themselves from the expenditure of intervening in the indigenous

[20] *Bawi s*ystem was put into practice when the colonial administration made it mandatory for all households in the hilly territories to do forced labour. This was the administrative agenda to increase revenue collection. Such a demand from the colonial rule collided the distinction between free labour, traditional slaves and those who were coerced into labour (I. Chatterjee 294). However, with the abolitionist phase in British colonies, the word *bawi* was removed from the administrative dictionaries. this removal was to declare that there existed no slavery in the hills.

practices (Major 13). Major argued that de-legalisation of slavery by the Abolition of Slavery Act V of 1843 in the British colonies did not invite authoritarian interventions on the slave holders in India. And this non- intervention of the EIC benefitted them as the administration continued to receive revenue derived from land-holding taxpayers who depended on their agrestic slaves (Major 43).

Rupa Viswanath in her study on the Pariah agrestic labourers of Tamil Nadu opined that the colonial administration had used the trope of "gentle slavery" in representing the downtrodden state of the agricultural labourers of South India (3). Viswanath made a similar argument to that of Major's regarding the colonial stand on abolitionism in South India. She observed that the colonial administration wanted the system of slavery to continue in the provinces of Malabar for economic and political reasons. Viswanath made it clear that under the colonial rule, the system of slavery was legitimised by associating it to the caste system and this allowed the landlords to continue paying higher taxes to the government (23). Viswanath went on to argue that the administration wanted to highlight their abolitionist face on the global stage. The strategy they resorted to do this was to replace the term "slave" in the administrative documents with euphemistic terms like "agrestic servant," "labourer" or "*adscripti glebae*" (attached to the soil) (Viswanath 23).

Though there are ample discussions regarding slavery in colonial South Asia, there are few studies that exclusively discussed agricultural slavery in Kerala, in relation to caste. *Emergence of a Slave Caste,* by K. Saradamoni (a historian and an economist) is a significant study that came out on the agricultural slaves of Kerala. Saradamoni studied the social transformation of the Pulaya agricultural labourers of Kerala in the nineteenth century through the British administration. She made use of the colonial archives to get a picture of the condition of the Pulayas during the nineteenth century. By a reading of the colonial archives, Saradamoni concluded that the Pulayas who cultivated the wetlands were a slave population since the nineteenth century. Saradamoni pointed that the Pulayas were the absolute property of the master and that they were not attached to the soil (52). The Pulayas of Kerala did not have a life of their own during the nineteenth century and their entire life was dependent on the masters. Another significant study by Tanika Sarkar on the situation of the agrestic slaves of Kerala came out in the 1980s. Sarkar, a noted historian of modern India, called the

bonded agricultural labourers of South India as ‘praedial slaves’ (the word “praedial” comes from the Latin noun *praedium*, which meant “landed property”). Thus, praedial slaves are those agrestic slaves who are attached to the lands on which they worked. Nevertheless, these slaves could be alienated from the land as it was practised in south India (Sarkar 102). Praedial slavery according to Sarkar is an institution that kept large reserves of the lower castes as agricultural labourers in wet land cultivation, especially in the Malabar district, in South India. Praedial slaves were seen as “an integral part of the master’s landed property” (Sarkar 102). They were dependent perpetually on the landlords for subsistence. Sarkar in her work attributed the economic deprivation of the praedial slaves to the ritualistic attribution of untouchability to them. An important observation that Sarkar made in her study is that the praedial slaves were subjected to the rigours of slave system. Praedial slaves were the absolute property of their masters (who is a native landlord) and the master had the right to buy, sell, mortgage or rent them out at his will (Sarkar 105). Though praedial slaves were allowed to have a family, the master’s authority to sell or mortgage him/ her made his/ her family life extremely vulnerable. Bondage commenced through the self- sale of the individuals to a master or the sale of younger ones by elders to meet monetary needs during famines. The labourer who was bonded had to work for the master till the money was repaid. If the money could not be repaid during the debtor’s lifetime, then the debt was inherited by the next generation (Sarkar 108). Sarkar observed that slavery and bondage could hardly be seen as two categories and that debt bondage became a disguised continuation of slavery even after its abolition in the colonial India by the 1840s. Sarkar attributed the persistence of slavery in South India to the colonial administration’s indifference to the local practices of bondage and their inability to cut through the caste system. Therefore, Sarkar’s inquiries into the agricultural bondedness in South India made it quite clear that there existed slavery in South India, including the coasts of Malabar. However, these local systems of bondages were justified by the landlords by extending some customary privileges to the slaves (Sarkar 103- 104). The implication is that the native landlords used religion as a justification to exert total control over the landless untouchable castes. More important argument here is that the colonial administration was complacent with the native landlords in justifying the caste-imposed slavery. Sarkar observed that the British administrators conceptualised praedial slavery in South India as favourable to the labourers and thereby milder. The administration suggested that

South Indian slavery was milder because the slaves were not flogged often and that they were provided provisions for a homestead and maintenance in distress from the native master (Sarkar 107).

Similarly, P. Sanal Mohan, a historian from Kerala has studied caste slavery among the Pulayas of Travancore in the work titled *Modernity of Slavery*. Mohan differentiated between the Atlantic slavery and systems of bondage in India. Mohan argued that there existed slavery in India and that the slave system in Kerala was graded. Whereas the Atlantic slavery is a modern phenomenon linked to European colonialism (Mohan, *Modernity* 40). Mohan called the Indian caste system a graded institution which legitimised dominance and subordination. The working slave castes of Kerala in the pre- colonial agrarian sector had to carry their status as slaves over to the colonial times. This was because land ownership in Kerala was directly related to one's position in the caste hierarchy and the slave castes were forbidden from owning any lands. However, Sanal Mohan, through a reading of the colonial archives, observed that the colonial administration brought the agrestic labourer castes of Travancore under the umbrella of the global system of slavery. But, as Major and Indrani Chatterjee suggested, this strategy of the colonial administration of bringing the local systems of bondage under the ambit of global slavery, did not free the agrestic labourers from bondage: "...there emerged various intermediary stages of labour that combined elements of extra- economic coercion" (Mohan, *Modernity* 33). Mohan's study, I would argue, is important for one specific reason. Mohan has pointed that the colonial administrative discourse, attributed the global category of 'slavery' to a "system of social control of the subordinated untouchable slaves in Kerala, that emerged from the caste system" (*Modernity* 39). However, this category of slavery itself was used later by the servile castes of Kerala to challenge the modern society, which was slow to accept their dignity as humans. Vinil Paul, another historian from Kerala argued in his edited collections on slavery in Kerala that the slave systems in India were different from the European forms of slavery (19). Paul argued that the essential difference between slave systems in India and Europe is the result of the caste system in India. Caste system made the agricultural slaves of India polluting and inglorious, observed Paul. However, the pollution attributed to the slave castes by religious texts like *dharmasashtras* got systematised by the colonial state (Paul 19). Paul agreed with Sanal Mohan, in his

theoretical positions on the slave systems in India. He argued that the systematisation of caste system in India closed all means for the agrestic slaves to come out of slavery.

In conclusion, the colonial rule in India systematised local slave practices by their non- interference in the 'custom of the land.' While the abolitionists in Europe readily agreed upon the emancipation strategies offered by the colonial rule in India, the deeper question they failed to ask is whether the colonial abolitionist stand really benefitted the slave communities of India. Thus, slavery in India is graded and is very much linked to the caste system. The colonial rule systematised this system of exploitation. Abolitionist policies remained only on the papers in the nineteenth century colonial India. The colonial stand on abolitionism was therefore ambiguous. This ambiguity arose from the colonial administration's inability to validate the perpetuation of local systems of bondage in India, even after the declaration of the abolition of slavery in 1843. The EIC wanted to present themselves as part of the enlightenment project in Europe during the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the EIC also wanted to sustain the revenue derived from local systems of exploitation. In such a scenario, the administration simultaneously abolished slavery on papers, while obliquely supporting the local customary relations between the agrestic slave and the native landlord. Another important concluding remark is that almost all the historians on South Asian slavery agreed upon the appropriateness of naming the untouchable agricultural labourer of colonial India, a slave, and more specifically, 'praedial slave.' Studies on slavery in South Asia already established that the praedial slaves occupied the lowest strata of the caste system, in which they were treated as untouchables. The ritualistic pollution of the praedial slave was primarily the reason for his/ her economic dependence on the master. Former works on agrestic slavery in South Asia argued that the situations of bondage in India was different from that of the plantation slavery. These works also observed that the colonial administration was eager to compare the East Indian slavery and its western counterpart to arrive at the conclusion that slavery in the East was mild and therefore permissible. The colonial rule strategically forgot that the praedial slaves were living in a condition of unfreedom and that their will and consciousness was ruled by the landlord. The colonial rule pushed to oblivion the larger point that the praedial slaves could never free themselves from the caste system and therefore their subjugation to the masters was inescapable.

There have been numerous discussions regarding the situation of the praedial slaves of South India recently. Most of these works dealt with the situation of the agrestic labourers belonging to the untouchable castes, who are now called as Dalits. Saradamoni, Viswanath, Mohan and Paul looked at the relation between untouchability, caste and agrestic slavery in South India. After a careful scrutiny of the proceedings of the colonial rule in India, they have arrived at the conclusion that there existed slavery in South India amidst the Dalit castes like the Pulayas, Parayas and *Cherumas*. I agree with them in this regard that the Dalit agrestic labourers of South India were subjected to different degrees of bondage. However, no academic study till now has tried to look at the tribal bondedness in the wetland cultivation in Kerala. Sanal Mohan hinted at the existence of slavery among the Paniya community of Wayanad in the nineteenth century. But no serious study has come out which discusses the colonial administrative standpoint on the treatment of tribal agrestic labourers in their administrative documents.

Therefore, in the ensuing section, I would attempt to see the discursive construction of the tribe as a slave in the colonial archives, with particular reference to the Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad. I would read the colonial archives to see how the tribe as a figure was constructed for colonial administrative purposes. My discussions on tribal bonded situations in Malabar would show that the discursive construction of the tribe as a slave happened during the nineteenth century. However, this does not mean that the colonial administration was able to alleviate the bonded situation of the tribe. The naming of the tribe as a slave happened along with the colonial state policies that brought the tribes forcefully from the hills and forests into the plains. The effect was that some tribal communities of Wayanad got assimilated into the caste system on the plains and some others independently remained in the hills and forests. By a textual analysis of the colonial archives, I would show in the coming section that the larger colonial stand on the tribal communities like the Adiyas and Paniyas was that they were slaves, who benefitted from the emancipatory policies of the administration. However, the provincial administrative documents and correspondences reveal a complex picture of the Adiyas and Paniyas as agrestic serfs on the plains and independent hill cultivator and hunters in forests.

1.2. The Colonial Discursive Construction of the Adiyas and Paniyas

One of the earliest references to the settled agricultural tribal communities of Wayanad is to be found in a survey report by Francis Buchanan published in 1807. Buchanan was commissioned by the East India Company to survey the South Indian territories, its people and geography in the nineteenth century. As part of this mission, Buchanan travelled across the territories of Madras, Mysore, Canara and Malabar. Buchanan, while travelling through Malabar, observed that there existed agricultural slave communities in Malabar and they were called *Cherumas*. *Cherumas* were the absolute property of the master in the southern, central and the northern parts of Malabar, observed Buchanan. The slaves that Buchanan encountered in his journey through the coast of Malabar were not attached to the lands and were sold separately from the lands on which they worked. Buchanan observed that the slaves of Malabar had a "diminutive stature and squalid appearance" and that their physical status was clear evidence of their want of nourishment (371). Further, Buchanan pointed that they were severely treated and that the slaves of Malabar were in a state worse than the plantation slaves of the West Indies (371). He also commented on the Paniyas, whom he encountered in the northern parts of Malabar. Buchanan notes that Paniyas inhabited near Thamarassery from where the road lead uphill from Kozhikode to Wayanad (Wayanad was part of the country of Karnataka then). Buchanan in his report presented the status of Paniyas, in relation to *Cherumas*, the agrestic slaves of the plains: "Panion or Paniya was not called *Cheruman* or slave, but was in fact such and belonged to *Thamburans* or lords, who give them daily subsistence, and exact daily labour precisely in the same manner, and of the same kind as is done with slaves" (496). Further talking about the Paniyas, Buchanan categorised them as "rude tribes" who dwell in small villages, consisting of four or five huts, which are called *madum* (495). Buchanan made no comments regarding other tribes of Wayanad like the Adiyas inhabiting uphill in Wayanad as he did not visit this part of the country. But his reports mentioned that all forms of exploitation that the *Cherumas* were subjected to in Malabar held good for the tribes of Wayanad as well. Moreover, Buchanan made a comparison and contrast between the plantation slaves.

Now, let us look into a *Report from the Indian Law Commissioners: Relating to Slavery in East Indies* (hereafter *RILC*) relating to slavery in East Indies which was

published in the latter half of the nineteenth century. This report quoted H. S. Graeme, the special commissioner on land revenue in Malabar, who talked about the matters related to *Cherumas* of Malabar. Graeme (in 1822), in this report suggested that the category of *Cheumas* or rustic slaves of Malabar, included the tribes like Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad. Graeme opined that *Cheruma* was a generic name used to denote twenty-one classes or tribes of 'agrestic slaves' of Malabar including the 'Adian' (Adiya), 'Punnien' (Paniya) and 'Moopen' and 'Naicken' who are chiefly found in Wayanad (*RILC* 128).[21] Other classes who belonged to the category of *Cheruma* included those classes like 'Adian' (Adiyan), 'Punnian' (Paniyan), 'Moopen' and 'Naiken' who are chiefly found in Wayanad. I want to emphasise here that the subtle distinction that Buchanan made between the rude tribe and a *Cheruma* slave is collapsed in the reports on East Indian slavery, which came out in the latter half of the century. This is just one instance of the colonial administrative aporias regarding the categorisation of tribal communities, who are to be found both on the plains and hills. Moreover, Buchanan's report has anthropological elements, which explicitly talked about the physique of the Paniyas. Whereas Graeme published an administrative report that classified the tribes as slaves. Both the anthropological and administrative narrations played a crucial role in determining the ways in which the nineteenth century Europe viewed the tribes of Malabar.

1.2.1. The Question of Agrestic Slavery in Kerala

Historians like Saradamoni, Mohan and Viswanath already opined that the Dalit communities were slaves, doing wetland cultivation, under the native landlords during the nineteenth century. Mohan argued that the permeation of modernity during the colonial rule necessitated ascribing universal values to the social groups, including the slave castes. Ascription of universal values to the social groups was necessitated by the requirements of modern governmentality (Mohan, *Modernity* 10). Mohan further noted that modern governmentality required 'bound serialities' of social groups. Partha Chatterjee notes that bound serialities involve the serialisation of citizens by the

[21] Other groups of people who belonged to the *Cheruma* category were Kullaadee, Kunnakkun, Yerlun, Alloor, Parayan, NambooVettuvan, Kongolum, Koodummer, Nuttalum, Malayen, Koorumber, Punni Malayen, Moopen, Naiken, Poolayan, Waloovan, Uralee, Kurumpalen and Mavilen (*RILC* 128).

enumerative procedures of modern census and modern electoral system, so as to identify them ("Anderson's Utopia" 128). Saradamoni in her study on the Pulayas of Kerala observed that the Pulayas who had a glorious past once, were reduced to slavery in the very beginning of the nineteenth century. As Sarkar, Major and Viswanath pointed out, the colonial rule legitimised the slave status of the Dalit agrestic labourers. I want to make it clear here that the legitimisation of the slave status of the landless Dalit labourers in the colonial times was immediately linked to the caste system. Caste hierarchy, which was the rule of the land during the times of colonial intervention, got systematised in the form of bound serialities. It was in turn these bound serialities that allowed the colonial state to identify the Dalit landless slave labourers as the 'other' of modernity.

However, the tribes of Malabar have a different historical trajectory. The tribal communities of Malabar, especially those groups found in the hilly area of Wayanad, were not completely settled into wet- land cultivation by the nineteenth century. However, the Dalits were. The colonial administration found the relative inaccessibility of the tribe an administrative problem. Nevertheless, there were attempts by the colonial regime to close in on the independent tribal means of living. The identity of the tribal communities of Wayanad had always been a topic of debate and discussion in the colonial administrative documents from the nineteenth century. The earliest attempts to enumerate the agrestic slave castes of Malabar could be found in the reports of James Vaughan, the principal collector of Malabar.[22] Vaughan, in his report on slavery in Malabar, published in 1819, noted that the number of slaves in Malabar was one hundred thousand exclusive of those in Wayanad (172). Vaughan also mentioned that the situation of the slaves of Malabar had materially improved under the establishment of the British government (171). Similarly, T. H. Baber, in the reports on slavery in India published in 1834, invoked William Sheffield (principal collector of Malabar during 1826- 1831) on the number of slaves in Malabar. Sheffield observed that the number of agrestic slaves in Malabar was 95, 696, exclusive of the number of slaves in Wayanad (Baber, Answers of T. H. Baber 5). The implication of Vaughan's and Sheffield's observation is that even by the 1830s, Wayanad remained a relatively

[22] J. Vaughan was the principal collector of Malabar district between 1816- 1826.

inaccessible area to the colonial administration. Thereby, the indigenous tribes inhabiting the hills of Wayanad were excluded from the enumeration of the administration.

In the next sections, I attempt to look closely at some of the difficulties that the colonial administration faced while they tried to bring the tribes under their administrative regime. In other words, my attempt is to read the colonial administrative documents to delineate the colonial understanding of *valli* labour. I would argue that a majority of the colonial administrators borrowed the western category of 'slavery' to explain *valli* labour, the vernacular term used to denote the agrestic labour of the tribes. Given this hindsight, the larger argument that I make here is that the colonial administration attempted to consolidate the tribal population along with the Dalit agrestic slaves of Malabar by the 1820s. This consolidation gave the colonial administration a category, which is 'praedial slavery' or 'agrestic slavery' to capture the specificities of the tribal labour. Moreover, the situation of the tribes in wetland cultivation was in fact similar to slavery, as is evident from the archival reports. However, the colonial rule, was forced to deny the existence of slavery in Malabar in the post 1840s. This was because the administration had to assert that slavery was abolished in Malabar by the abolition laws of 1843. The consequence of this abolitionist stand was that the Adiyas and Paniyas lost a category of representation, while they continued as *valli* labourers. I would also point out that, in this process of creating a category of 'praedial slavery' to define the *valli* labour, the administrators themselves faced difficulties as they found various instances where the tribes evaded the categorical ascriptions of slavery. My methodology to arrive at this conclusion is a textual analysis of the colonial archival documents of the nineteenth and twentieth century. In the coming section, I use various colonial documents including the Board of Revenue records, forest records, legislative reports, judicial correspondences, district gazetteers, administrative manuals, census records, survey reports, slavery papers and travelogues. This colonial archive covers a time period between the 1800s and 1860s. In addition to the colonial administrative records, the colonial documents that I analyse in this section allow me to historicise the colonial discursive construction of the tribal groups of Adiyas and Paniyas.

As I deal with the colonial discursive construction of the tribe here, it is significant to introduce the archival material in detail here. A majority of the colonial archival reports that I analysed are about the Paniyas as they are the largest tribal community in Kerala. References to the Adiyas are mostly found in the colonial anthropological accounts that came out from Coorg, a district in Karnataka, adjacent to Wayanad. I have used these reports to argue that the Adiyas were also stereotyped along with the Paniyas during the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, the were also categorised as 'praedial slaves' along with the *Cherumas* of Malabar. Official correspondences of the Board of Revenue, Judicial correspondences and Legislative papers give an overview of slavery and the situation of the slaves in Malabar. An important observation is to be made here regarding the nature of these colonial administrative reports on slavery in Malabar. According to C. H. Jayasree, a historian on slavery and serfdom in Kerala, these reports were furnished without consulting the actual slaves of the land (582). Most of the information about the situation of slaves are collected from the landlord communities, who are called the masters of the slave communities. These reports constitute the native landlord's perspective on the situation of slavery in Malabar. Thus, almost all the correspondences related to slavery from Malabar presented agrestic slaves as perpetually benefitting from the subsistence given by the master. Some reports among these, mostly from district judges and magistrates presented an alternative view on slavery by pointing out that the slaves of Malabar suffered utmost exploitation. The correspondences of the Board of Revenue on slavery in Malabar cover a time period between 1819 and 1842.

RILC, published in 1841, is an important legislative document/ parliamentary paper that gives an account of the situation of slavery in the Madras presidency during the time period between 1828 and 1838. This report is useful for this section to understand the colonial categorical constructions to define a slave in the early nineteenth century. Other judicial correspondences and legal enactments published in the latter half of the nineteenth century allow me to appreciate the consequences of the enactment of the slavery abolition law in the Madras presidency during 1843. Another important source that I use in this section to understand the local practices of bondage in Malabar is the *Slavery in India: Papers Relative to Slavery in India* (hereafter *PRSI*) which was published in 1834. These reports were furnished in 1832 with evidence from local administrators, missionaries and military personnel before the select committee of

the House of Commons in 1832. The report is in the form of answers given by the collectors to a series of inquiries from the Commissioners for the affairs of slavery in East Indies. I have made use of the reports on the situation of slavery in Malabar, furnished by T. H. Baber, A. D. Campbell and Henry Bevan.[23] Thus, the slavery papers of 1832 give a more detailed description of the system of slavery in Malabar. While Baber spoke about the wretchedness of the agrestic slaves of Malabar during the colonial rule, Campbell and Bevan argued that colonial rule was the only way to mitigate slavery in Malabar.

Survey reports, district gazetteers, memoirs and administrative manuals are another set of sources that produced colonial discourses on the geography, demography, laws and customs of Malabar. These reports are produced by administrators including district collectors. I have made use of district gazetteers, survey reports, administrative manuals and memoirs written by administrators of Madras presidency and provinces of Coorg. These reports gave details regarding the customs and traditions of different castes and classes of people, who were involved in agricultural labour in Malabar. This colonial attempt at classifying people based on their caste and communities, according to Jayasree, was to furnish records for the collection of revenue (582). Most of these reports belong to the latter half of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Documents related to forest policies and land revenue settlements offered useful insights on the intervention of colonial state expansion in the early nineteenth century. These reports cover a time period between the 1800s and 1900s. The Board of Revenue correspondences related to the consolidation of land revenue in Malabar offer useful insights. These reports reveal that the land revenue got systematised in the nineteenth century. The systematisation of land revenue forced the native landowners to pay higher taxes. The payment of higher taxes meant more production with a steady supply of agrestic slaves. Forest reports revealed the ways in which forest reserves affected the

[23] Baber had 32 years of experience in India in the various public services including Revenue, police, Magisterial, Judicial and Political departments. In the 1800s, he was the English magistrate for Tellicherry, in Malabar. Later, Baber became the Judge of Western Division of the Madras presidency. Campbell was the Secretary, member of the Board of Revenue at Madras, Superintendent of Police at the Presidency, Registrar, Judge and collector etc for twenty-two years. Henry Bevan was military personnel of the 27th Madras Native Infantry and served for twenty-three years in India.

hill tribes of Malabar, including the Adiyas and Paniyas. The Adiyas and Paniyas were not completely into wetland cultivation by the nineteenth century. Some among them were still shifting cultivators in the hills and forests. However, colonial regulations on the forests affected these tribal communities. The forest policies began to levy taxes on cutting timber, collecting fodder, grazing cattle and hunting. Moreover, the reservation of forests criminalised those individuals who trespassed on these areas. It is thus significant to observe that the state policies deprived the Adiyas and Paniyas of their free access to resources. Thereby, the colonial administration could easily capture their existence as slaves, along with the *Cherumas*. However, a detailed discussion of the forest policies and land revenue settlement policies are beyond the scope of this chapter.

Slavery among the Adiyas and Paniyas

Even though the principal collectors of Malabar could not set forth a clear idea of the agrestic slave population of Wayanad even during the 1830s, there had been attempts by the provincial officers to classify the agrestic slaves of Wayanad as early as the 1820s. Graeme, the special commissioner to the land revenue in Malabar in his report on the revenue administration published in 1822 observed that the rustic slaves of Malabar are called *Cherumas*. Graeme opined that *Cheruma* was a generic name used to denote twenty-one classes or tribes of agrestic slaves of Malabar including the "Adian" (Adiya) and "Punnien" (Paniya) (*RILC* 128). Provincial documents thus conceptualised *Cheruma* as a generic category which also included the tribal agriculturalists like Adiyas and Paniyas. Thus, Adiyas and Paniyas, who evaded enumeration in Vaughan's report of 1819, were brought under the ambit of East Indian slavery by 1820s. This process, I argue, has an implication. The tribes are now categorised as East Indian slaves, and thus epistemologically brought into the caste system on the plains. Bringing the tribal communities into settled cultivation as slaves occurred along with the implementation of the forest regulations in Malabar, and particularly in Wayanad. The forest regulations strategically denied the tribes their customary rights in the hills and forests (Letter to Captain Watson). By the early nineteenth century, the colonial state in Malabar attempted to bring the entire population under their administrative regime. This was done using enumerative processes of census reports. The census reports provided early colonial sociological material (Dirks 66). The census reports were mainly aimed at categorising people based on the castes to which they belonged. Dirks observed that the

consolidation of caste was consistent with the change of the land revenue settlements from the landlords to the village headmen to the individual cultivator (66). The categorisation of the Adiyas and Paniyas under the umbrella term of *Cherumas* however, was not simply epistemological. A critical reading of the Board of revenue papers on the matters of slavery in Malabar could be used to argue that the Adiyas and Paniyas, who were settled around paddy cultivation in Wayanad, had experiences of slavery. Therefore, I want to suggest here that the discursive constructions around the East Indian slavery held good for the Adiyas and Paniyas as well. Equally important is a shift in the colonial narrativizations around slavery in Malabar from the 1800s to the 1830s when the slavery abolition act was passed in the British parliament and then to the 1850s, the post abolition phase in British Malabar.

The discourse around agrestic slavery in Malabar during the 1820s and 30s is strewn with physical descriptions of the agrestic slaves on fields and details regarding the various agricultural pursuits in which they were engaged in. Moreover, the prices at which the slaves were sold, mortgaging terms, the working hours of the slaves, and punishments that were meted out to the slaves for dereliction of duty were discussed. Andrea Major observed that the physical descriptions of the slaves labouring on the fields, the punishments they were subject to and the colonial impressions on their wretchedness produced a "pornography of pain" (251). What Major suggested was that presenting the degraded state of the slaves of Malabar to the reading public in Britain would instil in the British a sympathetic attitude towards the ameliorative measures suggested by the administrators. However, the colonial administrative standpoint on the emancipation of the agrestic slaves of Malabar was already ridden with problems as suggested by Sarkar and Major elsewhere. Before analysing the problems with the abolitionist stand of the colonial administration, it would be fitting here to discuss the descriptions of the labour practices of the agrestic slave tribes, in the colonial documents. These descriptions, in fact suggest that the situation of the agrestic labourers of Malabar was similar to slavery. Some provincial reports did not hesitate to call the agrestic labourers as 'slaves.' However, these reports were simultaneously engaged in the dehumanising of slaves. The agrestic labourers of Malabar were presented as the 'other' to the rest of the human race in Malabar in most of these documents. This 'othering' of the slave is done by the administrators by describing their physique as distressed. Edward Said, in his *Orientalism*, argued that the attempt at dehumanising the

orient was a colonial project. It is only then that the orient could be modernised. The coloniser assumed that it was their burden to bring the Eastern civilizations out of wretchedness and decline so that the orient would be turned into "rehabilitated residents of productive colonies" (Said 35). Similarly, the administrators of Malabar highlighted the wretched state of the slaves of Malabar so that they could be brought under the horizon of their abolitionist stands.

Having categorised the Adiyas and Paniyas along with the *Cherumas*, Graeme called the local practice in which the *Cherumas* were bonded as the '*wallee* system' or *valli* system (*RILC* 55). *Valli* was used by Graeme to define the system of daily allowance that was given to the slaves (*RILC* 55). Graeme here thus used the term 'slave' to denote the bonded *Cherumas*. But Graeme also pointed to the local specificity of the practice when he observed that the slaves were paid in kind. Graeme called these wages in kind as 'allowance.' I would suggest that the usage of the word 'allowance' itself implicates that the *Cherumas* were slave like as they were regulated within a local system that worked according to a set of rules. Thus, Graeme's observation corroborates that there existed a group of people in Malabar who were actually in a state of bondage. These groups also included the tribes of Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad. In the PRSI, Baber, Campbell and Bevan answered to certain questions by the Commissioners for the affairs of India, which were about the situation of the slaves of Malabar. Baber called the system of bondage in Malabar as 'agrestic' or 'praedial slavery' in *PRSI* (Answers of T. H. Baber 4). Baber observed that the general term that was used to describe a slave in Malabar was *adami*. Baber translated *adami* as serf, aboriginal or indigenous. However, Baber used the Malayalam word *adami*, a corrupt form of *adima*, which meant a "slave." Baber gave a detailed description of the terms of the *valli* system in Malabar. *Valli* is an allowance given to a slave labourer. Baber observed that a male slave was given one and a half to one and three quarters *seers* (one seer equalled 75 gms) of paddy, female slave was given one to one and a quarter of paddy and the young and aged received nothing (Answers of T. H. Baber 8). Baber observed that the agrestic slaves of the upper country of Wayanad should be rightly called as 'conditional labourers.' Conditional labourers included the tribal groups like Paniyas, Kurichyas, Kurumas and Kadders (Baber, Answers of T. H. Baber 12). Paniyas were rice cultivators. Kurichyas along with Kadders were involved in cardamom cultivation. Baber also turned to Major Walker, who observed in a report on land tenures in Malabar

that the mountain or *poonum* cultivation in Malabar was carried out by the *slaves*.[24] Major's category of slaves included the tribes like Karimapalar, Paniyas, Kurichyas and Kadilers (Baber, Answers of T. H. Baber 13). The fact that even the hills and forests began to be appropriated by the hill proprietors attested the penetration of state policies into the shifting cultivation practices. Gradual attempts at bringing the hills and forests under the regime of revenue administration thus forced the tribes into slavery. Certain reports on the fixity of land revenue in Malabar observed that by the nineteenth century, the landlords began to claim a portion of the produce from the *poonum* cultivation done by the Adiyas and Paniyas (*Report of the Special Officer* 43)

Baber's explanations regarding the cultivation practices of the tribes of Wayanad made it clear that the Paniyas were engaged in wetland cultivation. Baber suggested that these tribes by the nineteenth century were cultivating the hills and lowlands, however, the native proprietors laid claim to both hills and lowlands (Answers of T. H. Baber 12). He noted that the Paniyas were transacted like goods. Paniyas were sold, but not out of their country of birth. Baber also recorded that the Paniyas eloped from their masters when ill-treated (Answers of T. H. Baber 12). Thus, tribal communities including Paniyas were subject to slave like situations on the lowlands. They were sold, ill-treated and eloped to escape punishment. Baber's report came just after the implementation of the Abolition of Slavery Act (1833) by the British parliament in most of the British colonies, except in India. I would suggest that Baber's report clearly hinted at the existence of systems of bondage among the Paniyas in Malabar, though they were called 'conditional labourers.' Baber classified the *valli* labourers as those performing rice cultivation and Paniyas were indeed *valli* labourers. Moreover, Baber observed that the slaves were lashed, were imprisoned and put in stocks and chains (Answers of T. H. Baber 13). Baber described the prices at which the slaves were sold and were given on rent. Baber gave a detailed description of the prices of *Cherumas*. According to Baber, a *Cheruma* man fetched 48 *fanams* (one *fanam* equals one seventh of a rupee) and a *Cheruma* woman fetched 36 *fanams* (Answers of T. H. Baber 9). A *Cheruma* boy was priced 20 *fanams* and a girl, 15 *fanams*. The annual rent for both a man and a woman were 2 *fanams* (Baber, Answers o T. H. Baber 9). The

[24] Major Alexander Walker was attached to the Malabar Commission of the EIC.

slaves were thus sold and rented in Malabar. Moreover, Baber gave a detailed description of the tasks that the slaves were entrusted to do apart from agricultural pursuits. These tasks included tending cattle, carrying agricultural products to the market, felling trees and collecting materials for house building. Baber noted that the slaves were made to toil from morning till evening with no other sustenance than his morning *canjee* (rice water). After the evening meals, the slave had to keep watch over the paddy fields at nights in sheds erected on an open platform in the centre of the paddy field to scare away trespassing and wild animals (Baber, Answers of T. H. Baber 8). I would argue that Baber's opinions on the slavery in Malabar are evidence to point that the Paniyas who were doing wetland cultivation were in fact slaves. They were sold by their masters, and were subjected to corporal punishments. It is evident from Baber's reports that the slaves had practically no time to rest. They had to be on the fields during the days and had to keep watch over the paddy fields during the nights. Such harsh treatment from the master made the Paniyas run away from them often.

Similarly, A.D. Campbell and Henry Bevan reported on the situation of the slaves of Malabar in *PRSI*. While Campbell talked about the slaves of Malabar in general, Bevan talked about the situation of the slaves in Wayanad particularly. On the status of slaves of the Madras presidency, Campbell observed that the local practices of bondage had characteristics of slave institutions. Campbell's observations regarding the slaves of Malabar are important as he pointed out the peculiarities of these agrestic slaves. Campbell observed that the slaves of Malabar could be called as 'savage tribes' and that some of them still inhabited the forests (33). He observed that these agrestic slaves are the "absolute property" of the master and were treated as cattle. In Madras, the slaves were bought and sold. Campbell suggested that the slaves of Malabar were lashed. He also observed that the most brutal form of implementation of slavery in southern India was in Malabar. Campbell's opinions on the situation of bondage in Malabar revealed two things. One is that the agrestic labourers were subjected to slavery and the second is that some among these slaves still inhabited the forests. Campbell thus hinted at the fact that the agrestic slaves, who once inhabited the hills and forests had become slaves in the nineteenth century. Henry Bevan's opinions regarding the status of slaves in Malabar is crucial as Bevan's opinions are particularly about the slaves of Wayanad. However, Bevan's opinions are in contrast to Baber's. Bevan suggested that the labour circumstances of the slaves of Wayanad was so

systematic that the labourers even had time to do other jobs apart from agriculture like carrying loads, getting wood for fuel, and herding cattle. Bevan stated that the slaves in the fields of Wayanad had to work only for a fixed time of six to eight hours a day and the average work days for a labourer was 200 days per year. Bevan's suggestions in fact make the reader think that the master is only being helped by the labourers: "The slave women and children assisted in transplanting the rice, cleaning the corn and other minor avocations, when required by their masters" (Bevan 38). Bevan, in contrast to Campbell and Baber, opined that the slaves were never coerced into labour using lashes as it would make the slave run away. Bevan's initial observations regarding the "comfortable" work circumstances of the slave are belied by his later description on the material conditions of the slaves. Bevan pointed out that the slaves were clothed scantly and they often migrated to adjacent countries of Coorg and Mysore (38). Along with the observations made in the *PRSI*, the *RILC* published in 1841 discussed in great detail about the punishments that the slaves of Malabar were subjected to from their masters. *RILC* presented the observations of the provincial officers furnished in the late 1820s regarding this matter. The slaves of Malabar, according to the provincial officers, suffered corporal punishments like cutting off the nose. They were confined, put in stocks and were made to labour in chains (*RILC* 135). Moreover, the slave did not have any right to property ownership as the slave himself was the 'absolute property of the master' (*RILC* 137).

Description of the scenes of agrestic slaves on the fields of Malabar by the provincial administrators is a testimony to the fact that agrestic labourers of Malabar, including the Adiyas and Paniyas were actually slaves. However, some of the provincial administrators commented on the peculiarity of the tribal agrestic slaves by categorising them as 'savage tribes,' 'conditional labourers' and '*poonum* cultivators' who inhabited both the plains and the hills. However, almost all the independent means of cultivation by the tribals were appropriated by the landlords by the nineteenth century. As suggested earlier, observations on the slave like situations from the provincial administrators instilled in the European reader a sympathy to the abolitionist stand of the colonial rulers during the 1830s. However, the ground reality was that the agrestic slaves were never released from the practices of bondage. Provincial documents which commented about slavery in Malabar simultaneously dehumanised them by pointing out that they are cattle- like. I would comment here that such an orientalist stand, that

presented them as the other of modernity, only deepened the exploitative relation between the master and the slave. The paradox here is that the very slave- like situation of the Adiyas and Paniyas was the result of colonial modernity.

After commenting on the wretched work circumstances, the administrators took great efforts to describe the physique of the agrestic slaves. Most provincial reports are a continuation of Buchanan's observations on the Paniyas. Buchanan already highlighted the undernourished appearance of the slaves. Graeme, Campbell and Bevan in their notes on slavery in Malabar reproduced Buchanan by pointing out to the tribes' diminutive and squalid physical appearance. Campbell went on to the extent to note that the slaves of Malabar were distinguishably different from the rest of the human race. The slaves appeared in a condition worse than that of the cattle, for Campbell. The slaves, observed Campbell had skeletal arms and legs which contrasted with their "their dropsical pot bellies" (33). The implication was that these slaves were starving. Moreover, they were scantily clothed (Campbell 33). Moreover, Campbell observed that slaves should be spiritually civilized (by the colonial emancipation policies) as they used to propitiate evil spirits and practiced sorcery (35). Bevan's observations on the slave's physical features are even harsher. Bevan compared the slaves of Malabar to the African slaves in plantations by pointing out to their dark complexions, flat features and thick black matted hair (39). Bevan went on to say that the tone of the slave's voice is "guttural and disagreeable" and that "their character is pusillanimous, ignorant, superstitious and listless…their actions are guided more by natural instinct than by any other principle" (39).

Bevan went to the extent of criminalising the tribes by observing that the slaves would not hesitate to pilfer (39). Said observed that the orient had always been dominated by the occident by producing a knowledge system. Similarly, the colonial administration produced an epistemology of debased culture for the agrestic slaves of Malabar. Said observed that the Western production of the knowledge system of a particular society was to dominate it, to have authority over it and to deny autonomy to it (Said 32). Meena Radhakrishna, an Indian sociologist who studied extensively on the migrant tribes of South India, opined that attributing criminality to the itinerant tribes was a colonial policy to contain them (28). Similarly, I would propose here that the dehumanising administrative reports are part of the larger agenda to bring the entire

slave population under the colonial narrative of emancipation and thereby to contain them. Nevertheless, critical inquiries into the abolitionist stand of the colonial rule in Malabar indicate that the slaves never benefitted from the emancipation project. What was left for them was a powerful epistemological domain that would impact the slave/ tribal culture.

East Indian Slavery or the Caste System?

Though studies in South Indian slavery already indicated that the Dalit agricultural labour was closely linked to the caste system, no studies attempted to look at the issue of tribes in relation to slavery and caste in Kerala. Through a reading of provincial documents, it has already been argued that the Adiyas and Paniyas of Malabar were brought under the ambit of slave labour by the 1820s. There is also no denial of the fact that these tribal communities were simultaneously shifting cultivators, hunters and food gatherers in the forests. But, penetration of the state policies made the tribe a slave in Wayanad. It is significant to understand the conflictual nature of colonial archives regarding the tribal agrestic slaves. Ramnarayan Rawat, a historian of the Dalit communities of North India, talked about the importance of provincial documents in writing an agrarian history of the Chamars. Rawat depended on the settlement and land tenure surveys to undercut the dominant assumptions of colonial sociology. Colonial sociology, observed Rawat, unified the conflicts found in the provincial documents. The result was that influential dominant documents like the census, caste and tribe surveys produced "dominant representations of Indian society and history around the *varna* model of social division, consisting of four castes and the untouchables, who were outside the *varna*" (Rawat 55). For instance, Rawat observed that the Chamars were depicted as leather workers in the colonial sociological sources.[25] But the colonial sociological sources only reiterated the Hindu scriptures that presented Chamars as leatherworkers (Rawat 64). Rawat argued that the regional colonial archives identified the Chamars as peasants, agricultural labourers and artisans and not as leather workers

[25] Marc Poncelet discussed colonial sociology, in relation to Belgian Congo. According to Poncelet, colonial sociology was aimed at producing knowledge systems of the indigenous people. This involved compilation of ethnological data by the missionaries, colonial magistrates and administrators. Colonial sociology was mainly linked to institutions of colonial power rather than any academic institutions (Poncelet 130).

(57). However, the Adiya and Paniya story is quite different from the Chamars. According to E. B. Thomas, the district judge of Malabar, during the 1840s, the agrestic slaves never paid rents as agriculturalists and they never owned lands (15). It is significant to note that even the hill cultivation practices of the tribes began to be controlled by the state. Simultaneously, there is an active attempt from the part of the colonial administration to homogenise the tribal existence as praedial slavery. What is useful in Rawat's argument regarding colonial sociology is its systematisation of identities based on the *varna* system. In this section, I would go back to the board of revenue correspondences and the slavery papers to argue that the administrator's branding of the tribe as a slave effectively associated the tribe with the caste system on the plains.

The Adiyas and Paniyas, by the 1820s, increasingly began to cultivate for the landlords, thereby becoming part of the caste system. The agrestic tribes of Wayanad thus could be called as tribal- castes, a term used by Jan Breman (*Patronage and Exploitation* 7). Breman, who wrote intensively on different forms of bondage in the modern capitalist society, observed that 'tribal castes,' unlike the other tribes, continuously interacted with the Hindu landlords of the plains, thereby becoming the 'untouchables.' Breman noted that it was very unlikely for the tribal castes to have a history of landowning: "Their entry at a low level into the caste system inevitably led to their being taken up in the agrarian production process in a relationship of dependence, that is, as agricultural labourers or tenants" (*Patronage and Exploitation* 7- 8). Any claims of the tribal castes to shifting cultivation was lost when their integration into the caste system happened. In the case of Adiyas and Paniyas, this process of settling as agrestic labourers did not begin before the colonial era. The association of the tribes with the caste system on the plains has deep- seated impacts as they also became the hereditary slaves of the landlords. And becoming a hereditary slave meant no release from bondage. The proceeding discussion shows how the colonial administration, through their abolitionist stand, played complicit in the agrestic slavery of Paniyas and Adiyas.

Before going in detail about the abolitionist stands of the administration, I would discuss a petition dated 8 September 1843, that the native landlords sent to the then principal collector of Malabar, H. V. Connolly. This petition is written six months after

the proclamation of the abolition of slavery act in Malabar. The petition presented the difficulties that the landlords faced with the emancipation of the Paniya slaves by the Abolition of Slavery Act. Connolly forwarded this letter to Lowell, the then Secretary of the Board of Revenue, to make the "hardships" of the landlords known. The landlords in this petition stated:

> The Paniya slaves and cattle are our only wealth. We have lost our slaves with the Act V of 1843. The loss of slaves pushed our families into penury. The 'Paniyas,' being illiterate and servile, could not survive without their masters…We kindly request the administration to withdraw the Act V, considering our difficult circumstances. (Seluraj 109- 110)

The petition suggested that if the slaves were released, they would go with other *jenmies* (Seluraj 110). And the administrator in fact forwarded this petition to the higher authorities for consideration. I would suggest here that the landlords asserted the inefficacy of the act by observing that the slaves would find a different master if they were to be freed. The Paniya slaves are also dehumanised as "cattle," and as "servile" people without agency. The landlords in this petition also observed that the Paniyas were linked to the *jenmies* by the caste system. They observe that some of these Paniyas were bought for an amount of 30- 100 INR on *jenmom* rights (a hereditary proprietary right which is absolute. *Jenmom* right attributes the proprietor the right to sale and mortgage a slave). The landlords also observed that if the slaves were emancipated, then the land revenue would be affected. The landlords interestingly put the blame on the administrators by stating that it was the administrators themselves who perpetuated the system of slavery. The government used to put the slaves on auction and the landlords used to buy them during such auctions (Seluraj 109). The petition reminded the government that they were equally a partner in promoting local systems of slavery in Malabar.

This petition, I would suggest, is clear evidence of the British stand on abolition. The administration wanted to proclaim abolition, but without affecting the local labour relations. The landlords on the other hand stated that they were simply following the colonial directives. The administration, in turn, observed that they were respecting the local practice according to the *deshachary* or the 'custom of land.' The ensuing discussion would be a detailing of the incongruities on the abolitionist policies of the

colonial government since the 1820s. An analysis of the colonial archives shows that the tribes were drawn into the caste system of the plains. Integrating the tribal and *Cheruma* agricultural practices had far reaching effects on the independent tribal cultivation practices. By the 1820s, the agrestic labour of the Adiyas and Paniyas began to be linked to the *deshachary* or the 'custom of the land,' which is the caste system. Indrani Chatterjee already pointed out that the colonial rule in the post- abolition era was not ready to acknowledge the existence of local systems of bondage. As an extension to Indrani Chatterjee's argument, Major and Viswanath analysed the ways in which the imperial regime tried to downplay the existence of agrestic slavery in Malabar. Both Major and Viswanath put forward the idea that the colonial administration legitimised the wretched state of the agricultural labourers in South India by linking it to *deshachary*. Linking slavery to caste system thus made slavery static and hereditary. Thereby the imperial regime naturalised the relationship between caste and agrestic slavery. The imperial regime defined agrestic slave system in Malabar as a symbiotic relationship where the slave was given perpetual maintenance by the master. Moreover, the slave was seen as someone who was not able to subsist without the master's assistance. Rather, the administration decided that the praedial slaves did not appreciate freedom as they were bound by the caste system. Major observed that the imperial regime declared that slavery in the Madras presidency was not intolerable and therefore it did not require immediate action (198). Moreover, many administrators like C. Hyde observed that agrestic slavery in India was free from objections raised against the plantation slavery in the West as the Indian slaves were not sold as bondsmen to a foreign land (Major 215). Such a strategic understanding of the East Indian slavery allowed the colonial empire to present East Indian slavery as subtler than the West Indian plantation slavery. It is important to observe that the colonial rule was not ready to intervene and abolish caste slavery altogether. At the same time, the administration systematised *deshachary* to a great extent. Thus, the agrestic slaves of Malabar, who were disposed to bondage never enjoyed the benefits of abolition.

Provincial documents on revenue and slavery papers of the early decades of the nineteenth century turned to the mythical story of the origin of Kerala and formation of caste hierarchies. A mythical story that presented the Brahmins as superior lords of the land and the agrestic labourers as wild people who were subjugated into cultivation is taken as an authority by the administration. The mythical story that attributed *jenmom*

or landlord status to the Brahmins who settled in Kerala is found in *Keralolpathi*, the earliest history of Kerala. According to Sreedhara Menon, a historian of Kerala, *Keralolpathi* dated back to the eighteenth century. However, *Keralolpathi* came to the modern readership with its transcription by Herman Gundert in 1868. The work dealt with the Brahmanical myths and legends associated with the formation of Kerala. This work is largely dependent on the Sanskrit work called *Kerala Mahatmyam*, which is classified as a Hindu *purana*. Thus, the colonial perceptions of the relation between caste and agrestic slavery are derived from a Brahminical myth. As has already been stated by various historians on South Asian slavery, the reason behind the administration taking a favourable stand towards the caste system in South India was to increase the revenue derived from the slave labour. I would go on to discuss some of the documents that revealed the colonial stand in favour of *deschachary*. I would also argue that a critical reading of the slavery papers and Board of revenue correspondences from the 1820s to the 1840s reveal another important colonial stand on slavery in south India. This is regarding the sale of slaves from the lands on which they worked to distant lands. The administration totally argued against the sale of slaves separate from their lands. The administrators observed that *deshachary* did not permit the sale of slaves separate from the lands on which they worked. What the colonial rule did was a regulation of the slave trade, without actually abolishing the local systems of bondage.

The earliest colonial report that linked slave system in Malabar to the custom of the land is found in Robert Rickards's (the second principal collector of Malabar, who served between 1803- 1804) reports on the administration of Malabar district. This report was published in the early nineteenth century. Rickards observed that the administrators should abide by the customary rules of the land, which is the caste system. Rickards's report thus openly commanded all the administrators to respect the local landlord- slave relations. Provincial reports on slavery in Malabar that followed this report borrowed the myth of the creation of the landlords (*jenmies*) and slaves to justify the slave system in Malabar. Evidence of colonial justification of slavery in Malabar could be found in the reports of Vaughan, Graeme and Major Walker in the early nineteenth century. Vaughan observed that slavery in Malabar could not be compared to West Indian slavery as the slaves of the plantations were free men sold out to foreign plantations. On the other hand, the *Cherumas* were born slaves: "Slavery has been handed down to them by their ancestors, and which are by them religiously

adhered to…" (*RILC* 187). Vaughan in the 1820s, claimed that even though the slaves were to be emancipated by the administration, they would still go back to their masters. Vaughan thus argued that it was impossible for the administration to cut through the caste- system. Major Walker observed that the *Cheruma*s were destined to be slaves as the Kerala legend says so. Walker narrated the myth so: The *Cherumas* were reduced to slavery by the intervention of the sage Parasurama in the life of Aryan Brahmins of the Malabar coast. Parasurama gifted the Brahmins with some lands. These Brahmins informed the sage that their lands would remain uncultivated without assistance. Parasurama thus "went in search of the *wild people*, who at the time inhabited the jungles, collected them and presented them to the Brahmins" (*RILC* 127). Graeme observed that the slaves were introduced by Parasurama for the "tillage" of land when he distributed the lands to the Brahmins (*RILC* 127).

By according legitimacy to a Brahminical myth, the colonial state gave religious sanction to slavery among the *Cherumas*. Slavery among the *Cherumas* was therefore conceptualised as *deschachary* or the custom of the land. Later observations regarding the situation of the slaves in Malabar followed from the above-mentioned reports. Provincial administrators and officials in the 1830s discussed bondage among the slaves of Malabar in this context. Baber in his response to the situation of slavery in India noted that the system of praedial slavery has origins dating back to antiquity, thereby linking the agrestic slavery to the myth of the creation of landlords and slaves. Baber observed that 'agrestic' or 'praedial slavery' was fully recognized by the common law called *deshachary* (Answers of T. H. Baber 5). This *deshachary*, or the system of praedial slavery existed from time immemorial. By the *deshachary*, the slaves were entitled to certain allowances from the master. However, Baber's opinions on *deschachary* hinted for the first time, that the practice was worse than the situation of the plantation slaves. Baber observed that the system of bondage in Malabar, which was often seen as a patron- client relationship, was exploitative. The slaves were treated merely as cattle. Baber critiqued the supposed benevolence of the landlords towards his slave. He observed that the *wallee* allowance which fed and clothed the slave was something similar that the cattle stock of the master (native master) also enjoyed. Baber only had problems with the slave being sold off to distant lands from their estates.

Campbell observed that the *Cherumas* were hereditary slaves. The *Cherumas* formed the "great slave population" of East Indies and that their status as slaves depended on the castes to which they were born (Campbell 3). Baber's and Campbell's opinion regarding bondage among the slaves of revealed that the administration was building a caste- slave nexus. For the administrator, this caste- slave nexus was impenetrable. Bevan's report pointed to the ritualistic pollution attributed to the slaves of Malabar, including the tribes. Bevan argued that the slaves of Malabar were part of the caste system and that the main reason that marginalised them was the ritualistic pollution. According to Bevan, the slaves of Wayanad were outcastes (37). Bevan puts blame on the slaves for their 'unfortunate' and 'debased' status by observing that they were aborigines of the land (and not free men sold to plantations) who were complacent in the hegemonic customary practice: "the slaves including the Paniyas were placed out of the pale of the civil and social rights of the society" (Bevan 37). The administration thus justified the ostracization of the Paniyas as they were the outcasts.

The colonial policy of linking agrestic bondage to *deshachary* had far reaching effects on the *Cherumas*, including the tribes. The 1830s and 40s was the time when emancipation laws began to be discussed in colonial Malabar. Slavery was abolished in Malabar during 1843 by the slavery abolition law. However, the abolition law remained on papers while the colonial emancipation policy deepened the master- slave hegemony. One main argument that the colonial administration proposed was that since the slaves were linked to the masters by *deshachary*, the slaves could not be emancipated immediately. Rather, the colonial policy advocated gradual emancipation. And a paradoxical measure they took was that the slaves should be treated with 'kindness' by the master. Majority of the documents on slavery in Malabar, which was written with an eye for the British reader goes along with the argument that *deshachary* should be respected. Therefore, the general trend that almost all the abolitionist policies advocated was 'emancipation without disturbance to native relations.' I would now try to discuss some of the reports on ameliorative measures that the administrators advocated until the 1840s. Some administrators commented on the inhumanity evident in the sale and transfer of slaves. However, even these administrators did not argue for the total abolition of slavery.

PRSI, compiled in 1832 is an important document that advocated the necessity of protecting the native land relations. Baber talked extensively about the distressed state of the slaves and was famous for his stand against slave labour in the Anjarakandy plantations, in Malabar, owned by Murdoch Brown. Baber came hard at Brown for keeping slaves (who were kidnapped from Cochin and Travancore and brought to Malabar) at the Anjarakandy plantations in the early decades of the nineteenth century.[26] Baber accused the Bombay government as well for being complacent in this slave trade. Baber, in the same report went on to criticise "the seizure and sale of slaves off the land" for the satisfaction of revenue arrears (7). Baber's report critiqued the native administrators like Vaughan for his favourable stand on the sale of slaves to realize public dues. Vaughan in 1829 had stated that declaring the slaves as not liable to be sold towards in order to meet public revenue demands would not make much changes in the situation of the slaves. Vaughan went on to observe that the government should not give up on a right that every other native proprietor had (7). However, it is significant to note here that Baber found a problem with the slave trade as it was against *deshachary*. I would suggest here that Baber's abolitionist policy could have two implications. First one is the rather plain one, which would say that Baber was against slave trade as the *deshachary* did not permit it. But, the more complex argument would be that Baber used the *deshachary* to critique the slave trade in Malabar. If the second premise is taken as valid, then another implication is that Baber wanted to gently suggest that slaves should not be sold from the lands on which they worked. I would argue here that this reading would be more preferable, given the evidence in Baber's report. Baber, in his report on slavery, finds a problem with the changes in *deshachary* as far as the sale of slaves was concerned. Baber notes that *deshachary* was not so absolute since the Malabar coast came under British rule (5). The slaves, under the colonial rule were sold off separate from their land of birth and Baber found it inconsistent with the observation of religious ceremonies of the land. Baber made references to the custom of lands while referring to the sale of slaves. Baber observed that it was incompatible to sell the slaves apart from their lands as they would be separated from their tutelary deity and household gods (5 - 6). Baber also pointed to the

[26] For a detailed discussion on Baber's impressions on slave trade at Anjarakandy plantations, see Baber, Answers of T. H. Baber 6-7.

sale of slaves off their native lands as disrupting their familial relations (6). Husbands, wives and children were separated. Thus, Baber, who is famously known for his abolitionist stand, finds a problem with the violation of *deshachary*. The opinions of Baber with regard to the violation of *deshachary* could be interpreted as an attempt by the administrator to prevent the transfer of the slaves of an area to another. Thus, the abolitionist stand of Baber is only a stand taken against slave trade, and not against the abolition of *deshachary*. Nevertheless, Baber's observations on the situation of agrestic slaves of Malabar corroborates the argument that the *Cherumas*, including Adiyas and Paniyas went through situations similar to the plantation slaves.

Viswanath opined that the British were hardly interested in ameliorating the slave's condition in South India before the abolitionist movement of the 1830s. Viswanath pointed that with the aim to improve revenue from slave labour in India, the administrators exempted India from the empire- wide abolition of slavery bill passed in 1833. To justify their argument the administration played with the "trope of gentle slavery" (Viswanath 4). Pariah labour was seen as a mutualistic and familial relationship between the master and the servant, observed Viswanath. The trope of gentle slavery was used to juxtapose the customary labour practices in India (which supposedly supported the labourer in distress) with the modern form of labour that exploited the labourer to meet the rising demands of the market (Viswanath 5).

Campbell, in his reports even critiques the administration by stating that the measures he suggested for the amelioration of the condition of slaves in the Madras presidency remained only in papers. Campbell observed that the only measure the administration took for the amelioration of the condition of slaves was preventing the sale of slaves for arrears of revenue due to the proprietors (35). Thus, Campbell observed that the main thrust of the administration was to prohibit the sale of slaves. Even though Campbell critiqued the administration's paradoxical stand on abolition, he also observed that the slaves of Malabar should be emancipated gradually (Campbell 35). As stated elsewhere, Campbell argued for the gradual emancipation of the slaves as they were spiritually uncivilised. It has already been argued that the colonial reports dehumanised the slaves. One important trend seen in these reports is that the slaves were presented as less than humans, who are unable to appreciate freedom and agency. The administrators argued that the slaves would go back to the masters even if they are

emancipated. Thus, the only way the administration found to mitigate slavery was to urge the masters to treat their slaves with kindness. This logic implicitly supported the *deschachary* and in turn maintained the steady revenue from slave labour in Malabar. For instance, Bevan observed that the slaves should be emancipated gradually as they would not appreciate freedom suddenly (Bevan 38). It is mentioned already that for Campbell, emancipation meant spiritual civilization. The implication of Campbell's statement is that the slaves should be emancipated not because the colonial administration appreciated the freedom of citizen, but to make them a modern subject. Bevan also talked about the treatment of slaves with kindness as a measure of emancipation. However, Bevan also makes an argument similar to Campbell. He believes that slaves should be treated with kindness and they should not be emancipated instantly. This is because kind treatment would change the debased habits of the slaves (Bevan 40). Thus, for Campbell and Bevan, slave proprietors were seen as the legitimate sources through which the slaves' character was redeemed.

By the latter half of the 1830s, the emancipation policy took an agreeable stand on the native relations between the slaves and landlords. For instance, a judicial letter written by Thomas Warden, published in the late 1830s, in the years after the abolition of slavery in the British colonies (except in India), suggested that the slaves could be relinquished for an amount of Rs. 927.13 (this amount was the revenue derived from the slaves annually) in the annual *jummabandy* accounts" (Emancipation 297).[27] However, in this report, Warden observed that the relinquishment of the slaves should not affect the "domestic relations of the native subjects" (Emancipation 297- 98). "Domestic relation," mentioned in this report, was the practice where the praedial slaves belonging to the lower castes had to stay bonded to their native masters. Thus, what was defined as "domestic relation" was the caste system that allowed the slaves to subsist only with the maintenance from the landlord. Abolition of Slavery Act V (7 April, 1843) talked about the emancipation of slaves to be done gradually without affecting the sentiments of natives of India (meaning landlords). The policy of emancipation, in its favourable stand towards domestic relations, suggested that those masters who treated their slaves with kindness would be remitted from land revenue (Warden, Emancipation 298).

[27] Thomas Warden was the principal collector of Malabar between 1806- 1816.

Clementson (principal collector of Malabar during 1832- 39) in his report on the revenue derived from Malabar published in 1838 observed that the disturbances in native land relations affected the revenue derived from Wayanad (*A Report on Revenue* 1). The reason was that the yearly land revenue in Wayanad was fixed based on the extent of cultivation unlike the other taluks in Malabar district where the revenue was fixed on the lands (*A Report on Revenue* 1). Moreover, Clementson's correspondences on the *Cherumas* of Malabar published in 1840, talked about benefiting the landlords who would take measures for the betterment of the condition of their slaves. Clementson observed that the elopement of slaves could be solved if the slaves were treated with kindness (Letter to the Secretary 37). Clementson went on to argue that complaints given by the slaves were given equal importance with the freemen as of any other caste. Nevertheless, Clementson observed that in his residence of three years in Malabar, he had never come across a slave complaining against his/ her master. But he came across masters who complained about the elopement of slaves from their estates to adjacent estates (Clementson, Letter to the Secretary 37). P. B. Smollett, the then secretary of the Board of revenue, in his report on the amelioration of the condition of *Cherumas* agreed with Clementson on the measures taken for amelioration. Smollett talked about providing benefits to the slave owners who treated their slaves with kindness. Smollett invoked Clementson who dehumanised praedial slaves as a degraded race, devoid of all feeling (12). He also observed that the slaves had no "mental culture" to identify their servile status (Smollett 12). Thus, the administration found that the kind treatment from the masters would urge the slaves to stay in bondage. Thus, it could be argued without any doubt that the colonial policy wanted economic benefits from the uninterrupted slave labour.

The contradictory abolitionist stand of the administrators continued even after the abolition of slavery in Malabar by 1843. The slavery abolition act, as well as the board of revenue reports that came out post 1843 are evidence to the fact that the administration continued to support the practice of *deschachary*. The gradual emancipation theory still continued in the 1850s. The reason was evident in these reports: a sudden abolition of slavery would affect the revenue derived from the lands. Moreover, some documents revealed that the administration did not appreciate the sale of slaves away from the lands to which they belonged. Robinson (the then Acting Collector of Malabar) in the report on the prospects of the taluk of Wayanad, published

in 1857, gave an interesting observation regarding the colonial attitude on the emancipation of the slaves of Malabar. Robinson pointed that the emancipation of slaves in Wayanad, including the hill tribes led to their migrations to Coorg. This was coupled with the slaves joining the coffee plantations. Robinson observed that the dispersal of slaves from the lands on which they worked led to the disruption of local land and labour relations. Disruption in local labour relations affected the revenue derived from land. The report thus notes that the colonial administration was directly in opposition to their own abolitionist stand even in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

The Abolition of Slavery Act, 1833, initiated by the Parliament of UK abolished slavery in various British colonies, yet failed to abolish the system of predial slavery in India completely as it would have caused disturbances among the native slave holders. Legislative papers compiled on the status of slavery in India, published in 1896, noted that the enactment of slavery abolition in Malabar did not prevent slave labour. Rather, the provisions included in the act were meant to be practised without "prejudice to the interests or violence to the habits and feelings of the Natives of India" (*Legislative Papers*). William Logan (the principal collector of Malabar during 1875- 78), in his *Malabar Manual*, observed that there existed slaves in Malabar even during the late nineteenth century.[28] Logan suggested that there existed slavery in Malabar even after its abolition. The slave population of Wayanad during 1857 was 16, 561 and the total slave population of Malabar was 1,59,000 (Logan 150). Logan observed that the slaves continued to work under their former masters in the post- emancipation times.

The main provisions of the abolition act were restricted to the prevention of sale of the slave children, extension of the rights of property ownership to the slaves and the rights for slaves to transfer their ownership rights to the children. For instance, correspondences of provincial administrators during the 1840s constantly referred to orders from the Madras government prohibiting the sale of slaves as movable property apart from the estates to which they belonged (Princep 2; Elliot 21). Major had already

[28] *Malabar Manual* is an administrative manual of Malabar, which was commissioned by the government of Madras. This work provided information about the geography, demography and flora and fauna of Malabar.

observed the way in which the colonial administration made a distinction between East Indian and West Indian slavery. The non- interventionist strategy of the administration in the local systems of bondage was based on the premise that the slaves of Malabar did not have to face the horrors of the middle passage. Yet, provincial reports suggest that slaves of Malabar were equally subjected to isolation from one's native place through sale, separation from one's family and corporal punishments. There are provincial administrators who contradicted the colonial narrative on the permissibility of East Indian slavery. E. B. Thomas, in one of the reports on slavery in Malabar observed that the slave was tied to the master perpetually, yet, perpetual maintenance was not given to the slave (13). Thomas concluded in his report that East Indian slavery is worse than the plantation slavery. The slave of Malabar is perpetually tied to the master, by the caste system, yet the slave is not given maintenance when he is disabled (Thomas 13). Thomas's conclusions reveal that the supposed maintenance rights that the slaves claimed were not always granted and that these rights were contingent. Like cattle, the slaves were disposed of when disabled or sick.

However, comparisons between East Indian slavery and the African slavery in plantations was always prevalent in the provincial documents. While Thomas contrasted the situation of slaves in the East and West, he drew parallel measures for the emancipation of slaves in Malabar and the Caribbeans. Thomas opined that the emancipation of the slaves of Malabar could be done in a way similar to that was done in the case of the plantation slave. One way of doing this was the acquisition of private property by the slaves. However, attempts of appropriating all the tribes into the plain cultivation continued even in the 1840s. For instance, Thomas observed that the situation of the tribes living in the hills and forests was worse than those of the *Cherumas* on the plains (17). Nevertheless, Thomas indirectly hinted that the situation of the tribes was that of a choice (17). This meant that the tribes living in the hills were not bound to the caste system unlike the *Cherumas* on the plains. Given this hindsight, Thomas made clear the colonial stand on the tribes who evaded the caste system and the state policies on the plains. The task for the administration, according to Thomas, was to draw the "scarcely accessible" tribes into "the circle of civilization" so as to reclaim them as colonial subjects (17). I would suggest here that while Thomas admitted that some tribes inhabited independently, he also wanted to entirely close in on the tribes

who were not yet part of the plain cultivation. The result would be more labour force in the local system of bondage and more revenue for the administration.

1.2.2 The Tribe as a Savage in Colonial Anthropology

The tribal distinctiveness is already lost in the colonial administrative data including the census reports, revenue reports and slavery papers. The duality of the agrestic tribal groups is lost in the colonial homogenisation policy. The colonial epistemology on *Cheruma* slaves, invariably included the tribes as well. However, the tribes were simultaneously called 'conditional labourers,' '*poonum* cultivators,' 'hunters' and 'food gatherers' who navigated both the hills and plains. However, in the modern domain, the multiplicity of the tribes is lost and they are simply slaves, who could be reduced to their physical features. Administrative reports played a huge role in dehumanising and stereotyping the Adiyas and Paniyas. The colonial reports that were discussed in the previous section identified the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'less than human,' 'cattle,' 'servile' and 'people with no mental culture and ability to appreciate freedom.' All these attempts at denuding the tribes of their essential humanity were to bring them into the confines of the local practice of *deshachary*. Certain administrators went on to argue that the *Cherumas* should not be emancipated as they would resort to crimes thereafter. Thus, the best way to contain the agrestic slaves, for the administration was to retain them in the local system of *valli* labour. Thus, there is a dominant discourse of colonial policy that denied agency to the agrestic tribes. Equally important is the colonial anthropological and ethnographic depictions of the tribal communities. While the former is directly aimed at the administration and containment of the tribes, the latter produced a cultural discourse on the tribes. However, the anthropological accounts too have a civilising project. Most of the anthropological accounts on the tribal communities stereotyped them as the 'other' of the colonial modernity. Thereby, there was implicit in the anthropological accounts a civilising mission that the colonial state purported to undertake.

Colonial anthropology is a powerful discursive domain that fixed identities to the indigenous and aborigines. R. Srivatsan, who intensively worked on tribal welfare amidst capitalist development, observed that colonial anthropology has its roots in the works of H.H. Risley, the famous British administrator- ethnographer. Risley's theory of anthropology was primarily based on the techniques of anthropometry.

Anthropometry was a technique developed in the nineteenth century to study racial types. Anthropometry tried to study racial types by measurements and proportions of the human body. The technique resorted to the mapping of nasal indices, shape of the human skull and jawbone and length of the limbs to assert racial difference. Risley understood that the racial difference (which was supposed to be measurable) arose in India, because the Brahmins were reluctant to form kinship with the tribes/ aborigines. Anthropometric difference was seen as the legitimate source of the superiority of the Brahmin and the inferiority of the tribes. However, the superior Brahmin was inferior to the European, who was the norm. Srivatsan in his essay on tribal anthropology observed that colonial anthropology is based on the essentialist difference between the European, the Brahmin and the aborigines. Anthropometry ensured "a didactic proportionate system of representation overseen by the administrative eye for the barbarous Aryan; and a simple paternalistic system of rule for the savage tribal…colonial anthropometry provided a scientific basis for the logic of colonial supremacy and sovereign authority" (Srivatsan 144). Similarly, the colonial ethnographic accounts portrayed the aborigines like the Adiyas and Paniyas as the 'other.' The othering of the tribes imply that they are lesser humans than the rest of the human race on the plains of Malabar. In this section, I would discuss certain ethnographic accounts on the Adiyas and Paniyas by both the colonial and native administrators. Most of these accounts are not produced primarily with an ethnographic eye. But these reports are administrative manuals, economic surveys, administrative histories and district gazetteers. The reports that I have chosen for delineating the stereotyping of the tribes talk extensively about the people of Malabar, their occupations and traditions. The anthropological and ethnographic reports that I discuss in this section belong to the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century.

I would argue in this section that the anthropological observations resulted in the stereotyping of the tribes as slaves, criminals and sorcerers. Administrative reports already placed the tribes in the bottom rungs of the caste hierarchy. However, caste became physically measurable in the colonial anthropological reports. Anthropological accounts compartmentalised people into closed groups administered by personal laws. This compartmentalisation was based on the caste system or *deshachary*. The orientalist theory was that the upper caste Hindus would gradually move towards the Western civilization. This theory implied that the tribes and Dalits who were outcastes would

aspire to move upwards in the caste hierarchy. Srivatsan observed that Indian anthropologists including B.S. Guha and Mahalanobis buttressed Risley's conclusion that different tribal groups in India are enroute to evolution into a higher caste group. Colonial anthropology was thus steeped in a methodology, which presupposed caste as the deciding factor that measured civilization. All the anthropological accounts that are discussed in this section are published post 1850s, after the abolition of slavery in Malabar. This was a time when the colonial administration tried to deny the existence of slavery in the Indian territories. However, the anthropological reports reiterated the slavish nature of the tribes. On the other hand, some of these reports also hinted at the dualism of tribal existence.

I would discuss in this section, the ethnographic details given in the administrative manuals and district gazetteers written by administrator- historians like Herbert Wigram, C. Gopalan Nair, C. A. Innes, B. L. Rice and Lieutenant Connor. Another set of texts that I discuss belong to purely anthropological category, published by anthropologists including Edgar Thurston and A. A. D. Luiz and Herbert Wigram. Wigram, an authority on the land affairs and relations in Malabar, in his study on Malabar law and customs, observed that the Paniyas were 'jungle tribes.' Wigram classified the tribes like Kurumbers, Paniyas and Kurichyas as "pastoral, agricultural and hunting tribes" respectively (i). A similar observation is made by Innes (principal collector of Malabar during 1906) in his *Malabar Gazetteer*. Innes commented on the multiplicity of the jobs in which the Paniyas were engaged in. Innes observed that those depressed classes of aboriginals who occupied the plains were agricultural serfs and those in the hills and forests were genuine "jungle tribes" (133). Paniyas, according to Innes, were the chief agricultural coolies in the foothills of Wayanad. However, they were also shifting cultivators who used to cultivate the hill for other cereals like ragi (Innes 133). The Paniyas, observed Innes, were also employed as woodcutters and mahouts (133). Moreover, they were excellent *shikaris* or hunters. Edgar Thurston, in his voluminous work on the castes and tribes of South India, talked about the manifold ways in which the tribal community of Paniyas found ways for their living.[29] However, Thurston did not make any observations regarding the Adiyas in his work. Thurston

[29] *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (1909) is an important anthropological work that catalogues the customs of different castes and tribes of South India.

observed that the Paniyas were slaves on the plains and did majority of the rice cultivation: "their position was a little removed from that of a slave, for every Paniya is some landlord's man; and, though he is, of course, free to leave his master, he is at once traced, and good care is taken that he does not get employment elsewhere" (Thurston 58). Paniya men were employed as night watchmen for the paddy field and as cattle herders. On the other hand, the Paniya were food gatherers and hunters. According to Thurston, the policy regulations on forests and water bodies severely affected the food gathering and hunting habits of the Paniyas (62). C. Nair, a native administrator, in his administrative history on Wayanad, opined that the Adiyas and Paniyas were 'praedial slaves' and 'agricultural coolies.' C. Nair's work was published in 1911 and he suggested that the Adiyas and Paniyas cultivated both the hills and the fields.[30] However, in the preface to Nair's book, R. B. Wood (the then collector of Malabar) said that C. Nair's assumptions regarding the probable origins of the people of Wayanad is based on an analysis of their present habits and customs (vii). Thus, C. Nair glossed over the fact that it was the administrative policies that pushed the tribes into settled forms of cultivation. Ironically, Nair took *deschachary* for granted and presented the Adiyas and Paniyas as slaves of the land from time immemorial.

The above-mentioned anthropological accounts from both colonial and native administrators, I would say, do not deny the fact that the tribes had an independent existence in the hills and forests. These reports suggested that the Adiyas and Paniyas depended on shifting cultivation and food gathering practices in the forests. However, the ensuing discussions present how the same set of administrators denied autonomy to the plural existence of the tribes by creating stereotypes. These stereotypes buttressed the colonial argument that the tribal communities should be regulated. Thus, the colonial state policies that aimed at regulating the tribal mobility and cultural stereotyping went hand in hand. An important parallel that the anthropologist/ administrators borrowed from the provincial reports was the comparison and contrast between the African slaves and the slaves of Malabar, especially the tribal agrestic labourers. The anthropological descriptions depended on anthropometric data to justify African ancestry imposed on the Adiyas and Paniyas. However, most of the

[30] See C. Nair 97, 100, 104 for a detailed description of the Adiya and Paniya labour practices.

ethnographers also mentioned that the tribes seldom established contacts with the colonial rulers (Innes 133). Thus, information regarding these tribes is mostly collected from the landlords. Thus, there is no surprise that the agrestic tribes were presented as delinquent and immoral. For instance, Innes compared the Paniyas to the slaves from Africa: “they are of an almost negroid type, with black skin, curly hair and broad nose” (Innes 135). Innes also called them animists, who worshipped strange deities (135). Similarly, Lieutenant Connor, a colonial official who published a survey report on the Mysore district in 1890, compared the Adiyas (Adiyas are called as Yeravaru in Mysore) to African slaves. Connor observed that the thick lips and compressed nose was evidence of their African origins (51). Similarly, B. L. Rice, a British historian and archaeologist compared the Adiyas or Yeravarus to the African slaves (215). Thurston drew comparisons between the Paniyas and the African slaves. Thurston used anthropometric measurements of the Paniya limbs, breadth of their hips and nasal indices to conclude that their physical features approached the recorded results of measurements of long-limbed African Negroes. Thurston observed that the negroid appearance of the Paniyas were enough to conclude that they had African origins (333). Thurston did not stop with the parallels between the African saves and the Paniyas. He went ahead to criminalise the Paniyas. Thurston observed that Paniyas were sorcerers who murdered men, changed shapes and lured women (334). Thurston observed that the Paniyas could metamorphose themselves into animals if they wished: “...if such a specifically gifted person is desirous of a woman...he pays a visit to her house at night with a hollow bamboo and encircles her dwelling place by going round it thrice. The woman then comes out, and the man, assuming the shape of a bull or dog, encompasses his wicked design. It is believed that in such a case, the woman dies in two or three days” (334). Thurston also mentioned that due to the criminal nature of the Paniyas, even the landlords used to employ the Paniyas as coffee thieves. Moreover, the Paniyas were not afraid of night trips and that they would not hesitate to heinous crimes at night (Thurston 59). A. A. D. Luiz in his account of the Adiyas, published in 1963, observed that the Adiyas were beggars and were alienable with the land (5). C. Nair, in his account on the Paniyas also tried to attribute criminality to the Paniya tribes by birth. C. Nair, attributed innate criminality to the Paniyas by citing a myth regarding the Paniya history. The myth goes like this: The Paniyas were savage tribes who lived in caves and thick forests. They came out only at night to feed on the paddy cultivation. This myth

projects them as “black beasts” who destroyed paddy cultivation (C. Nair 100). One Gounder, a landlord, caught some of these Paniya men in nets. They were taught language and errands in six months. These domesticated Paniyas were sent out to induce more Paniya men from the forests to work on the paddy fields (C. Nair 100). C. Nair also opined that the Paniyas were professional burglars and waylaid travellers to rob them (104). Thus, a myth that really talked about the forced settlement of the Paniyas in wetland cultivation is used by C. Nair to discuss their criminality and beastly nature.

I would suggest here that both C. Nair and Thurston overlooked the colonial regulations on resources that might have forced the Paniyas to come out to the plains in search of food. Radhakrishna made an observation regarding the colonial logic of attributing criminality to lower castes. Radhakrishna notes that one’s low hierarchical status within the caste system was directly proportional to their criminality (2). Radhakrishna argued that the colonial policies like introduction of railways, strict land revenue policies and forest policies deprived the itinerant communities of their traditional trading practices. The loss of livelihood of certain communities thus forced these wandering communities into criminality. However, the administration found a social scientific explanation for the criminality of the wandering communities to implement policies of governance (Radhakrishna 8). Similarly, the Paniyas were criminalised and projected as lawbreakers by the ethnographic documents. But this was the only way through which the administration could contain the tribes who occupied both the hills and plains. The administration projected their civilizational policy as benefiting the agrestic tribes and castes and the colonial argument is quintessentially summarised in C. Nair’s statement. C. Nair argued that the Paniya became a changed and civilised man under the British sircar. A Paniya man began to cover himself decently and approached the town for his daily arrack with complete awareness that the land now belonged to the *sircar* [*British rule*] (C. Nair 105). Thus, almost all the anthropological and ethnographic documents on the Adiyas and Paniyas presented them as colonial projects. The tribes, according to the colonial regime, were barbaric and savages. It was thus the burden of the civilizational policies of the administration to redeem them from slavery. Yet, the administration strategically forgot the fact that the colonial state policies deprived the tribes of their freedom, forced them into the plains

and deprived them of their autonomous means of existence. In fact, the tribe became a slave with the colonial advent in Malabar.

In this chapter, I discussed in detail, the colonial discursive construction of the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'agrestic' or 'praedial slaves.' Borrowing a global category of slavery to discuss the local labour practice of *valli* was in fact a ground-breaking attempt by the colonial administrative regime. The colonial regime, in the early nineteenth century identified the situation of agrestic labourers of Wayanad as comparable with the plantation slaves of the Caribbeans. The colonial regime described *valli* labour in such a way that it instilled sympathy for the agrestic labourers of Wayanad particularly, and Malabar in general. Most of the provincial administrators pointed to the slave like situation of the Adiyas and Paniyas, though there were some administrators who described the situation as milder than that of the plantation slavery. The descriptions of *valli* labour in fact revealed that the tribal agrestic labourers were slaves in all sense. They were in a situation of total unfreedom and were the absolute property of the master. The agrestic labourers were bought, sold and mortgaged. They suffered natal alienation as they were sold apart from the lands on which they worked. This way, their families got separated. These agrestic labourers had to work under excruciating circumstances during the days and nights, without a break. Moreover, they were forcefully employed by the masters into robbery for personal gains. They were lashed, chained and put in stocks.

In addition to the documents that are exclusively meant for administration, the anthropological accounts described the Adiyas and Paniyas as savages and criminals who practised animism. 'Wildness,' attributed to the tribal agrestic slaves, thereby became a justification for the colonial regulations on the free movement of these communities. The result was that the Adiyas and Paniyas in fact became slave labourers during the nineteenth century. Glossing over this fact, the administration flaunted the policies of emancipation. The reality of the situation was that even after the abolitionist proclamations, the slaves of Wayanad remained the same. The equality argument put forward by the administration was just a gimmick and the landlords continued to benefit from slave labour. But this is one side of the story. But what is more important is the very fact that the colonial rule created a category called 'agrestic slavery' to define the local labour practice of Adiyas and Paniyas. Thereby the local systems of bondage in

Malabar began to be discussed globally. Thus, the colonial rule is definitely a milestone in the consolidation of the tribes of Wayanad as 'agrestic slaves.' However, the colonial stereotyping fixed identities for the Adiyas and Paniyas, which continued to affect them in the post- independent times as well. In the next chapter, I take up this issue of the Adiyas and Paniyas as agrestic slaves to see how the post- electoral Kerala dealt with these labourer communities.

Chapter 2

Revisiting the *Valli* Strikes: The Emergence of the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'Agricultural Labourers'

The political scenario in Kerala has considerably changed by the end of colonial rule. The modern Kerala state was formed in 1956, by uniting the princely states of Travancore and Cochin, along with a major part of the British ruled Malabar. The formation of the modern state of Kerala was based on linguistic similarity. Immediately after one year of the formation of Kerala state, the first ministry led by the Communist Party of India (CPI) came into power in 1957.[31] The new ministry sought to settle the discrepancies, which were imperative to the sovereign British rule. The Communist ministry instilled new hopes in the lowest strata of agriculturalist and industrial workers, by promising a welfare state. An important step aimed at welfarism was the land redistribution policies. The communist government sought to abolish landlordism and make lands accessible to the lowest strata of agriculturalists. In this backdrop of the formation of the Kerala state and the introduction of the welfare state, the epistemologies regarding the agrestic slaves of Wayanad also underwent changes. The shift from the colonial rule to the electoral form of democracy changed the state of affairs of the adivasis. The larger argument that I make in this chapter is regarding the transitions in the administrative discourses on conceptualising the adivasi. I would argue in this chapter that the colonial discursive construction of the adivasis as a 'slave,' gave way to the category of 'bonded labourers' in the post- electoral Kerala state. The Adiyas and Paniyas were very much part of the discourse of welfarism put forward by the Communists. However, since the abolition of slavery by the colonial rule in the 1840s, the Adiyas and Paniyas lost a representative category in the administrative domains.

---

[31] It was the undivided Communist party called the Communist Party of India (CPI), which came to power in Kerala in 1957. In 1964, the CPI divided to form the Communist Party of India (Marxist) or CPI (M), which is also a parliamentary group. In 1974, the Communist Party of India (Marxist- Leninist) Liberation (CPI (ML)) was formed as a splinted group of the CPI (M). The CPI (ML) is not a parliamentary group. At present, the ruling front in Kerala is called the Left Democratic Front (LDF), led by Pinarayi Vijayan, which is an alliance of various leftist parties including the CPI and the CPI (M).

However, these adivasis who worked as the agrestic slaves rose in rebellion in the 1950s and 60s to highlight their bonded status. This resistance was called the *valli* strikes or *coolie*/wage strikes. However, the *valli* strikes were not aimed at owning lands. But the objective of these struggles, which happened in Wayanad, was to break free from landlordism and to assert a dignified existence. There are a number of works in Malayalam and English which analysed in detail the adivasi struggles for land in Kerala. For instance, Luisa Steur, a political anthropologist, in her *Indigenist Mobilization* (2017), studied the role played by upwardly mobile adivasi and Dalit leaders in organising land struggles. Steur studied the twenty first century Muthanga land struggle led by the adivasis under the banner of the newly formed political party called Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha (AGMS). Steur identified that the adivasis including the Paniyas and Adiyas organised under the ambit of an exclusively indigenist identity, for reclaiming land rights. However, Steur suggested that the Muthanga land struggle, happened during a period when the welfarism of Kerala model had already departed (*Indigenist Mobilization* 189). Thus, land ownership was seen as a primary need by the adivasis in the twenty first century according to Steur. There have also been studies in Malayalam that looked at the history of land reclamation struggles. For instance, M. K. Prasad, a renowned environmentalist from Kerala, made a detailed historical study of the land alienation by the adivasis and the position of adivasis in the developmental agenda of the Kerala state. M. K. Prasad observed that the discussion around adivasis in modern Kerala began with the discussions regarding restoration of alienated lands (7). He gave a comprehensive account of the adivasi land rights and land struggles in Kerala. M. K. Prasad also argued that the first adivasi strike in Kerala was the *valli* strike (15). However, the *valli* strikes were merely mentioned as a trivial incident and was not given the importance it deserved. Similarly, K. Sahadevan, an activist closely associated with the democratic struggles in Kerala, wrote the history of adivasis beginning from the colonial times to the post- independent India. Sahadevan also suggested that the alienation of resources was the main reason for the adivasi rebellions in India (19). However, Sahadevan's inquiries into the history of land struggles in India is limited to those that happened in the colonial times. He made no comments on the adivasi resistance that happened in the post- independent times. Mathew Aerthayil, an Indian sociologist, looked at the impact of globalisation on the adivasis of Kerala in the 1990s. Aerthayil suggested that the adivasis of Kerala were left back, when the rest of

the state advanced with liberalisation and privatisation (16- 17). Though Aerthayil observed that the adivasis were affected by the neo- liberal policies of the state government, he did not comment on the resistance movements led by the adivasis of Kerala. There are hardly any academic studies that focused on the *valli* struggles. There are some historical studies that dealt with the *valli* strikes in relation to the Naxal movement in Wayanad. However, the origins and growth of the *valli* strikes within the context of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) has never been studied seriously. Therefore, in this chapter, I would try to revisit the *valli* strikes of the Adiyas and Paniyas during the 1950s and 60s. The *valli* strike in itself is important because this was the moment when the adivasi for the first time claimed an identity of being a peasant/ agriculturalist. I would also examine in this chapter, the crucial role played by the Communist Party of India (CPI) in building an atmosphere suitable for mass movement amongst the adivasis of Wayanad. Moreover, the land redistribution policy of the Communist government gave the peasant a centre stage. Thus, the main objective of this chapter is to revisit the *valli* strikes so as to contextualise the category of 'bondedness' attributed to the Adiyas and Paniyas.

I have divided this chapter into three broad sections. The first section titled 'Contextualising the Adivasi Resistance in India' is an overview of the works of subaltern historians who tried to understand adivasi resistance from an adivasi perspective. I have adopted the methodology followed by the subaltern historians in re-reading an adivasi rebellion of the past. This methodology is to parallelly read the archival material along with the ethnographic data. The second section is titled 'The Adiyas and Paniyas in the Post- Colonial Kerala.' This section is divided into two subsections that look at two historical junctures which contributed to the consolidation of the Adiyas and Paniyas as bonded labourers. These moments are: the Communist party's (CPI) ascent to power as the first elected ministry of Kerala in 1957 and the publication of K. Panoor's administrative ethnography *Keralathile Africa* in 1963 and the debates around this book in the Kerala legislative assembly. The third section is titled 'Adivasi Identities and the *Valli* Strikes.' This section is divided into various subsections that deal with the significance of the *valli* strikes in the 1950s and 60s and the emergence of the Adiyas and Paniyas as an agricultural labourer class. This section examines the role of P. K. Kalan and A. Varghese as the leaders of Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (hereafter KSKTU) in organising the *valli* strikes. This

section also deals with the declaration of the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act (hereafter BLSA 1975) in Kerala in 1975, followed by the *valli* strikes.

My methodology in revisiting the *valli* strikes of the 1960s is both archival and ethnographic. Based on the ethno- historical method; prominently resorted to by the subaltern historians; I revisit the native newspaper reports and journal interviews. The newspaper reports belong to the 1980s, whereas the interviews published in journals are more recent. From the print media, I have mainly used the interviews and opinions by adivasis who participated in the *valli* strikes including P. K. Kalan, Choman Mooppan, P. K. Kariyan, Batti and Goni. I also draw from the memories of the renowned Adiya CPI (M) leader P.K. Kalan to understand the contributions of the Communist party in *valli* strikes. Moreover, I use memories of *valli* strikes by the adivasi comrades including P. K. Kalan, M. P. Kalan and Karunan. The newspaper archives and interviews are useful for me to understand how the adivasis asserted themselves as a dignified labourer in the 1960s. Ethnographic data revealed the memories of bondage that commenced with the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival in Wayanad. It is due to the painful experiences of bondage that the adivasis unified under the peasant organisations of the Communist party in the 1960s. Thus, the various historical trajectories that I analyse in this chapter show that the adivasi who was a 'slave' in the colonial times got consolidated as a 'bonded labourer' in the modern Kerala state.

2.1. Contextualising the Adivasi Resistance in India

One of the most important projects of the subaltern studies collective was to reclaim the voices of the peasant classes from the recorded archives and from memories. Subaltern studies that tried to reclaim the voices of the actual participants of the peasant rebellions are in stark opposition to mainstream history writing. Mainstream history writings sought to highlight the grand narratives that presented the peasants' rebellions as either anti- colonial or nationalist. Such "grand narratives" or "metanarratives," according to Jean Francois Lyotard, a theorist on post- modernism, should be replaced for "localised narratives" or "*petit recit"* (60). Lyotard talked about the post- modern condition as an "incredulity towards metanarratives" (xxiv). Grand narratives, according to Lyotard, gave a comprehensive account of the events in history. Metanarratives also tried to reduce the multiplicity of identities and historical

experiences into fixed identities. In this way, the metanarratives tried to legitimise the power structures of the state. On the other hand, Lyotard favours *petits recits* or little narratives. Little narratives are plural, localised and appreciate the diversity of human experience (Lyotard 60). Similarly, subaltern historians, in the late decades of the twentieth century identified the plurality of peasant experiences and rebellions in India. Moreover, they identified that there is no autonomous, pure peasant consciousness that is readily available to be retrieved. What the subaltern historians could do was to accept and acknowledge the multiplicity of narratives that a peasant rebellion offered. Partha Chatterjee, a founding member of the subaltern studies group argued that the peasant/ subaltern both existed inside and outside of colonial governance and nationalist politics. He argued that the subaltern retained autonomy to the extent that they remained outside the power structure. But invariably, the subaltern entered the domain of power, "participated in their processes and institutions, and thereby transformed itself" (P. Chatterjee, "A Brief History" 295). Thus, the subaltern perspective on resistance movements could be extracted only through a study of powerful archival discourse and the localised memories. In other words, grand historical narratives, often produced by institutions, should be read in such a way so as to shed light on the peasants' perspective on resistance. There had been instances where the rebel peasants joined the nationalist front, in their resistance against colonialism. There were various junctures within the nationalist movement when the elite and subaltern politics came together and interacted.[32] However, there were instances when the subaltern refrained from joining the nationalist movements. At times, the peasants saw the colonial regime as a mediator that would bring some alleviation from the exploitation of the local chieftains and landlords. I would discuss in this section, certain works by subaltern historians and anthropologists who worked on the adivasi resistance movements in India. I find their methodology useful for analysing the *valli* strikes of the Adiyas and Paniyas in Wayanad.

An increased interest in the adivasi resistance movements began to take the centre stage of the subaltern studies project by the 1960s onwards, with contributions from subaltern historians like David Hardiman and Nandini Sundar. What is significant

[32] Gyanendra Pandey, David Hardiman, Sumit Sarkar and Shahid Amin looked at the interactions between the subaltern and the elite politics in the context of the Indian nationalist movement.

about Hardiman's and Sundar's studies, I would suggest, is that both of them re- read the adivasi/ peasant rebellions of the past in a renewed light. Hardiman and Sundar analysed the adivasis resistance movements of the past by revisiting the archival documents created on such events. What Hardiman found in the archives is that the adivasi resistance were treated entirely as nationalist and anti- colonial. Sundar found that the archives projected the resistance movements as failed. However, Hardiman and Sundar, gave an adivasi perspective to the resistance movements. This was possible only through juxtaposing the existing archives with ethnographic data such as memories of resistance. Moreover, I draw from Alpa Shah, a social anthropologist who worked extensively on the adivasi issues in South Asia. Shah also attempted to re-read the adivasi resistance that happened during the colonial times. She also argued on similar lines like Hardiman. Shah observed that adivasi resistance movements, even during the colonial times, could not be simply described as anti- colonial. The adivasis had very specific agendas when they mounted a revolt, observed Shah. I would briefly comment on the arguments put forward by Hardiman, Sundar and Shah here.

David Hardiman, in his work, *The Coming of the Devi*, looked at a socio-religious movement of the 1920s among the Dang adivasis of South Gujarat. What is distinctive about Hardiman's work is that he sought to write a history in which the adivasis are the subjects. He revisited the Devi movement in the 1980s through archival and ethnographic research. Devi movement, according to Hardiman, was a moment when the adivasis asserted themselves as the rightful owners of the lands, which got alienated from them. The Devi movement was a strategy, in which the adivasis reinvented their small-pox propitiation cult to reclaim dignity, observed Hardiman. Re-reading of the Devi movement laid bare the autonomous nature of this adivasi movement. Hardiman identified that the Devi movement had certain millenarian elements. It involved the practice of ritual purity and abstinence from liquor and meat by the Dangs. But, the Gandhian nationalists, who entered the scene in the 1920s, appropriated this movement. The Gandhians defined the movements within the framework of Gandhian principles (Hardiman 7). Hardiman observed that the Devi movement should not be perceived as an attempt at Sanskritization either. Sanskritization was a term introduced by the Indian sociologist M. N. Srinivas. According to Srinivas, Sanskritization, is an attempt by the lower castes to appropriate the cultural ideas of the upper castes to raise their status in the caste hierarchy (482). At

times, the lower castes left some practices which are regarded as impure. Similarly, another Indian sociologist G. S. Ghurye, claimed that the tribe/ adivasi should not be seen as an entity outside the grand narrative of nationalism. According to Ghurye, the tribes were backward Hindus (qtd. in Srivatsan 155). Both of these arguments are critiqued by Hardiman. Hardiman observed that the Dangs by observing ritualistic purity were claiming equality along with the upper classes. Thus, I would suggest that Hardiman read the Devi movement as neither nationalist nor socialist.

Rather, there were specific agendas for the adivasis when they reinvented a small pox propitiation cult. The main agenda for the Dangs, while they participated in the Devi movement, was the restoration of land rights and reclamation of dignity. Hardiman observed that the issues of political autonomy, claims to unrestricted access to the forest rights and Sanskritization overlapped. Hardiman observed that the Devi movement was a collective effort by the Dangs to change their ways of life (5- 6). It was just that the nationalist movements that gained popularity during the 1920s provided a climate suitable for the peasant adivasis to give their smallpox propitiation cult (the Devi movement) a mass appeal (Hardiman 174).[33] Moreover, Hardiman identified that the loss of resources and customary rights were primarily the factors that led to the assertion of adivasi autonomy, both politically and culturally among the Dangs. For the Dangs of South Gujarat, the Devi movement was a moment of organising under the banner of 'adivasiness' to fight the Parsi liquor dealers and the exploitative colonial laws. In arriving at this conclusion, Hardiman's methodology was to juxtapose recorded archives including the police reports, census reports and other administrative reports with ethnographic data. He primarily depended on the oral memories to build a composite picture of the Devi movement.

Sundar's study on the *Bhumkal* rebellion of the forest dwellers of Kanger in Chhattisgarh during 1910 is yet another attempt at history writing with the adivasis as the subjects. In the *Bhumkal* rebellion, the adivasi agriculturalists rose in rebellion as

[33] Hardiman notes that the divinity attributed to Gandhi as part of the movement was not an influence of the Patidars of Gujarat on the adivasis. Rather the reification of Gandhi emerged from the whole structure of belief of the peasants. In Bardoli, adivasis began to look inside wells to see Gandhi spinning his *charkha*. Sometimes Salabai was seen sitting near him and a large number of people claimed to have received such a vision (Hardiman 50- 51).

restrictions were set on their traditional rights by the colonial rule. The adivasis organised in the name of *Bhumkal*, a term used to denote the solidarity that was shared by the clan members which bound them together to the *bhum* or earth. Sundar observed that the *Bhumkal* rebellion resulted from the administrative reforms that were introduced by the British government in Kanger forest area. These administrative policies included the "reservation of the forests, restrictions on *penda* (shifting) cultivation, introduction of grazing dues, increased land revenues and an increased demand for *begar*" (Sundar 132). Sundar observed that *Bhumkal* should be read as a "mode of protest juridically sanctioned by local authority (the local rajas of the region), in the name of the earth" and "a pitting of indigenous law against the colonial law" (133). While Sundar affirmed the specificity of the *Bhumkal*, what is more significant here, I would say, is her analysis of the multiplicity of adivasi memories on their movement.[34] Sundar also juxtaposed the colonial archival reports with the oral memories of the villagers. Sundar observed that the colonial archives represented the battle of the *Bhumkal* as a failed one, where the rebels failed to withstand the arms and ammunition used by the British army. However, the villagers had magnificent stories to recollect, which talked about their warriors who mounted a resistance against the colonial rule. Moreover, the support the adivasis garnered from the local elites made the administration argue that the adivasis were simply used as tools by the elites to surmount an anti- colonial rebellion. As the Devi movement was seen as a superstitious practice by most of the administrators, the Bastar rebellion was also seen as the result of a superstitious reverence of the village sites. But for Sundar, the *Bhumkal* rebellion was very much guided by the adivasis' exasperation over the severance from resources. Sundar further argued that *Bhumkal* rebellion was organised in such a way that the

[34] While the villagers understood that the arrests of their leaders resulted from an act of sabotage from a traitor who worked as an informer to the army, the colonial administration saw the rebellion as the result of a palace intrigue wherein the native rulers tried to retain their power during the colonial establishment. An elite Hindu (nationalist), called Shivram Prasad Dube's interpretation of the rebellion's failure attributing it to the imprudence of the adivasis while dealing with the cunning colonial army, is revealing of the upper caste condescension of the adivasis, See Sundar 139, 143, 150.

rebels never wanted their grievances to be heard and redressed by the authorities.[35] The rebels never made use of the opportunity to interact with political agents. Rather, they resorted to murder, savagery and looting. In short, Bhumkal rebellion was a movement of the Bastar state for Bastar forest dwellers (Sundar 148).

Alpa Shah re-read the Birsa Munda rebellion of the Chota Nagpur plateau in her study on the influence of religious sects on the adivasis of the area. Shah's methodology was to re-visit the colonial archives on the Birsa Munda rebellion. Shah re-read the colonial archives along with the ethnographic findings from the hilly tracts of Eastern India during the time period 2008- 2010. Shah found striking similarities between the Birsa Munda rebellion of the 1900s and a newly found religious sect called Shiv Charcha, to which the adivasis gravitated during Shah's fieldwork. Shah made a significant conclusion from her analysis of the two historical moments of adivasi resistance. Shah observed that the Munda rebellions could not be reduced as either anti-colonial struggles or armed struggles against the state. Shah conceptualised the adivasi movements as a moment when the community wanted to integrate their religious aspirations with political and economic ones. The Mundas were greatly disturbed by the appropriation of their religion and customs by the authoritarian forces. For instance, the Birsa Munda rebellion was against the Christian missionary activities during the 1900, and not specifically against the colonial state. With the turn of the century, the Mundas abandoned Maoism, which denuded them of their religion. Shah, in her essay observed that the customary laws and the adivasi religious customs could not sit well with the secular formations like Maoist movements. However, joining a religious sect called Shiv Charcha allowed the adivasis to reform their lives by practicing cleanliness and abstinence from meat and liquor (Shah, "Religion and the Secular Left" 1). Shiv Charcha could thus gain more influence among the villagers as it marked continuity with the village life unlike the Maoist cadres. Shah found that the Birsa Munda Movement of the 1900s was marked by similar meetings that prompted people to avoid consuming meat and alcohol and to abstain from practising witchcraft ("Religion and the Secular Left" 9). I would suggest here that all three of the subaltern historians I have

[35] Sundar notes that De Brett, the political agent of Chhattisgarh Feudatory States, had written about the defiance the tribals showed at the face of the colonial rulers as they chose to die at the British gun points rather than to surrender before them (138).

referred to have identified the specificities of the adivasi resistance movements. All these movements, these historians observed, arose from a collective will of the adivasis to reform themselves.

Writing history from an adivasi perspective also involves deconstructing the established notions of the adivasi as a primitive inhabiting the forest. Thus, I would also discuss here the theoretical frameworks provided by Archana Prasad and Luisa Steur. Archana Prasad, who worked on the political aspects of adivasi myths, remarked that the adivasis should not be ecologically romanticised. Prasad, in her essays on the Gonds and Baigas of the Gondwana region, problematised the colonial understanding of the adivasi as primitives who were primarily shifting cultivators, hunters and gatherers. Archana Prasad observed that the colonial understandings of the adivasi as "the original inhabitants of a forested area and their practices as those having ancient origins" were flawed ("Adivasis as Swadeshis" 28). The Gonds, Archana Prasad argued, originally inhabited the plains of Gondwana. They were then pushed to the forests during the seventeenth century with invasions. The displacement of the Gonds to the forests led to the replacement of the adivasis by later migrants to the area who further marginalised the Gonds (A. Prasad, "Adivasis as Swadeshis" 12). Moreover, the territorial settlement that happened during the British takeover of Gondwana in the nineteenth century, put a curb to the mobility of the Gonds from the forests to the plains.[36] Archana Prasad observed that the Gonds reinvented certain myths during the nineteenth century to counter the colonial invasions on their customary rights. She observed that these myths emphasised their community life as food gatherers in the forests "despite the fact that the Gonds still saw themselves as permanent cultivators who were in a permanent state of migration" (A. Prasad 26).[37] The myths that the Gonds circulated during the nineteenth century regarding close associations with forests was only a political strategy to ensure access to the land and forest resources, which was by then their only means of survival. Shah similarly, talked about the 'arcadian spaces' in her anthropological study

[36] The forest reservation policies prevented the Gonds from freely accessing the resources.

[37] For the 19th century Gond oral traditions that emphasised the Gonds' relation to the forests and the community's close connection with the forests, See A. Prasad, "Adivasis as Swadeshis" 26- 27. For the Baiga myths of the nineteenth century that connected the Baiga livelihood to *bewar* or shifting cultivation practices, see A. Prasad, "The Baiga and its Eco-Logic" 68.

on the case of indigenous politics among the Mundas of Jharkhand. She argued that the 'arcadian space' does not make distinctions between tradition and modernity. 'Arcadian spaces,' on the other hand, incorporated the adivasi myths regarding their cultural history with their political motives (Shah, *In the Shadows* 85). Similarly, Luisa Steur, observed that the idea of 'indigeneity,' that the adivasis often resorted to during land struggle should not be equated with ecological romanticism. Steur, in her essay on various models of indigenism, analysed indigeneity claims by the Paniyas of Wayanad, when they participated in the Muthanga land struggle in 2003. 'Indigeneity,' for Steur is not simply a falling back by the adivasis to traditions. Rather 'indigeneity' was a political tool for the adivasis to present their narratives to a neo- liberal democracy (Steur, "Traveling Models" 193).

Shah, Prasad and Steur thus observed that the adivasi claim to lost forest lands and resources are only political. The adivasi is thus not an entity, who is the 'other' of modernity. Claims to indigeneity are thus not to assert that the adivasi are the aboriginals inhabiting the forests. Rather, resorting to myths and memories that establish close connections with the forests is the only way forward for the adivasi in the modern times. This political strategy by the adivasis would highlight the problems of land alienations before the authorities. The only difference is in the identities that the adivasis assume at different historical moments. They would project themselves as peasants, agriculturalists and forest dwellers, but to assert a political stand. The conclusion that I draw from these studies is that the adivasis at different historical junctures had defined themselves strategically. Recorded archives might have dismissed the adivasi resistance as products of instincts, superstitions and ignorance. Rather, the adivasis were directed by specific objectives when they rose in resistance. Adivasi imagination and memories not always purported to lay claims to a pre- modern existence. The adivasis reinvented their myths and memories so as to negotiate with the colonial modernity. Their memories of resistance deviated from the grand narratives of nationalism. They moved in and out of the nationalist politics depending upon their political necessities. The claims of adivasis were never to isolate themselves from the political economy and to retreat into the forests. Rather, in the twentieth century, they wanted a dignified existence as peasants. The adivasis claimed equality with the landlords and other upper- classes who exploited them. They questioned the alienation of resources. In an economy that was becoming more market oriented and liberalised,

the adivasis were intuitive enough to secure a place in the democratic spaces. Most of them asserted themselves as peasants who had close connections to the lands they cultivated. While some claimed the status of free wage labourers, some claimed ownership of the lands. I would suggest here that re- reading adivasi resistance, would show that these resistances were crucial moments in redefining the colonial image of the adivasi. The adivasi, attempted to break free from the colonial image of a 'primitive,' 'savage' and 'slave' by claiming political rights.

2.2. The Adiyas and Paniyas in the Post- Colonial Kerala

One of the significant landmarks as far as the lower strata of agriculturalists in India was concerned was the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act in 1976 (hereafter BLSA 1976). This act came to force under the Indira Gandhi government in India. Bonded labour system is described as a forced or partly forced form of labour in which a debtor entered into an agreement with a creditor (BLSA 1976 2-3). This agreement made the debtor forfeit his/ her labour or the labour of his/her family members for a specified or unspecified period of time, with or without nominal wages (BLSA 1976 2-3). A bonded labourer is also a person who forfeited his or her right to the freedom of mobility and freedom of labour/occupation (BLSA 1976 2-3). The BLSA of 1976 abolished all forced forms of labour irrespective of the means through which the labourer had become a debtor.[38] The BLSA 1976 also covered systems of bonded labour that were naturalised as a social custom. The act identified the lower castes who remained as bonded labourers for a long time in India because of customary obligation. What is significant is that the *Cherumas*, who were the slaves of Malabar in the colonial context is identified as 'bonded labourer' in the 1976 act (BLA 1976 1). *Cherumas* of Malabar, undoubtedly, encompassed the Adiya and Paniya agrestic slaves of Wayanad as well.

Thus, in this section, I attempt to understand the discourse around adivasi agrestic labour in the periods during the 1950s and 60s in Kerala. I would argue in this section that *vallippani* or *valli* labour among the Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad got renewed attention in the modern Kerala state in the 1960s. The result of a renewed

[38] Bondedness, according to the BLSA 1976, commenced with advancement of money. It could also be inherited by a person. Birth in a particular caste or community also led to bondedness.

interest in the issue of *valli* labour amongst the adivasis led to the consolidation of adivasi agrestic labour as 'bonded labour.' I want to highlight two important historical conjectures that partially led to this transformation regarding the perception of *valli* labourers by the state. These moments include the assent of the first Communist ministry (CPI) in Kerala in 1957 and their introduction of the Agrarian Reforms Bill in the same year and the publication of K. Panoor's administrative ethnography titled *Keralathile Africa* on the adivasis of Kerala in 1963.

2.2.1. *Keralathile Africa* and the Renewed Debate on Slavery

The colonial regime had opened a pandora's box by identifying the agrestic labourers of Adiyas and Paniyas as slaves of Wayanad. It is only one part of the story that the imperial rule could not abolish the slave situation of the adivasi communities of Wayanad. However, the image of the adivasi as a 'slave' would haunt the independent Kerala state, with the publication of K. Panoor's memoirs of Wayanad titled *Keralathile Africa* or Kerala's Africa in 1963. There occurred a heated discussion regarding the identity of the adivasi as a 'slave' during the tenth session of the second legislative assembly of Kerala, which was held on 28 November, 1963. This assembly was led by the Congress led ministry of R. Sankar. Slavery issue among the Adiyas and Paniyas of Kerala was debated along with the discussions on the amendments regarding the Land Reformation Bill of Kerala as it was in 1963. O. Koran, from the opposition Socialist party, produced a copy of Panoor's *Keralathile Africa* before the speaker as evidence to the existence of slavery in Wayanad during the twentieth century. Koran observed in his legislative assembly speech that there existed slave trade at Valliyoorkkavu temple in Wayanad: "I would like to present here in the legislative assembly the evidence regarding the existence of slave trade in the Valliyoorkkavu temple…" (Koran 3423). However, it could be deciphered from the legislative assembly proceedings that the speaker disrupted O. Koran's speech in between and asked him to submit the evidence before the government and not before the speaker. The speaker was clearly reluctant to listen to an MLA making statements about the existence of slavery in the post independent Kerala. The speaker observed that no further explanation was necessary regarding the existence of slavery in the northern part of Kerala and that Koran was directed to hand over the substantial documents that were available to the government. The speaker went ahead to say that the government would take steps to look into the

matter and that "the matter was closed." The issues raised by the MLA O. Koran pushed the then home minister P.T. Chacko, to put a ban on *Keralathile Africa* under the Defence of India rules. The government was of the opinion that the book portrayed "Malayalees" in poor light (Panoor 15). However, the book became a watershed moment in the consolidation of adivasi slave labour. After almost ten years of silence on the issue of adivasi slavery, it was Panoor who took up the issue of Adiya and Paniya slaves in the 1960s. Panoor reminded the readers that when the Congress led ministers ranted against his opinions on slave trade in Wayanad, *Keralathile Africa* was appreciated globally for revealing the drudgery of the adivasi labourers. The book was seen as an important contribution to the history of adivasi labourers of Wayanad. *Keralathile Africa* received the UNESCO award in 1965. The book thus was both a controversy and contribution as far as the adivasis of Wayanad were concerned. The government retracted from its attempts to raise punitive measures against the author after it received the UNESCO award (Panoor 15). Panoor also observed that it was only after twelve years of the publication of *Keralathile Africa* that the Kerala government responded to the status of bondedness of the adivasis by the implementation of the BLSA 1975. I would reserve the discussion of the BLSA 1975, towards the end of this chapter. I would now proceed to discuss the significant observations that Panoor made about the Adiyas and Paniyas in *Keralathile Africa*, which led to the disavowal of this book from the ruling front in 1963.

K. Panoor, a civil rights activist, set his foot in Wayanad as a tribal development officer in 1958. Panoor was serving as a deputy collector in the revenue department while he got deputed as a tribal development officer in 1958, to Wayanad. His appointment as a tribal development officer at Wayanad happened during a time when Kerala was ruled by the CPI under E. M. S. Namboothiripad. Thus, Panoor was a government official who was deputed to Wayanad to inquire into the adivasi question. Panoor himself observed in the introduction to *Keralathile Africa* that the book was the result of his experience among the adivasis of Wayanad: "I lived as a tribal welfare officer amongst the adivasis of Wayanad for five years since 1958. I happened to come across different cultures and life worlds amidst the suffering adivasis there. This book, which came out in 1963 was the result of my close interactions with the adivasis" (15). In the beginning itself, Panoor observed that the adivasis of Wayanad were a suffering lot. Panoor further observed that the objective of his book was to present to the world,

"the hardships of a group of people, who lived amidst slavery, superstitions and ignorance" (Panoor 16). The significance of *Keralathile Africa* is that, it brought for the first time to the Kerala public, the issue of slavery among the adivasis of Wayanad. After the colonial discursive construction of the *valli* labour as slavery, the issue of adivasis came to the public eye with Panoor's book. In fact, *valloorpanam* or *nippu panam*, a key term that defined the bonded status of the adivasis of North Kerala in the BLSA 1975 was discussed for the first time in *Keralathile Africa*. Moreover, Panoor made parallels between slavery amongst the African plantation labourers as well as slavery among the adivasis of Wayanad. In fact, Panoor began the book with a comparison between Europe and Wayanad. Panoor observed that if ever a European happened to visit Wayanad, he/ she would never believe that Wayanad and its wretched adivasi slaves belonged to the twentieth century (Panoor 19). Panoor went on to say that Wayanad and the situation of its people remained unknown to the world outside (Panoor 19). Thus, I would suggest that Panoor tried to give a global appeal to the situation of agrestic labourers of Wayanad. Panoor talked about the actual sale of adivasi labourers in Wayanad during the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival. He observed that the sale of slaves happened during the festival at the temple, which commenced on1 *Meenom* (*Meenom* is the Malayalam month that falls during the time period between mid-March and mid-April). Panoor narrated the scenes of human transaction at the site of Valliyoorkkavu temple:

> The Paniyas of Wayanad would come to attend the Valliyoorkkavu festival which extended for fourteen days. The *jenmies* of Wayanad would also be present there. Each *jenmi* would choose some Paniyas from the lot, as if they were buying some cattle. The *jenmi* wanted these Paniyas to work as agrestic labourers for the next agricultural cycle, that is till the next Valliyoorkkavu festival. After choosing the required number of Paniyas, the *jenmi* would come to an agreement with the *mooppan* or adivasi chieftain (who would usually be the *dallal* or middleman in trade) on the price to be paid for each labourer. The price called as *adima panam* or *valloorpanam* [the term *panam* meant 'money' in Malayalam] would be given to the Paniyas, with the goddess Valliyooramma as the witness. A married man was bought for 10 rupees and a married woman for 5 rupees. If the labourers are unmarried, they would be bought for 2.50 rupees. (Panoor 72)

The descriptions given by Panoor on how the Paniya labourers became enslaved under the *jenmies*, is clear evidence to the fact that the Paniyas were bought and sold like the plantation labourers of the Caribbeans. The only difference is that the Paniyas did not have to cross the ocean. Moreover, an element of devotion was involved in Wayanad. Devotion to Valliyooramma was used as a tool by the *jenmi* to make the Paniyas bonded forever. I would suggest here that there was hardly any difference between the slave labourers of Wayanad and the plantation slaves. Both were treated similar to cattle in a slave market. The slave market at Valliyoorkkavu, as described by Panoor, very much reminds the reader of a slave market in the Europe. Saidiya Hartman, an African- American cultural theorist, who wrote intensively on African slavery, described the scenes of a slave market in Europe in the eighteenth century. These slave markets witnessed the horrors of coffles, lynching, beatings, and the shameful displays of the naked slave bodies for sale in the markets (Hartman 18). Panoor thus made an argument through his book that slave trade was not a story of distant past in Africa. Rather, Panoor's book suggested that slaves and slave trade was very much part of the modern Kerala state. The temple fair is a modern set up, where a lot of goods and commodities were traded. The Paniyas were reduced to expendable commodities in this slave market. Similar is the case with the Adiyas as observed by Panoor. Adiyas were also sold and bought during the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair (Panoor 23).

Panoor, tried to project to the world that the Adiyas and Paniyas in fact lived the life of a slave. He highlighted that their bondedness resulted from the advance of money called *nippu panam* or *valloorpanam* from the *jenmi*. Thus, the debt that the adivasi labourer advanced from the landlord was vernacularly identified as *valloorpanam* or *nippu panam*. Panoor described in detail various instances from the Adiya and Paniya lives that would reveal their hardships as slaves. The Paniyas and Adiyas, observed Panoor, worked under the landlord classes of Gounders, Chettis and Nairs (20). I would take a moment here to describe the picture that Panoor provided regarding the labour practice of the adivasis. Panoor described the slaves as destined to work uninterruptedly for twenty-four hours a day and three sixty-five days a year (73). Panoor suggested that the men and women had to leave for the paddy fields before the daybreak. They would till and plough the lands till noon. The adivasis would be given wages in kind, notes Panoor. During noon, a man would be given two *sers* of paddy (one *ser* equalled 750

gms), and a woman would be given one *ser*. This was the wage for an entire day (Panoor 73). The slaves had to walk back to their huts to cook the paddy given to them. The Adiyas and Paniyas had to go back to the fields after having lunch. They would continue doing jobs like reaping, bundling the harvest and carrying it to the *jenmi's* house. Panoor observed that the slaves were allowed to live in small huts on the edges of fields. They did not own lands, nor did they have an address: "The Adiyas and Paniyas belonged to the *jenmi*. The slave labourers would be continuously shifted from place to place by the *jenmi*. Thus, they never had a permanent homestead" (Panoor 68). Panoor notes that the slaves would remain hungry on jobless days. The *jenmi* would not give maintenance and wages to the slaves if there was no work (Panoor 73).

It should be stated here that Panoor's experiences among the Adiyas and Paniyas revealed that the adivasis, even in the 1960s, were victims of slave labour. Panoor made a crucial argument in his book regarding the reason behind slavery. The reason for adivasi slavery is the alienation of lands from the adivasis by the *jenmis* (Panoor 21). Hence, Panoor was hinting at the necessity of a Land Reformation Bill in the 1960s that would redistribute the lands to the landless labourers, including the adivasis. Panoor made a further powerful argument in comparing the situation of African slaves to agrestic slaves of Wayanad. Panoor came up with a contrast in the present situation of the plantation slaves and slaves of Wayanad. Panoor observed that the slaves of Africa were liberated years ago. The Africans had already raised their voice against inequality and injustice. But the Adiyas and Paniyas were bought and sold in slave markets of Wayanad during the twentieth century (Panoor 100). What is more problematic for Panoor is the abolition of slavery in Malabar in 1843 by the colonial regime. Panoor observed that by the abolition law, the Adiyas and Paniyas were deprived "of the rights to be known as slaves" (22). Thus, Panoor had made a significant observation in the early 1960s. Panoor opined that the abolition of slavery in Malabar epistemologically denied the adivasi slave existence, whereas experientially, the adivasis continued to lead a slave life. What Panoor was arguing, I would say, was that since, the category slavery could no more be used, no administration really cared to look into the issue of slave labour in Wayanad. Panoor made this argument years before many South Asian historians including Sarkar, Major and Indrani Chatterjee made similar observations on the darker side of the imperial abolitionist stand. The mission of Panoor's book was thus to bring the issue of slavery to the attention of the ruling front in Kerala.

Panoor's descriptions regarding the Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad should not be taken as exaggerations. There are elements of ethnography in Panoor's book, where he talked and interacted with the adivasis.[39] Despite, the descriptions of slave labour, Panoor made meticulous detailing about the customs and rituals of the adivasis of Wayanad. Panoor briefed about their customs after having interaction with adivasi chieftains. He also added ethnographic interviews in his memoir. Moreover, his position as a tribal welfare officer adds gravity to the situation of agrestic labourers of Wayanad. Panoor's descriptions on slave labour in Wayanad affirmed the colonial discourse on adivasi slave labour. It would not take long for a reader of *Keralathile Africa* to conclude that *vallippani* of the Adiyas and Paniyas was in fact slave labour. Therefore, Panoor's comparison of the situation of the adivasis of modern Kerala state to the plantation slaves of Africa was difficult for the ruling Congress front to accept. Moreover, opposition leaders used *Keralathile Africa* as evidence to the existence of slavery in the modern Kerala state. Such a political move by the opposition leaders of the left democratic front forced the then ministry to widen the scope of the Land Reformations Bill. The Land Reformation Bill as it existed in 1963, did not benefit the lowest strata of the agricultural labourers like the Adiyas and Paniyas. Thus, Panoor's discussions regarding the agrestic labourers of Wayanad should not be seen in isolation. Rather, Panoor's observations on slavery in Wayanad and the subsequent debates around this book in the legislative assembly should be read in relation to the introduction of the Agrarian Reformation Bill by the first Communist ministry in Kerala in 1957. I find it important here to briefly discuss the history of legislative measures that the first Communist ministry envisioned for the peasant classes of Kerala. Only then would the discussions regarding the issue of slavery among adivasis would come to a full circle.

2. 2.2. Agrestic Labourers and the Modern Kerala State

It is noteworthy to have a historical understanding of the contexts in which the debates regarding the existence of slavery happened in the legislative assembly in 1963. The Land Reformations Bill, which was actually introduced by the EMS led government in 1957, was amended several times with inputs from the Congress and

[39] See Panoor 25, 45, 55, 73, 81.

allied parties by 1964. The debates regarding the issue of adivasi slavery happened during one such sessions which discussed the amendments for the Land Reformations Bill. The formation of modern Kerala state in 1957 was coupled with the ascent of the first Communist ministry into power. It was for the first time in the history of Kerala that welfarism was given crucial importance with the arrival of the Communist Party of India (CPI) government to power on 5April, 1957 led by E. M. S. Namboothiripad.[40] R. K. Bijuraj, a political historian and journalist from Kerala, in his study on the political history of Kerala, observed that welfarism was the key agenda in the Communist party's election manifesto during 1957 (*Keralathinte* 35). The party declared that their main agenda would be to address issues like population growth, unemployment, under development in industrialization and the backward status of agriculturalists (Bijuraj, *Keralathinte* 35). Another important issue that came under the welfare policies of the Communist party was the relations between the bourgeoisie employers and their labourers (Bijuraj, *Keralathinte* 35). Welfare for the poor agriculturalists and working class became the main agenda of the communist ministry. According to Manali Desai, a noted Indian sociologist, welfarism cannot be but the main agenda of a party that came to power with support from the untouchables, industrial and agrarian workers in the nineteenth century (459). Desai went on to note that the Communists aimed at forming class solidarities amongst the workers and tenants. The main policy reforms of the communist party were the introduction of a Land Reformation Bill that protected tenancy rights, the abolition of landlordism, and promising minimum wages for agricultural labourers along with the distribution of plots for cultivation (Desai 483-484). These reforms, observed Desai, helped the tenants to break away from dependency on the landlords. C. Bhaskaran, the first president of CPI's student outfit in Kerala, observed in a compilation of Namboothiripad's speeches, that the most important contribution of the Communist government was the establishment of the agricultural and industrial workers unions all over Kerala:

> The employer- employee relations always ran into a ruckus in Kerala. The reason was the antagonism between the labourers and their employers over lockouts and strikes. Production process should smoothly continue in the

[40] Namboothiripad was a polit bureau member of the CPI in the 40s and was one of the founding members of CPI in Kerala.

> agricultural and industrial sector. One obstacle that prevented the uninterrupted production process was the indifference that the employers expressed towards the worker's unions. (Namboothiripad 68)

The Communist government also declared policies which would protect the rights of peasants and tillers. These policies included declaring the fixity of land ownership for the *kudians*. I find it significant here to discuss in detail about the various land ownership tenures across Kerala, including Malabar. In a correspondence of the Board of Revenue, William Oliver, a provincial revenue officer, detailed the various land relations in Malabar. According to Oliver, J*enmom* right is the supreme and absolute property rights over a piece of land and it was mostly possessed by the Brahmin landlords (1732). The landlord who possessed *jenmom* rights was thus called *jenmi*. Below the *jenmi*, is the *kanom* tenant. A *kanom* tenant is the one who mortgaged or leased the lands from *jenmies* for a particular period of time, which is often twelve years. This tenure was renewable at expiry. The *kanom* tenant enjoyed full rights over the lands except that he had to pay the *jenmi* a customary share of produce from the land. The *kanomkar* could even give the land as a mortgage to others. It was the *kanomkars* who paid the taxes to the sircar since the nineteenth century Malabar (Oliver 1732). Thomas Warden, the principal collector of Malabar, in his report on land revenue in Malabar, observed that below the *kanomkar* is the *kudian*, who actually cultivated the lands. According to Warden, the *kudian* neither paid the land revenue, nor had any rights over the lands (*Report on the Land Assessment* 2-4). The *kudian* was the cultivating population who were held by the *jenmom* rights (*Report on the Land Assessment* 4). The *jenmi* enjoyed his rights over the *kudian*s through the *kanomkar*, who actually possessed the lands. The *kudian* was thus a tenant at will who would be forced to move from one place to another as and when the *kanomkar* decided. I would conclude from this colonial detailing of land relations in Malabar that the Adiyas and Paniyas, the agrestic slaves were actually *kudians.* It was the Adiyas and Paniyas who actually tilled the lands in Malabar. However, when it comes to Travancore, the *kudian* is defined as a *kanom* tenant. B. A. Prakash, a noted economist from Kerala observed that the Jenmi- Kudiyan Act of 1896, passed in the princely state of Travancore, defined a *kudian* as a *kanom* tenant. A *kanom* tenant in turn is a person who had leased or mortgaged a land from the *jenmakar* (Prakash 24). In the princely state of Travancore, the *kanom* tenant was promised the security of tenure and protection from eviction. It

should be mentioned here that there were confusions over the definitions regarding a *kudian* in different parts of Kerala. It is amidst such confusions that Namboothiripad announced the policy of fixing land ownership for the *kudians*.

Namboothiripad declared that the land reformation policies introduced by the government would benefit the farmers and the small- scale land holders and a bill would be prepared soon to alleviate the burdens faced by the farmers. The Land Reformation Bill was introduced in the legislative assembly, by the then revenue minister K. R. Gouri on 21 Dec, 1957. This bill came to be also called the Agrarian Relations Bill. However, almost eight months prior to the introduction of the Agrarian Relations Bill, the government issued an ordinance prohibiting the eviction of tenants by the landlords on 11 April, 1957. Gouri declared in the legislative assembly on 21 December 1957 that the Land Reformation Bill is an important landmark in the history of enactments related to landowner- tenant relations. The Land Reformation Bill, according to Gouri, sought to provide "fixity of tenures to the *kudian* who was cultivating a piece of land, *maryada pattom* or fair rents for *kudiyans*, fixing a ceiling for land ownership and conferring rights upon the tenants to buy the lands that they cultivated from the *jenmies* on reasonable rates" (qtd. in Bijuraj, *Keralathinte* 41). The bill made provisions to protect the tenants from being ousted from their homesteads by the landowners. Small scale cultivators were also included under the definition of *kudians*. Thus, the agrarian relations bill sought to abolish landlordism in Kerala. But the CPI government soon ran out of popularity. This was because the Brahmin, Nair and Syrian Christian landlords of Kerala rose in struggle with the opposition parties including the Congress and Praja Socialist Party. Bijuraj opined that the *jenmi* classes were afraid that they would lose their control over the lands (*Keralathinte* 60). This large-scale movement against the communist ministry came to be called as *vimochana samaram* or the liberation struggle. The liberation struggle found success in 1959, when the ministry of Namboothiripad was dissolved by the president. The Communists were thus ousted in 1959. However, the Agrarian Relations Bill was sent to the president with minor changes by the successive governments led by Pattom Thanu Pillai (of the Praja Socialist Party) in 1962. During 1963, the Congress ministry, led by R. Sankar came to power backed by the liberation struggle. The then revenue minister P. T. Chacko modified the Agrarian Relations Bill. This bill sought to set a ceiling for lands owned, to annex lands thus seized to the government and to redistribute lands to the landless (*Keralathinte* 75). It

was during this time that the issue of slavery in Wayanad was discussed within the context of the efficacy of the bill.

These debates were regarding the efficacy of the bill in providing lands to the landless. By 1963, the actual intentions of the bill in abolishing landlordism got diluted. Opposition leaders like Gouri, of the CPI and Baby John of the Kerala Revolutionary Socialist Party were against the proposed amendments that were suggested to the bill by the ministers of the ruling front. The opposition leaders were unanimous in saying that the bill has now turned into one that would protect the rights of the landlords and that it should be renamed as the "Land Owners Protection Act" (Gouri 3547, B. John 3549). The Congress led ministry, in such a situation was thus reluctant to accept the fact that there still existed slavery as the land reformations bill should then be further widened to include the adivasi landless labourers. The adivasi labourers of Wayanad did not come under the ambit of *kudikidappukars* or tenants, who were protected under the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1963. *Kudikidappukars* as defined by the Kerala Land Reforms Act (1963) were labourers living in homesteads and were allowed to occupy this homestead, owned by a person in lawful possession of that land (The Kerala Land Reforms Act 23). The *valli* labourers were frequently moved from one place of cultivation to another. They never occupied a homestead permanently. Therefore, the adivasi labourers never benefited from the provisions of the tenancy protection laws. The controversy of slavery in Kerala, amidst the discussion of amending the Land Reformation Bill, thus reminded the rulers in power to make necessary steps to prevent slave labour in the agrarian sector. However, as I have observed, the response of the legislative members was mixed. Nevertheless, the Adiyas and Paniyas of Wayanad were not silent witnesses to the political debates regarding slave labour in the 1960s. In the next section, I would discuss another watershed moment in the history of Adiya and Paniya labour, which is the *valli* strikes of the 1960s. *Valli* strikes or the coolie strikes helped the adivasis to break free from the dominant conception of their condition as 'slaves' and to assert themselves as cultivators/ agricultural labourers.

2. 3. Adivasi Identities and the *Valli* Strikes

The CPI had already made its roots in Wayanad by the early 1950s. Wayanad witnessed numerous *valli* strikes or coolie strikes in the 1950s and 60s. These strikes

were led by the agricultural labourers' front of the CPI called The Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU). The significance of the *valli* strikes is that the adivasis for the first time in history rose against slave labour in Wayanad. In the following section, I would discuss the *valli* strikes of the 1960s, in Wayanad, with particular reference to the involvement of P. K. Kalan, an Adiya leader and CPI (M) activist and A. Varghese, another CPI (M) leader. Both P. Kalan and Varghese started their career as CPI activists. However, when the party split to form the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) in 1964, both P. Kalan and Varghese became CPI (M) members. Thus, I would revisit those phases of Kalan and Varghese when they organised the *valli* strikes as CPI (M) leaders. The *valli* strikes mark an important moment in adivasi history as these strikes helped the adivasi to self- fashion their identity as agricultural labourers. The *valli* strikes eventually led the Kerala government to abolish bonded labour in Kerala in 1975. In this section, I would discuss in detail, each of these phases that significantly affected the manner in which the adivasi labourers were imagined by the Kerala state. I also resort to the memories of the Adiyas and Paniyas regarding the *valli* strikes in this section to get a complex understanding of this historical moment. Revisiting adivasi memories related to *valli* slavery is also important as Panoor's observations on the slave trade at Valliyoorkkavu was met with dissent from historians. Thus, I use memory as a device to present an adivasi perspective on slavery and slave trade in Wayanad.

The veracity of Panoor's comments on Valliyoorkkavu slave trade was questioned by many critics. For instance, historians like Johnny and Mundakkayam Gopi questioned the possibility of a slave market in Valliyoorkkavu. For Johnny and Mundakkayam Gopi, the reason for bondedness resulted from an advance of money. Adiyas and Paniyas advanced money from the *jenmies* just before the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival, so that they could buy goods from the market at Valliyoorkkavu (Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal* 161, M. Gopi 178). Since they could not repay the money immediately, they forfeited their labour to the j*enmies* for a year. The cycle continued every year and the adivasis remained bonded to the *jenmi*, their entire life. Nevertheless, memories of ex- slaves and ethnographic data reveal otherwise. There is no denial of the role that *valli* strikes or coolie strikes played in bringing a change in the situation of the adivasi agrestic labourers in Wayanad. In this section, I would use memories of adivasis who were part of the *valli* strikes in Wayanad during the 1950s and 60s. I use the

memoirs of P. Kalan, the late communist leader from among the Adiyas, as a primary material to get an adivasi perspective on the *valli* strikes. I also draw from newspaper reports to see how the other adivasi comrades who took part in the *valli* strikes remember the 1960s. Memoirs and newspaper reports offer a return to the 1960s when the adivasis began to assert themselves as agrestic labourers. The 1960s was a period which saw the adivasis uniting under the communist party and rising in struggle for more wages. The accusations that Panoor made on the landlord classes of Wayanad, the debates over the issue of slavery in the legislature, the introduction of land reformation bill and the abolition of bonded labour are crucial events that are closely connected to the *valli* strikes in Wayanad. The story would be incomplete without an analysis of the *valli* strikes, which was led mostly by the adivasis. Before going into the details of the *valli* strikes of Wayanad, I would initially try to theoretically contextualise the necessity for *valli* strikes or coolie strikes in Wayanad.

2.3.1 The Significance of *Valli* Strikes in the 1950s and 60s

Local narratives on adivasi wage strikes reveal regional resistance to slavery and bondage. For the adivasis, the *valli* strikes or the wage strikes were successful. The *valli* strike gave the adivasi labourers dignity and it raised the wages of labourers. The wages of a man was raised from two *sers* of paddy to four *sers* of paddy and seventy-five paise per day and of a woman was raised from one and half *sers* of paddy to three *sers* of paddy and fifty paise. Wages were gradually raised from ten to fifteen rupees and eventually wages in kind (paddy) was done away with. Increased political participation of the adivasis in the land struggles and strikes for livelihood by the 1960s proved that an exotic adivasi life detached from the domains of colonial modernity, experiences of slave labour and political economy is impossible. Shah suggested the importance of the creation of spaces that are driven by adivasi world views and lived experiences, which would then act as a space from where adivasi resistance could emerge. For Shah, these spaces are called ‘arcadian spaces’ as is already observed. Such an ‘arcadian space’ is important to understand the particular nature of Adiya and Paniya *valli* strikes within the temporality of the Communist movement itself. Adivasi leaders who had participated in the *valli* struggles of the 1950s and 60s were driven by the hope to reclaim their history as agriculturalists and thereby the lost dignity. It was the

Communist movement that provided an 'arcadian space' for the Adiyas and Paniyas to reclaim their identity as agriculturalists.

Sukumaran Chaligadha, an Adiya poet, in his thirties, made an important observation regarding the land ownership among the Adiya community in an interview with me in March 2021. Chaligadha, during an interview with me, opined that the Adiyas were not totally into slave labour in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Chaligadha mentioned that the Gounders were the landlords under whom the Adiyas worked during the eighteenth century. However, Chaligadha remembered that the Adiyas still had vast areas of lands to practise their shifting cultivation practices, even when they used to work for the landlords. According to Chaligadha, adivasis like the Adiyas and Paniyas went into complete slavery post the migrations of Syrian Christians (from Central Travancore) to Wayanad. Historians have observed that the Syrian Christians historically had a high social status in Kerala. The migration of Syrian Christians to parts of Malabar, including Wayanad was mainly aimed at locating new lands for cultivation (Varghese 229). These migrant Christians thus became a new group of landowners who practised capitalist land relations in the vast forest areas of Malabar.

Some studies in economy and land relations in Wayanad argued in favour of the comments made by Chaligadha. These studies argued that the adivasis of Wayanad were involved in the shifting cultivation patterns along with the wetland cultivation on the plains in the nineteenth century. Adrian. C. Mayer, a social anthropologist, who worked immensely on Indian history and sociology observed in a report on the land and society in Malabar that *poonam* cultivation or hill cultivation was practised in Wayanad along with wetland cultivation (55). Mayer stated that *poonam* cultivation followed a pattern where cereals, including hill rice, were cultivated in the slopes of the Ghats and their foothills. Mayer observed that *poonam* cultivation was mainly done by the forest dwellers including the hill tribes of Wayanad (55). There are works which have already established that the in- migration to Wayanad during the 1930s affected the adivasi cultivation patterns. For instance, Darley Jose Kjosavik and N. Shanmugaratnam, in their study on the property rights dynamics of the indigenous communities of highland Kerala; suggested that the establishment of the plantation economies in Wayanad during the 1840s and the in-migrations to Wayanad during the 1930s from the central

Travancore were the main reasons for adivasi land alienation. Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam observed that the migrants from Travancore leased the government lands in Wayanad and began to establish plantations, yam, tapioca and rubber cultivations. The migrants also leased lands from the *jenmies* on much lower rents. Moreover, they began to 'buy' lands from the adivasis as well. Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam observed that the adivasis were least aware about the modern concepts of the land-owning titles unlike the settlers: "The indigenous people did not have a concept of the area or measurement of land in modern terms like acre or hectare. Their ignorance was taken advantage of by the settlers who got control over areas much larger than agreed upon by the tribes on paper (called *theeradharam*)" (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 1232). Another issue was that the adivasis who cultivated the lands as tenants were not protected under the Malabar Tenancy Act that was passed in 1929. The Malabar Tenancy Act introduced the 'fair rent,' which was the advance payment of revenue for one year (The Malabar Tenancy Act). However, most of the tenant adivasis could not afford it. Migrant settlement, and the regulations of the Malabar Tenancy Law forced the adivasis including the Paniyas, Adiyas and Kattunaickas who lived on the edges of the *jenmis'* lands to move out. Thus, I would suggest that the appropriation of the lands by the migrants led to the forced displacement of the adivasis who were living on the formerly *jenmi* owned tracts or who were already cultivating on some of these lands. Even those lands which the adivasis used for *poonam* cultivation got alienated from them.

On the contrary, there are some studies, which argued in defence of the Christian peasant migrations to Wayanad from Travancore. These studies argued that the migrations in fact helped the adivasis of Wayanad to transform into 'free wage labourers' from their status as 'bonded labourers' under the *jenmis*. Joy Varkey, a historian from Kerala, in his study on the Christian peasant migrations to Wayanad, argued that it was the traditional land ownership pattern of *jenmom* that existed in Malabar which contributed to the large-scale alienation of adivasi lands (207). *Jenmom* rights allowed the landlord to enjoy the hereditary rights over the lands that he owned. The adivasis and Dalits who cultivated on these lands as labourers had no rights to the lands and produce whatsoever, according to Varkey. In fact, the land along with the agricultural labourers were owned by the *jenmi,* Varkey observed (207). Similarly, another historian, K.N. Ganesh, in his work on the land tenures of Malabar observed

that the in- migrations to Wayanad was just one stage in a long process of land alienations that the adivasis had to face. *Jenmom* rights were established with the formation of a stratified agrarian society in Malabar between the ninth and the twelfth centuries, observed Ganesh. Rulers and chiefs of Malabar allotted permanent rights to the temples and lands attached to these temples to the Brahmins. Thus, the Brahmins established *jenmom* or hereditary rights over most of the lands (Ganesh 168). The establishment of *jenmom r*ights inaugurated the formation of different strata of tenants or cultivators, locally known as *pattakkars* under the *jenmis*.[41] The *kudiar* formed the lowest strata of cultivators, observed Ganesh. Ganesh notes that the *Adiyar*, was the generic name used to address various classes of the lowest strata of bonded labourers held by tenants on different leases (169). Adiyas, one such bonded class of labourers along with the Paniyas and Polayas, began to be addressed by the generic term called *Adiya*, as they historically worked for the landlords. It could be argued that since the *jenmi's* supreme rights over acres of lands in Malabar were largely protected during the British regime, the adivasi agriculturalists were at a loss even before the immigrations to Wayanad. Leasing of *jenmi* lands and state- owned lands by the Syrian Christian farmers during the 1930s could be seen as a continuation of the adivasi land alienation in Wayanad during the colonial period. During each period, the Adiyas and Paniyas were gradually alienated from the lands available for *poonam* cultivation.

It is important to observe here that there are arguments both defending the Christian migrants and those that presented such migration as the root cause of adivasi land alienation. Therefore, Chaligadha's testament in favour of the Gounders and Chettis need to be juxtaposed with the memories of someone from the Adiya community belonging to an older generation. For instance, M. Kalan, an ex- slave and a participant of the *valli* strikes, in an interview with me in 2021, argued that the adivasi labourers suffered mostly under the Warrier and Pattar landlords during the nineteenth century in the northern parts of Wayanad.[42] M. Kalan suggested that in the Southern parts of Wayanad, the exploitation came from the landlord classes of Gounders and

[41] Land rights of the twelfth century were gradated, starting from the chief or *naduvali* at the top followed by *uralar* (land owners and temple trustees), *karalar* (tenants and intermediary landholders), *kudiyar* (settled tenant cultivators) and the *adiyar* (bonded service classes) on the lowest rung (Ganesh 168).

[42] Personal interview with M. Kalan on 28 March, 2021.

Chettis. M. Kalan remembered that the lowest strata of cultivators, including the Adiyas and Paniyas were bought and sold as slaves. The slaves were severely punished by the landlords. Such differences in testimonies should not be seen as a discrepancy in the oral narratives. It is the hegemony that rules the memory that matters the most in an oral testimony. Chaligadha, a man in his thirties, remembered vividly the atrocities committed by the migrant Christians on his grandfather. Chaligadha shared with me these memories related to exploitations from Christian migrants during the interview. For Chaligadha, the period prior to the immigrants was unspeakable. Chaligadha had been already acclimatised to the adivasi land alienation caused by the Gounder and Chetty landlords in South Wayanad. The availability of lands for the adivasis to practise shifting cultivation during the landlord's rule made Chaligadha conclude that the Syrian Christian migrations were worse than landlord rule. Chaligadha's silent acceptance of the slave labour under *jenmis* as better are results of an internalisation of the oppressive regimes. For people like M. Kalan, the oppressive regimes began since the establishment of settled cultivation in Malabar. Luisa Passerini, an authority on oral history, in an essay on memory, observed that some of her interviewees were reluctant to speak about the horrors of fifteen to twenty years during Mussolini's regime in Italy. Whereas some generations actively talked about it (Passerini, "Work Ideology" 55). Thus, Passerini argued that memories do not talk about "real facts" ("Memory" 195). Similarly, the discrepancies in the memories of two generations of Adiya members on adivasi land alienation patterns reveal that memory does not simply reveal the past through the "real facts." According to Passerini, memory leads to "an active production of meanings and interpretations, strategic in character and capable of influencing the present" ("Memory" 195). Chaligadha's assertion of his ancestors owning lands during the nineteenth century is an assertion of freedom and dignity in the past. Memory thus becomes a tool for the new generations of adivasis to claim freedom not only in the past, but also from the future oppressive regimes. Thus, the legitimising claims of those histories that argue for the migrants and against the migrants prove to be less useful as far as the lived experiences of the agricultural communities like the Adiyas and Paniyas are concerned. Moreover, sociologists and historians have argued that the rights to the land were unevenly distributed among the various castes at a very early time. It is the narrativization of the memory that really mattered as far as the remembrance of adivasi struggles and their claims to freedom are concerned.

Since the colonial period imposed regulations on the unrestricted access to the forests and other natural resources, it was impossible for the Adiyas and Paniyas to re-establish their shifting cultivation practices. The only option for these agricultural labourers settled under wetland cultivation then was to challenge the existing exploitative circumstances and to fight for increased wages in cash. P. K. Kariyan, an Adiya labourer, who participated in the *valli* strikes observed that an improved and decent work environment, increased wage labour in cash and protection against alienation of the agricultural labourers from the cultivable lands were the main agendas that the adivasis put forward when joining the *valli* strikes.[43] The adivasis joined the *valli* strikes, for a political claim. This political claim was to unite as a class of agrestic labourers. The situation was also conducive for the agrestic labourers of Wayanad when the CPI formed agricultural labourers' union all over Kerala. I would go into a detailed discussion of the agricultural labourers' union of CPI a little later. I want to make it clear here the reason why the adivasis did not make claims on land occupation. The success of the *valli* strike in the 1970s did not help in regaining the autonomy over lands for the adivasis. *Valli* strikes were unlike the twentieth century land occupation struggles, organised under the banner of 'indigeneity.' Steur identified 'indigeneity' as a structural and political claim rather than a culturalist claim. Steur observed that it was the lived experiences of the adivasis of Wayanad that allowed them to occupy the lands of Muthanga under the banner of Adivasi Gothra Maha Sabha (AGMS) in 2003. Steur observed, in one of her essays that by the 2000s, agricultural adivasi communities like the Adiyas and Paniyas were forced to take up seasonal migrant labour in the ginger plantations of Coorg ("An Expanded Class Perspective" 1344). This was a result of the decrease in demands for agricultural labourers due to the higher wages achieved as part of the labour and land reform movements of the 1960s in Kerala (Steur, "An Expanded Class Perspective" 1342). Moreover, the migrants from Travancore began to compete for land ownership. All of these factors led to the increased migrations of the adivasis as 'wage hunters' to the ginger plantations in Kodagu to supplement their income from paddy cultivation.[44] In contrast to this situation of the twenty first century, during the

[43] Personal interview with Kariyan, 20 May, 2018.

[44] Breman, in his study on the migrant workers of the rural South Gujarat, calls the rural proletariat as 'wage hunters' who seasonally migrate to the informal sectors, both agricultural and non- agricultural, away from their home villages in his work on the migrant workers of Gujarat (*Footloose Labour* 222).

1970s and 80s, the labourers were supported by various welfare schemes provided by the government. But such welfare schemes, Steur observed became dysfunctional in the 1990s ("An Expanded Class Perspective" 1343). Thus, by the 1990s, the adivasis were exasperated with their identity as a working class under the Communist party, according to Steur.

Steur's observations could be attributed retrospectively to analyse the Adiya struggles for increased wages during the *coolie* strikes organised under CPI (M). In the 1970s, organising under the banner of agricultural class was very much feasible for the adivasi labourers. Circumstances and requirements of the adivasi agriculturalists were different in the 1970s as Steur observed. Main agenda of the adivasi political struggles during the 1970s had been primarily about freeing themselves from bondage and increasing their wages, whereas by the 1990s, the desire to own a piece of land had become a central preoccupation (Steur, "An Expanded Class Perspective" 1336). Steur's observation makes it clear why the *valli* or *coolie* strike mattered to the Adiya and Paniya labourers during the 1970s. I would argue here that the only viable option for the Adiyas and Paniyas during the 1950s and 60s to reclaim some dignity, was to assert themselves as a class of agricultural workers, united under the banner of the Communist party. The Adiyas and Paniyas believed that the resistance movement would help them build a respectable position within the modern Kerala state.

2.3.2. The Emergence of Adivasis as a Labour Class

As part of the Communist turn in the post- electoral state of Kerala, Kisan Sabhas (Farmer's Unions) and Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU) (Kerala State Agricultural Labourers Union) were formed all over Kerala under the CPI. Ronald. J. Herring, who studied agrarian political economy and agrarian reforms in South Asia, opined that the Communist reforms were made possible with support from the peasant classes. Herring observed that the CPI mobilised the agricultural classes against landlordism, the colonial rule and other oppressive social (112). Main agenda of the peasant organisations, including the Kisan Sabhas and KSKTU was to protect the peasant rights. These unions ought to ensure freedom of the agricultural classes from all forms of exploitations and physical abuses at the work place (Herring 112). Herring further suggested that the agricultural labourers were able to recognise freedom and dignity in their workplace. I agree with Herring here and underline the fact that it was

the freedom and dignity that the adivasi labourers contemplated the most, while joining the peasant organisations of the CPI. One of the earliest peasant organisations under the banner of the CPI is the Kerala State Karshaka Thozhilali Union (KSKTU) of Travancore in 1943. This union organised the praedial slaves of in Travancore. The agrestic labourers of Travancore were mostly from the Dalit castes of Pulayas and Parayas. The Pulayas and Parayas organised under the KSKTU with certain demands. Alex George, who studied intensively on Dalit labour and peasant organisations of Kerala, observed that the demands of the agricultural labourers of Travancore included settling of work accounts without manipulations and an increase in the quantity of paddy which was paid as wages (George A147). George argued that with the establishment of the union, the owners who kept praedial slaves lost interest in the system as the work accounts could no longer be manipulated and the wages given in kind was increased. Thus, the formation of KSKTU led to the termination of feudalism in Travancore. T. K. Oommon, the famous Indian sociologist, in his article on the peasant legislations and mobilizations in Kerala, remarked that the formation of the KSKTU was followed by the formation of the Kisan Sanghs all over Kerala in 1954. Kisan Sanghs demanded the "suspension of all evictions, conferment of ownership rights on those having twelve years possession rights, fixing a ceiling of five acres on family holdings, allotment of forest lands in favour of ryots and laying of a tax of Rs. 3 per acre on lands fetching an annual income of Rs. 100" (Oommon 1575). The agendas put forward by the Kisan Sanghs later became the election manifesto for the Communist party in 1957.

The Communist Party's involvement in the *valli* strikes or wage strikes of agrestic labourers in the 1960s was the first association the party had with the adivasis of Wayanad. Initially, it was the undivided Communist Party that made inroads into the adivasi population in North Wayanad.[45] The responsibilities for organising labourers under the party were given to K. K. Annan, a Kurichya leader from Wayanad and P. R. Warrier, a party worker. As a result, the KSKTU was formed in 1953 in North Wayanad. Johnny suggested that the KSKTU tried to address the issues that the adivasi

[45] By the end of the 1960s, a more radical Naxalite splinter group split apart from the Communist party, which came to be called CPI (ML). CPI (ML) began independent activities among the adivasis of Wayanad.

labourers faced, especially the exploitations from landlord classes (*Wayanad Rekhakal* 171). The main agenda of this peasant organisation was to force the landowners to agree to a Charter of Demands. Johnny observed that "the demands put forwarded by the party was to raise wages of male labourers from two *ser* of grain per day to three *sers* and of female labourers from one *ser* to two" (*Wayanad Rekhakal* 171). There was also an entirely new demand put forward by the organisation. This was to provide the labourers with one rupee per day as wages in cash along with the wages in kind (Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal* 171). Johnny observed that in a meeting organised at Panavally in north Wayanad, adivasi labourers strongly voiced these demands before the *jenmies*. However, according to Kariyan, a CPI (M) activist, the activities of KSKTU in Wayanad were not extensive in the initial years of the 1960s. It was in 1965 that the party decided to reorganise KSKTU in Wayanad. It was around this time that A. Varghese, who joined the CPI (M) as an office secretary of the Karshaka Sangh of Kannur, was called to Wayanad. K. K. Annan, a Kurichya adivasi comrade, specifically asked the party district secretary of Wayanad for Varghese's service. Thus, in 1966, Varghese, a CPI (M) activist was appointed the KSKTU Taluk secretary of North Wayanad.

I would suggest here that the debates regarding the existence of slavery in Wayanad in the Kerala legislative assembly had repercussions in Wayanad as well. The Communist party began to increasingly organise around the adivasi issue in Wayanad in 1965. This happened just after the debates around Panoor's *Keralathile Africa* in the legislative assembly. This was also the time when the adivasis, who were till then silent witnesses of history, began to raise their voices. Studies of adivasi history and ethnography by Hardiman and Shah show that the adivasi resistance could be seen only within a particular historical context when the contradiction between the adivasis and non- adivasis intensified. What the adivasis expected by participating in the *valli* strikes was to claim a dignified existence as peasants or agriculturalists. The adivasis, during the 1960s, did not organise under the banner of indigeneity, nor did they form any religious sects. What was possible then in the 1960s, for the adivasis was to organise under the KSKTU led by CPI (M). It was also a time when the facades under which the landlord classes perpetuated slavery were being uncovered. I would suggest that resisting as a peasant class allowed the Adiyas and Paniyas, in the 1960s, to challenge the unequal power relation that existed between the *labourer* and the landlord. The

adivasis believed that the movement would help them build a respectable position in the new society.

2.3.3. Rebellious Voices of the *Valli* Strikes: P. K. Kalan and A. Varghese

A serious inquiry into the history of the *valli* strikes under the banner of the KSKTU in Wayanad needs to be done here. I venture to do this by focusing on the memoirs of P. K. Kalan, the most famous CPI (M) leader from among the Adiyas of north Wayanad. P. Kalan emerged as an important CPI leader of Northern Wayanad in the 1940s. Later he became CPI (M) local area committee member of Thirunelly and area committee president of Karshaka Thozhilali Union. In 1996, P. Kalan became the block panchayat president of Mananthavady. Moreover, P. Kalan is famous for bringing *gaddika*, the ritual performance of the Adiyas on to the secular stages of Kerala. For his contributions in popularising *gaddika*, P. Kalan was given the chairmanship of the Kerala Folklore Akademi in the period between 2006- 7. P. Kalan's memoir is titled *P. K. Kalan: Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham* (P. K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life*)*. P. Kalan's memoir is edited and compiled by Azeez Tharuvana, who worked extensively on the life and culture of the adivasis of Wayanad. Thus, the work is not a memoir that P. Kalan narrated to the biographer, but it is a compilation of the memories that the interviewers had with Kalan, during his lifetime. Thus, it would be logical to state at the outset that the information regarding Kalan's life is mediated. Same is the case with the newspaper reports that documented Kalan's involvement in the *valli* strikes. However, these are the only sources available to talk about P. Kalan's participation in the *valli* strikes. Moreover, the memoir and the newspaper reports that I use to retrace the life of P. Kalan, his association with A. Varghese and his participation in the *valli* strikes are written from an adivasi perspective. I also want to make it clear that the slave experiences of Kalan proved to be good for the slave labourers from among the Paniyas as well. But no leaders emerged from the Paniya community to author or narrate their slave experiences. I would try to bridge this gap with memories collected from Paniya elders during the fieldwork. An adivasi perspective on *valli* strikes is needed for this chapter. Thus, I attempt here to build a narrative on the *valli* strikes of the 1960s by revisiting memories of adivasi comrades who took part in the movement. These memories are available in the archives and ethnographic data. I have thus adopted the strategy of Sundar and Hardiman who revisited adivasi struggles in the

past, by making use of the archival and ethnographic resources. Revisiting the past struggles from an adivasi perspective thus would unravel the specificities of adivasi resistance. As Shah observed in "Religion and Secular Left," the adivasi resistance could no more be generalised as either anti- imperialist or anti- government.

According to his memoir, P. Kalan was born in 1938 as the eleventh child of Karuthamma and Kolumban, who belonged to the Adiya community (Chelembra 58). Azeez Tharuvana, observed in P. Kalan's memoir that Kalan was born to slave parents. Born to illiterate parents in an adivasi settlement near Mananthavady, P. Kalan was convinced of the necessity of education from his teenage years. P. Kalan's life is crucial to situate the *valli* strikes of Wayanad. This is because P. Kalan had worked as a slave labourer for thirty-five years in Coorg, Tamil Nadu and Wayanad, according to Tharuvana. Tharuvana observed that P. Kalan had learnt the languages of Kannada, Koorgi and Tamil, quite early in his adolescence, while he worked as a slave under the *jenmies* there ("Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 5). P. Kalan narrated to Tharuvana, the circumstances of the slaves during the 1940s, in the form of a short song: "Ayyantadiyan nangale/ Mammuttantadiyan nangale/ Mantal adiyan nangale/ Chettintadiyan nangale/ neettintadiyan naangale…" (We are slaves of the gods, landlords, hills, fields and streams…) ("Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 5). This song quintessentially revealed the situation of total unfreedom in which the Adiyas lived.

P. Kalan observed that the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival was in fact a centre of slave transactions. Thus, long years of slavery and subordination convinced P. Kalan to strive for the upliftment of the Adiya community. P. Kalan did not shy away from the fact that his identity is very much related to slavery and feudalism in Wayanad. P. Kalan described in detail to his interviewers about the distressful conditions of *vallippanikkars* or *valli* slaves. Valliyoorkkavu temple and the slave market related to the temple festival had till then been in the public attention only through the descriptions of Panoor. However, P. Kalan's memories of slavery for the first time brought into the public attention, an adivasi perspective on the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival and the slave transactions at this site. P. Kalan observed that the slave life of an Adiya and Paniya man began at the site of Valliyoorkkavu temple festival. P. Kalan's ancestors, who were bought by the landlords at Valliyoorkkavu, were destined to serve a single master until death. P. Kalan's immediate ancestors were also slaves who were

exchanged at Valliyoorkkavu temple. The conditions under which a *jenmi* bought a slave, is explained by P. Kalan in his memoir. P. Kalan observed that the Adiyas were bought as slaves for a period of one year, that is, until the next temple festival at Valliyoorkkavu (Tharuvana, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 6). P. Kalan's words are a powerful source that revealed the memories of slave trade that existed in Kerala during the 1940s and 50s. P. Kalan observed that they would go to the temple premises along with their *mooppans* or chieftains as soon as the festival began.

> The Adiyas would wait for the *jenmis* there, on a mat stretched on the floor. The *jenmis,* as soon as they arrived, would give a thorough examination of each Adiya, noting down their physique and muscular bodies. Finally, if they were satisfied with a slave's appearance, the *jenmis* would ask the Adiyas to follow him. The chosen labourers had to go with different *jenmis*. In this process, families got separated: husbands from wives and children from their parents. The *jenmis* would fix a deal with the *mooppan*, on the price that each slave fetched. The Adiyas, who were sold thus, had to go with the *jenmis* taking an advance of a maximum of 50 rupees. (Tharuvana, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 6)

P. Kalan observed that even the cattle fetched more than this money in a market. Thus, the human exchange at the Valliyoorkkavu temple had all the characteristics of a modern slave market in the Europe as observed earlier. Humans are reduced to their bodies. The physique of an Adiya determined the price that he would fetch from the *jenmi*. Moreover, the hegemony of the landlord- slave relation is reiterated by the role that the chieftain played. The Adiya chieftain was the middleman who eased the slave exchange. Even an Adiya chieftain is coerced to be part of the slave transaction. Moreover, determining price for a slave based on their physique, completely denuded them of their identity. Thus, all the Adiyas, including the chieftain, were expendable commodities for the landlords. Valliyoorkkavu temple festival was thus a modern market. It was not simply clothes, utensils and bangles that were transacted here. This was the site where the landlords 'recruited' their labourers for an agricultural year. Moreover, there was no escape from this bondage. P. Kalan observed in an interview given to the daily *Malayala Manorama* in 1998 that that the *valli* labourer could work for another *jenmi* the next year if he wished to do so. But the debt never ended as the

new *jenmi* would settle the debts with the old *jenmi*. The Adiyas and Paniyas now had a new *jenmi* to be indebted to (P. Kalan 20).

The labourer's life after the exchange is pathetic, observed P. Kalan. There would be fifty or sixty slaves under one *jenmi*. P. Kalan narrated to Tharuvana that even after accompanying a *jenmi* to his field, the Adiyas could never stay at a permanent place. He observed that the *jenmis* never allowed the slaves to build huts inside the premises of the *jenmi's* bungalow: "The *jenmi* would designate us to inhabit a piece of infertile forestland in the beginning. With all our efforts, we would convert the infertile land to arable land by planting plantain, coconut and jack trees. Then the *jenmi* would come and ask us to shift to another infertile place where we again had to work hard to convert it into arable lands" (qtd. in. Tharuvana, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 6). Thus, P. Kalan's description of the way in which the *jenmis* treated them, revealed that *jenmi* would keep on displacing the labourers. This way, the landed property of the *jenmi* also expanded. Thus, I would suggest here that the *jenmis* of Wayanad took all precautions not to include the adivasi slaves under any protection provided by the Malabar Tenancy Law. With the frequent displacements of the Adiya slaves, they were divested of the right to claim any protection under the Malabar Tenancy Law as observed earlier. P. Kalan observed that he worked under landlords from Wayanad including Shulapani Warrier and Rama Warrier from Kulirmavu, Ananthan Cambondar from Plamoola, Parameswara Iyyer from Chiramoola, Agastyan from Narippatta and Ambu Iyer Swami from Kaithavally. At Coorg, he worked under Mathu Kodagan, and in Tamil Nadu, he worked under Appayya Pattar from Edappadi (Tharuvana, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 7). Tharuvana depended on an interview given by P. Kalan in 2011 to a Malayalam journal called *Vijnana Kairali* for the details of a work day in the life of Adiya slaves.

> P. Kalan observed that the Adiyas had to reach the field in the early morning. Each labourer had to be strictly present on the fields and minor illness should not avert them from coming to the fields. They had to start ploughing the field and it continued till 12 in the noon. By 12' o clock, men would be given two *sers* of paddy and women would be given one *ser*. The slaves would unhusk this paddy at their huts and they would cook gruel. After lunch, they would have to either go back to the fields or to the hills to clear forest. The slaves would

> continue their labour until darkness spread. The slaves would go back to their huts and have the leftover food from noon. (Tharuvana, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 7)

P. Kalan also pointed that the slaves had to often work on empty stomach in the morning. The paddy that they got from the *jenmis* were not enough to meet the needs of an entire family. The Adiya labourers often starved and the *jenmis* threw abuses at them if they were a little late to the fields. Descriptions of the work circumstances at the paddy fields reveal that the Adiyas were treated similar to cattle. And the benefits enjoyed by the slaves were nothing more than what was enjoyed by the cattle. I would here point out that the parallels that the colonial administrators drew between plantation slaves and the *valli* labourers were apt. The Adiya slaves were depleted of their honour and dignity on the paddy fields. The ways in which slavery became so indispensable a part of the lives of the Adiyas is clear through P. Kalan's words. P. Kalan observed that the biological clock was set in accordance with the slave labour. P. Kalan remarked that the slaves had no sense of time outside slavery. When the slaves felt hungry, it was noon, when the crows crowed, it was evening, and when the crows crowed again, it was dawn (Tharuvana, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 7).

P. Kalan in an interview given to Soman Kadaloor in his memoir, described the plight of the Adiyas during the festival seasons like Onam and Vishu. While Vishu marked the beginning of an agricultural cycle in Kerala, Onam was the festival of prosperity. Onam is celebrated in the Malayalam month of *Chingom* (which falls between mid-August and mid-September) and it was the time when harvests happened. Both these festivals were celebrated in the landlord houses with gaiety. However, the plight of the slave labourers remained the same except for the advancement of paddy. However, again this advance payment of paddy bonded the labourer to the same landlord. P. Kalan observed that the days immediately before Onam would be a time of added hardship to the slaves. The labourers had to then start working in the field from four in the early morning. The fields on which P. Kalan worked belonged to the landlord houses of Chekkot and Mooryad. The fields stretched beyond one's eyes could reach as most of the landlords owned more than hundred acres. P. Kalan described how the festival of Onam reassured the slave status of the Adiyas. A family would get an advance of four days wages, which meant a family got almost twelve sers of paddy (8 *sers* to the husband and four *sers* to the wife). P. Kalan observed in one of his

interviews that the labourers would get incentives called *kundalakkarikkan* for Onam and Vishu (P. Kalan 134). *Kundalakkarikkan* included coconut oil, chilly, salt, coconut, and a new *mundu* (a piece of cloth used to wrap around the waist). Some *jenmies* would give betel leaves and areca nuts as well (Kadaloor 67). But, the purpose of *kundalakkarikan* was to make sure that the labourer remained bonded for another year to the *jenmi*.

Given the slavery and bondedness in which the Adiyas lived, the CPI (M)s attempts at organising the peasants as a class at regional levels, during the 1960s, found results in Wayanad. P. Kalan was largely influenced by the Communist party ideals from his adolescent years. D. D. Namboothiri and Vinod Krishnan, in a short essay written on P. Kalan's involvement in the Communist party, observed that his association with the party began in the 1950s (Namboothiri and Krishnan 30). P. Kalan strongly believed that changes in the situation of the Adiyas would be possible only through the Communist party initiatives. P. Kalan had been a rebel within his community, Namboothiri and Krishnan observed. He wanted to become a *mooppan* or chieftain of his community, so that he could reform the community (Namboothiri and Krishnan 30). According to Kariyan, the late *Gaddika*, P. Kalan later became an Adiya chieftain of Kaithavally Adiya colony, in Thrissilery.[46] I would say that P. Kalan radically changed the political and sacred lives of the Adiyas. Politically, P. Kalan got associated with KSKTU in the 1960s and led *valli* strikes to free the Adiyas from bondedness. As an Adiya chieftain, he secularised *gaddika*, the ritual practice of the Adiyas. P. Kalan brought *gaddika* ritual to the public stages as an art form and asserted it as a medium that conveyed Adiya identity. I would delve into the details of P. Kalan, as a *gaddika* artist, in the next chapter. In this chapter, I limit my discussion on his role as an active member of KSKTU. I would enrich the history of the *valli* strike with contributions from other adivasi comrades who were also part of the *valli* strikes. As Sundar observed, it is only the multiplicity of local narratives and memories that would help one to understand the resistance movement from an adivasi perspective. I would try to focus on the local narratives as opposed to some of the grand narratives to bring the adivasi voice to the forefront. For instance, the grand narrative of Naxal history by Ajitha and Bijuraj identified that the adivasis deserted the Communist party to join

[46] Personal interview with Kariyan, 20 May, 2018.

Naxalism (Ajitha 61; Bijuraj, *Naxal Dinangal* 126). Thettamala Krishnankutty, a former Naxalite, observed in his autobiography, which was serialised in the *Madhyamam Weekly* that it was the failure of Communist party to address the adivasi issues that led to the mass desertion of CPI (M) by the adivasis. C. K. Janu, an Adiya leader of land struggles, in her biography argued that the Communist party saw the adivasis simply as vote banks (Bhaskaran 34). However, the multiplicity of local adivasi narratives observed that the adivasis found *valli* strikes led by KSKTU as victory against landlordism.

P. Kalan remarked that his earliest associations with the Communist party began during his acquaintance with literacy mission groups which came to the adivasi hamlets of Wayanad. Most of them were communists who made aware of the adivasis about a classless society. P. Kalan was fascinated by the stories about Russia, where all the citizens were treated equally. He was immensely influenced by the policy of welfarism advocated by the communist party (Namboothiri and Krishnan 30). By the 1960s, P. Kalan became a close associate of A. Varghese, who was appointed as the Taluk secretary of KSKTU in Wayanad. Varghese, along with P. Kalan organised adivasi labourers in Thrissilery, Thirunelly, Kattikulam and Panavally areas of North Wayanad. *Valli* strike or coolie strike, under KSKTU of the 1960s, organised the adivasi agricultural labourers including the Adiyas and Paniyas to demand for increased wages. The adivasis also demanded wages in cash.

P. Kalan's memories were vivid when he talked about the *valli* strikes organised by Varghese. Main sites where P. Kalan and Varghese organised *valli* strikes were landlord houses including the residence of Kalan's own landlord (Namboothiri and Krishnan 31). According to Bijuraj, *Valli* strikes were organised at the houses of Venkitachala Aiyer, Shoolapani Warrier and Vasudeva Adiga, who were the landlords in Wayanad (*Naxal Dinangal* 128). P. Kalan narrated his involvement in the *valli* strikes on the paddy fields at Thrissilery to Kadaloor in his memoir. He observed that the *valli* strikes put pressure on the landlords as the labourers refrained from working on the fields till their demands were met. In an interview given to P. Damodaran, P. J. Joshua and Sebastian Joseph for the daily *Malayala Manorama*, P. Kalan observed that the main tool of resistance in *valli* strike was 'non- cooperation' by the adivasis: "We refrained from tilling the lands, planting the saplings and sowing the seeds. All forms of

agricultural activities were brought to a halt" (P. Kalan 20). In the same interview, P. Kalan observed that the *valli* strikes helped in raising the wages of the labourers from three *manam* (one and half litres) paddy to four (two and half litres) for men and from two (one litre) *manam* paddy to three for women per day (20). In one of the interviews given to Soman Kadaloor, P. Kalan observed that he along with Varghese spoke against the hoax that the *jenmis* played with the *valli* or *kolagam. Valli* was a bamboo cup that was used to measure the daily wages (Kadaloor 71).

Along with P. Kalan's memories on *valli* strikes, I would also discuss here the memories of other adivasi comrades who took part in the movement. Sebastian Joseph, a journalist from Kerala, in his historical account of the resistance movements led by Varghese in Wayanad, observed that there were other Adiya comrades who took part in the *valli* strikes along with P. Kalan. They were Choman, Batti, Goni, M. P. Kalan, P. K. Kariyan, Marachathan, Chambaran and Koriyan (Joseph 184). I would revisit the memories of some of these Adiya comrades regarding the *valli* strikes to get a clearer picture. Kariyan, from the Kaithavally Adiya colony in Thrissilery, observed that the adivasis took part in the *valli* strike with two- fold interests- the first was to ask for increased *valli* given as wages to a labourer per day and the second one was to do away with the bamboo cups that were used by the landlords to measure the daily *valli* to the labourers.[47] Kariyan, who was also part of the *valli* strikes in the 1960s recollected the contributions made by P. Kalan and Varghese in introducing standard litres for measuring daily wages. Kariyan, in a personal interview with me, observed that the labourers often received lesser amounts of grain as the inside of the bamboo cups were convex. Adiyas asked for the use of standard litres instead of the bamboo *valli* to measure the daily wages. Thus, the *jenmies* began to use standardised litre for measuring paddy. According to Kariyan, this measurement cup later came to be known as 'Varghese litre.' Kariyan recalled about the situation of the Adiyas during the 1960s and 70s in an interview which appeared in *Madhyamam* weekly in 2004. The Adiyas and Paniyas, according to Kariyan, were treated as cattle. Kariyan observed that one of the aims of the *valli* strikes led by the adivasis was to make the state government aware of the situation of the adivasis. Kariyan suggested that during the pre- independence days, the labourer had to serve the *jenmi* for his entire life. In the modern state of

[47] Personal interview with Kariyan, 20 May, 2018.

Kerala, the only difference that Kariyan found was that the contract between the *jenmi* and the labourer got renewed every year. Kariyan observed in this interview: "Some of the names of our comrades might sound strange to the more developed Malayali public sphere. The food that the non- adivasis consume daily, including rice, tea and coffee and the cash crops like black pepper smelt of the adivasi sweat" ("Njangalkk"). Kariyan wanted the government to recognise that a group of agriculturalists were bonded in Wayanad in the twentieth century.

Goni and Batti, two Adiya adivasi comrades from Varinilam colony at Thrissilery, who took part in the *valli* strikes of the 1960s talked about the *valli* strike in their interviews given to N. S. Nissar. The *valli* strikes reinstituted human dignity for the Adiya labourers (Goni 19; Batti 15). Goni added that after the *valli* strikes, the *jenmies* no longer treated the adivasis as slaves (18). Choman memoirs of his close connections with Varghese revealed details that were not registered in mainstream history. Choman, from Varinilam Adiya colony, started his political career as a KSKTU member. He later joined the splinter group CPI (ML) by the end of 1960s, along with Varghese. In a piece that appeared in *Madhyamam* weekly, published in 2006, Choman gave an interesting anecdote on the situations that led to the beginning of the *valli* strikes in North Wayanad. According to Choman, the strikes began with the collective decision of the adivasis to beat one of the landlords called Chalippalli Kunjirama Warrier. An infuriated Kunjirama Warrier had beaten Choman's brother Chaman. As a fitting response, the adivasis, including Choman, decided to beat Warrier. This was followed by labour strikes all over north Wayanad and the adivasis did not appear for work on the paddy fields for days. The adivasis asked for better wages and better treatment on the fields. The adivasi women hindered the landlords' wives who decided to sow and harvest the crops themselves (Choman 42). Similarly, Karunan, a Paniya elder from Kavu colony, near Valliyoorkkavu, shared with me, his experiences of taking part in the *valli* strikes in the mid-1960s.[48] Karunan opined that *valli* strikes occurred at a significant moment when the adivasis became aware of self- worth, honour and dignity. Karunan, who took part in the *valli* strikes by the end of 1960s, opined that the strikes were crucial in building self- respect for the adivasi agriculturalists. raising the coolies in kind: "The picketing in front of the houses of the *jenmies* during the 1960s

[48] Personal interview with Karunan, 24 March, 2021.

raised the amount of grain which was given as coolie from three ounces to six ounces a day" (Karunan). For Karunan, the shift in rule from the colonial administration to the Communist led ministry of E. M. S. Nampoothiripad in 1957 was a crucial moment for the adivasi labourers in Wayanad. Karunan observed that the shift in rule from the colonial administration to the Communist led ministry in 1956 was a game changer for the adivasi labourers in Wayanad. Landlordism was abolished and the condition of the labourer-adivasi women improved, with the new peasant organisation. The women labourers suffered exploitation from the landlord, both physically and sexually. The *jenmi* made sure that the women worked with naked breasts on the fields and the outer courtyards of his place, recollected Karunan. This situation changed during the 1950s with the democratically elected government under the Communists. The women had to suffer less and they began to cover their bodies while working on the fields (Karunan). As Sundar observed in her re-reading of the *Bhumkal* rebellion of 1910, the actual participants of the resistance movements had different stories to tell, as opposed to the recorded history. The *valli* strikes were seen as a failure by mainstream historians in Kerala.[49] The reason for this argument was the interference of the Naxalites in the adivasi cause during the 1970s. The Naxalite movement, in turn, was muzzled by the state government in the 1970s. The disappearance of the Naxalite faction in Kerala, could not be attributed as a rationale for the failure of the *valli* strikes. I find here the memories of adivasis who actually took part in the strikes more useful. Multiplicity of memories revealed different dimensions of adivasi involvement in the communist party. Choman and Karunan observed that adivasi unification under the KSKTU gave results when the issue of bondedness came out to the public sphere of Kerala. M. Kalan, another comrade who took part in the *valli* strikes along with Varghese, opined that *valli* strikes enlightened the agricultural labourers like Adiyas and Paniyas of their rights.[50] M. Kalan belonged to Kundu Chekkot Adiya colony in Thrissilery. This struggle according to M. Kalan was to abolish the *kundal* slavery and to demand for wages in cash rather than in kind.[51] The strike was a success, according to M. Kalan, "The coolie was raised to four litres of paddy and fifty paisa per day. Coolie was further raised to

[49] See Bijuraj, *Naxal Dinangal*; Joseph and Ajeesh.

[50] Personal interview with M. Kalan, 28 March, 2021.

[51] *Kundal* refers to the grain advanced from a *jenmi* for a year by an adivasi labourer. Usually, this advance measured 36 kgs of grain approximately.

ten rupees and then to fifteen rupees." Wages in kind were done away with. M. Kalan further observed that the *valli* strike reversed the power- structure that existed between the landlord and the slave.

Most of the Adiyas who took part in the *valli* strikes observed that these strikes led by KSKTU gave the adivasis the power to challenge the hegemony exerted by landlords. Moreover, anchoring my discussions on *valli* strike with diverse memories allowed me to argue that dissent was possible for the adivasis from within an established political party in the 1950s and 60s. Thus, organising as a peasant class gave the Adiyas an opportunity to claim equality and dignity as agriculturalists. Moreover, this was the time when the adivasis themselves began to identify themselves as agriculturalists. I agree with P. Kalan here, to argue that the *valli* strikes reminded the adivasis that paddy cultivation would greatly be affected if the *valli* labourers refrained from going to the fields. The *jenmi* would then be at a loss. Moreover, I would add that the KSKTU and *valli* strikes, for the first time, gave the adivasis, a channel to loudly claim that their situation was bonded. Moreover, the adivasis wanted the political front and the state government to look into the matter. The political arena of Kerala was by then replete with discussions regarding land reformation policies and welfarism for the tenants. Through the *valli* strikes, the adivasis wanted the government to look into their issue. The adivasis wanted themselves to be free wage labourers, if not land owners with the reformation policies. Moreover, they wanted protection from exploitation at the workplace. Thus, I would suggest that the *valli* strikes was the crucial moment when the adivasi agrestic labourers broke themselves free from the discourse of slavery attributed to them. *Valli* strikes of the 1960s became a moment when the adivasis began to be identified as peasants/ agriculturalists and not simply as slaves. The KSKTU redefined adivasis in the modern state of Kerala as agriculturalists. In the next section, I would discuss the ways in which the successive ruling governments responded to the *valli* strikes of the 1960s. I would suggest in the coming section that the ruling fronts implemented legislative measures as a solution to the issue of bondedness among the Adiyas and Paniyas.

2.3.4. The *Valli* Strikes and After: The Land Reformation Bill and The Abolition of Bonded Labour

The *valli* strikes of the latter decades of the 1960s were met with success not only in terms of a reversal in the power structures in Wayanad. The *valli* strikes also led to various amendments to the Land Reformation Bill, which was first introduced by the CPI ministry in 1957. Koran wanted to establish the fact that slavery existed in modern Kerala before the ruling Congress front in 1963. However, the ruling MLAs were reluctant to consider this accusation made by Koran. The intention of Koran to bring the issue of slavery to the legislative assembly was to widen the scope of the Land Reformation Bill. The opposition parties, including the communist MLAs argued that the land reformation bill as it existed in 1963 did not benefit the lowest strata of agriculturalists. I have already mentioned that in the legislative assembly proceedings of 1963, opposition leaders like K. R. Gouri and Baby John argued that the land reformation bill as it was in 1963 could be called the "Land Owners Protection Act." Gouri and Baby John found that the bill protected the rights of the landowners rather than the actual cultivators. Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, in their study on property ownership among the highland communities, in fact observed that the Land Reformation Act that came out in 1963 gave provisions for tenants to own lands. Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam argued that the implementation of land reforms only led to unequal distribution of land resources. The Kerala Land Reformation Act conferred ownership rights to those settlers who held *jenmi* lands on various tenancies. However, the Land Reformation Act made these tenants owners of the lands they cultivated.

However, some of these tenants, observed Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, had leased lands from the adivasis like Kurumas, Kurichyas, Paniyas and Kattunaickas, on oral agreements (1243). With the fixity of tenures that happened in 1963, the adivasis lost their lands completely. The Land Reformation Act also protected permanent hutments. However, some adivasis like Paniyas who lived as dwellers on the edges of landlord's field could not go through the cumbersome procedures involved. Moreover, the relative lack of literacy and poverty of the adivasis did not allow them to apply for ownership titles. Those adivasis who applied for such titles were not given the titles as the state claimed that these people lived and cultivated in the reserve forests. If at all some adivasis managed to get ownership titles on some lands, they were forcibly ousted

by the *jenmies*: "They [*the adivasis of Wayanad*] were threatened and harassed in various ways to leave the land. Many were thus forced to leave thereby relinquishing their rights to the land and the hut" (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 1243). Therefore, after so many discussions around the practicality of reaching the lowest strata of agriculturalists, the Land Reformation Bill got assent from the president in 1964. However, this bill could not be implemented by the Sankar ministry. It took another five years for the bill to become the Kerala Land Reforms (amendment) Act in 1969, under the CPI ministry, led by C. Achutha Menon.

However, the Land Reformation Bill, introduced by the CPI and the Kerala Land Reforms Act of 1969 were criticised for its inability to reach out to the tillers and the poor farmers. For instance, K. K. Kochu, a Dalit scholar from Kerala, in his autobiography, notes that the land reformation policies, did not benefit the lowest strata of agriculturalists, including the Dalits and the adivasis. For instance, in Kochu's village called Madhuraveli, in Kottayam district, there were a lot of Pulayas who were *kudikidappukars.* They were coolie labourers and not *kudians*. These *kudikidappukars* lived on the edges of the cultivating fields (Kochu 68). Kochu observed that most of the Pulaya labourers were not tenants who took the lands on lease from the landlords. Kochu thus notes that the real issue that the state governments should address was that of the *coolie* labourers who were the actual tillers of the land. Kochu argued that the land reformation policies of the 1960s did not help the poor agricultural adivasi communities of Wayanad as well. Kochu observed that the most deprived of the labourers from among the adivasi communities were the Paniyas and Naickans. Some of them possessed lands that they considered their own. However, they did not possess documents of possession called *pattoms* or *adharams* (Kochu 136). Taking advantage of their ignorance, the migrants often acquired possession rights from the adivasis by obtaining fingerprints on revenue stamps. The adivasis were often unaware of the terms and conditions of the transfer of these lands. They often received meagre returns for the sale of their lands. But the documents of transfer showed bigger amounts. None of the political parties were interested in looking at the issues of the adivasis as they feared that they would lose support from the migrants, who formed a formidable voting majority. Thus, the adivasi cultivators did not benefit much from the land reformation policies. The adivasis were perceived as landlords whereas the settlers became tenants.

And the land ownership of the tenants got regularised, whereas the adivasis lost the available lands for cultivation.

I want to suggest here that since most of the lands got alienated from the adivasis (as a result of colonial state formation and the inefficiency of the land reformation policies of the state government), the *valli* strikes were the only way that the adivasis could resort to. Kariyan made it clear that the Adiyas had already lost lands for independent cultivation practices. The only way to negotiate with an economy that was fast becoming market oriented was to become free wage labourers in wetland cultivation. The *valli* strike was the only way out then. Archana Prasad argued that the adivasi memories and imagination should not be interpreted as an attempt by the adivasis to go back to the forests. Thus, the *valli* strike was a political stand for the adivasis in the 1960s. The purpose of the *valli* strikes was never to claim a return back to forests or to reclaim the lost lands for shifting cultivation practices. Rather, the Adiyas and Paniyas, through the *valli* strikes, openly discussed about slave transactions at Valliyoorkkavu. They wanted to do away with the bondedness that came with the customary practices of receiving *nippupanam* and *kundalkarikkan*. In other words, they wanted to gain more visibility to their bondedness in modern Kerala. The Adiyas and Paniyas wanted to establish their status as free wage labourers. The only way forward for them was to insist the state government to pass ordinances that would abolish bondedness among them. What is significant to observe here is that the *valli* strikes forced the government of Kerala to pass the Kerala Land Reforms Act in 1969.

Another important phase of legislation regarding the issue of slavery among the adivasis of Wayanad was the implementation of the Bonded Labour System Abolition Act by the state government in 1975. The BLSA 1975 was introduced during the second tenure of CPI led Achutha Menon government. The BLSA Bill sought to abolish bonded labour which was prevalent in the districts of Malappuram, Kozhikode and Cannanore (Kannur) in the state of Kerala. According to this bill, bonded labour was defined particularly in relation to slave labour that the adivasis were subjected to in Wayanad.[52] Bonded labour is defined in this bill as that which "consists in the payment

[52] The district of Wayanad was formed by carving out areas from the districts of Kozhikode and Kannur, in 1980.

of cash called *Vallurkavu panam* (the money advanced by the adivasis during the annual festival of Valliyoorkkavu temple from a landlord) or *nippupanam*…by one person (hereinafter called the creditor) to a person belonging to a Scheduled tribe (hereinafter called the debtor)" (BLSA 1975 171). The act says that this advance of money by the debtor would be evidenced either through oral agreements or in writing. By the advance of *nippupanam*, the debtor, along with his family became indebted to the creditor. This indebtment meant the debtor had to render labour for the creditor during a specified time. The labourer would be given wages or no wages at all. Moreover, if the debtor failed to render the service, he/ she was bound to repay the cash advanced. They should also vacate the huts in the creditor's property if any were occupied by them (BLSA 1975 171- 172).

I would suggest that this act, which abolished bonded labour in Malabar is an important landmark in the history of adivasi agrestic slavery. I have already discussed the role of the colonial regime in consolidating adivasi labour as slavery in the nineteenth century. It took almost fifteen years; after the departure of colonial rule; for the rulers of the democratic Kerala to totally abolish bondage among the adivasis of Malabar. The very fact that the CPI ministry of 1975 was forced to pass a bill that would abolish bonded labour implied one thing. Local forms of slave labour in Malabar did not disappear with the formation of modern Kerala state in 1957. I would agree here with Tanika Sarkar, who observed that slavery and bondage could hardly be seen as two separate categories in India. Sarkar rightly pointed out that debt bondage became a disguised continuation of slavery after its abolition in colonial India (Sarkar 102). Thus, the adivasi slavery which went uninterrupted in the post abolitionist colonial phase, transformed smoothly into the post- electoral Kerala state as well. The definition of bonded labour around the practice of *valloor panam* or *nippupanam* is significant. Valliyoorkkavu temple, the advancement of *valloor panam* and the subsequent bondage of the adivasis got visibility in the post- electoral Kerala state through a legal enactment. This meant that the government acknowledged the experiential realms of bondedness of the Adiyas and Paniyas in modern Kerala. Acknowledging the existence of slavery among adivasis in Wayanad was but made possible with the *valli* strikes of the 1960s that brought to light the local system of bondage. Thus, I would conclude this section by arguing that the *valli* strikes of the 1960s were crucial in the implementation of the BLSA in 1975. However, I would also like to alert the readers to the fact that the state

tried to address the problem of slavery by redefining the identity of the *valli* labourers as 'bonded labourers.' The state tried to solve the issue of slavery by means of legislative measures. However, the 1960s and 70s was also the time when the Adiyas and Paniyas tried to imagine their identities as cultivators/ agricultural labourers.

In this chapter, I attempted to trace the historical moments of transformation in the discourse around the agrestic slaves of Wayanad. The colonial discourse regarding the adivasis already constructed an image of the adivasi as a 'slave.' Adivasi agrestic bondage was paralleled to plantation slavery by the colonial administration. The prices with which the slaves were sold, the corporal punishments they endured and the natal alienations the slaves suffered were the main focus of the colonial reports. However, in the post- colonial state, the aspect of debt- bondage became the main focal point. The customary bonded practice of *vallippani* that began with the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival became a topic of discussion in the mainstream with the publication of Panoor's *Keralathile Africa*. The issue of slave transactions and the bonded labour thereafter became a debated issue in the Kerala legislative assembly. The context of these discussions around adivasi slavery was the implementation of land reformation policies instituted by the CPI ministry in 1957. The welfare policies that the Namboothiripad government introduced were mainly aimed at benefiting the agriculturalists as a labour class. However, as Panoor observed in *Keralathile Africa*, the Adiyas and Paniyas remained as *valli* labourers/ slaves, even during the 1960s.

The discussions and debates around slavery in Wayanad in the legislative assembly had reverberations in Wayanad. The result was the *valli* strikes of the 1960s, led by the adivasis. The adivasis for the first time, raised their voice against exploitations under the aegis of the KSKTU. *Valli* strike was the way forward for the adivasis in the 1960s, when globalisation had not yet reached Kerala. *Valli* labourers still had jobs in the wetland cultivation of Wayanad. Their political claim was to ask for increased wages and freedom from customary bondages. The *valli* strike saw results and the adivasis became an organised class of peasants in the 1960s. The adivasis imagined themselves as an agriculturalist class as opposed to the colonial image of the adivasi as a 'slave.' As a consequence, the political parties who ruled Kerala took steps to abolish the systems of bondages in Wayanad by the introduction of the BLSA Act in 1975. Thus, I have tried to trace some of the milestones in post- electoral Kerala that led to a

shift in the conceptualisation of the Adiyas and Paniyas. Slavery reappeared as a concept to think of the conditions of Adiyas and Paniyas in the twentieth century. It appeared in the form of a debate in the assembly around *Keralathile Africa*. Thereby, legal domains identified the adivasis as 'bonded labourers' post *valli* strikes in Kerala. Since bonded labour was abolished, the Adiyas and Paniyas appeared as free labourers/ agriculturalists with dignity in the contemporary times.

I have already discussed in this chapter that the memories of *valli* strikes provided the Adiyas alternative ways to imagine themselves as free labourers. There is more to this discourse of adivasi memory, which imagined spaces of freedom and liberation. I will take up this discussion in the next chapter. The next chapter is a discussion on the cultural memories of the Adiyas to see how they deal with the slave/ bonded experiences at different phases in history. I would therefore make a shift from the historical narratives to ethno- historic narratives in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Imagining the *Uchronic* Spaces of Equality: The Cultural Realm of Myths and Ritual Performances of the Adiyas

Adivasi culture and traditions of Wayanad were documented by various historians/ anthropologists in the post- independent times. It has already been mentioned that the colonial historiography highlighted the slave status of the *valli* labourers. Moreover, colonial discourse constructed the *valli* labourers as uncivilised. In the post-independent Kerala, the *valli* labourers began to be described as 'bonded labourers' and thereby recognised as exploited communities. However, in the post- independent times, there began a renewed interest in the culture and traditions of the adivasis of Wayanad. Numerous socio- anthropological works came out in the twentieth century that tried to explain the traditions and rituals of the adivasis. However, most of these works were about the Paniyas. Studies in the culture and traditions of the Adiyas were scant. The earliest post- colonial references to the life of Adiyas is found in Panoor's *Keralathile Africa.* However, Panoor's description of the Adiyas had limitations as the book was written from an administrator's perspective. He could highlight only those aspects of the Adiya life which were deplorable and therefore to be improved. He also had a civilizational agenda to bring the Adiyas under the welfare policies of the state government through this book.[53] However, the adivasi perspective on their cultural history was lost in Panoor's work. However, in the 1980s and 90s, K.J. Baby, a prominent dramatist and novelist based in Wayanad, made important contributions to the Adiya orality and history through his drama *Nadugaddika* (1983) and novel *Mavelimanram* (1991). Baby used the Adiya mythical history and memories to create literary works with Adiyas as the chief characters. Baby's work was significant for the reason that he built slave narratives, adapting from the memories of the Adiyas.

I would suggest here that Panoor and Baby stood at two poles in creating representative discourses about the Adiyas. Panoor called attention to the exploited condition of the Adiyas and presented them as people without agency. Baby pointed at

[53] Panoor's other works including *Ente Hridayathile Adivasi* (2005) and *Keralathile America* (2005) also depicted the adivasi as a figure who was exploited.

the power of the rich orality of the community in creating alternative histories. Though numerous works have come out pointing to the subjugated status of the Adiyas, there were hardly any works that came out discussing the memories of Adiyas after Baby. For instance, socio- anthropologists from Kerala like C. K. Karunakaran and Santha Thulasidharan published comprehensive studies on the adivasi culture in Kerala. However, these socio- anthropologists limited their descriptions to the dressing style, eating habits, birth, death and marriage rituals of the Adiyas. Adiyas just became one entry among other adivasi communities in such works. Moreover, these works accentuated the fact that the Adiyas were bonded as *vallippanikkars* (Karunakaran 19; Thulasidharan 26). Such works that dealt exclusively with the traditions and rituals of the Adiyas reiterated the image of the adivasi as an outsider to the modern state formations. Manoj Mathirappally, a researcher in the cultural traditions of the adivasis looked at various art forms of adivasis across Kerala. In his work on the culture and art forms of adivasis in Kerala, Mathirappally made reference to *gaddika* as the propitiation ritual of the Adiyas (Mathirappally 70). However, in his attempt to cover a large number of ritualistic traditions of the entire adivasi communities in Kerala, Mathirappally failed to give *gaddika* the importance it deserved. I would say that, in the above-mentioned texts of social and cultural anthropology the Adiya is described as an ahistorical entity. Moreover, these works gave the impression that the Adiyas did not have any historical sense.

Therefore, in this chapter, I would attempt to present the Adiyas as people with a historical sense and agency. My methodology in doing this is to revisit the memories of Adiya slavery in their myths and rituals. These realms were till now exoticised by sociologists and anthropologists. I would also try to connect the mythical memories of the Adiyas with their memories of certain cultural sites of exploitation. My objective in doing this is to argue that the mythical history and memories of the adivasis do not stand outside modernity. The Adiyas invented a mythical method to negotiate with the historical subjugations and even to resist such hegemonic assertions upon Adiya agency. I have divided this chapter into broadly two sections. In the first section titled ‘Subaltern Myth and Memory: Cultural Histories of the Agrestic Slaves,’ I would discuss certain works on memorising slavery. Cultural historians and sociologists have discussed the importance of memory and orality for the subaltern communities to remember their history. Paul Gilroy and Saidiya Hartman talked about memory as a tool

for the plantations slaves to construct alternative histories. Such histories would oppose the grand narratives of modernity that imagined the plantation slave as a primitive who was to be civilized. Hartman identified certain cultural scenes of subjection where the slaves were dehumanised in the nineteenth century Europe. Thus, Hartman argued that modernity could not extricate itself of the responsibility of slave labour. Gilroy also made a similar argument. What is however more significant for me is the potentials of slave memories to offer resistance from within the system of subjugation. Both Gilroy and Hartman suggested that the slave memories were transformed into popular culture in the nineteenth century. Thus, popular culture became a site of resistance for the black diaspora. Similarly, Sanal Mohan discussed the importance of Dalits memorising slavery in the 1900s. Mohan studied a Dalit countercultural movement called PRDS in Kerala which reinvented the history of slave communities as part of the history of modernity as well. PRDS generated a discourse of Dalit slave history by employing the songs memorised by the community. I would also discuss in this section, the possibilities of resistance offered by the adivasi/ indigenous communities to the state produced histories. Shail Mayaram and Ajay Skaria made use of the oral traditions of the indigenous communities to show that they maintained autonomous forms of history. This history of the subaltern, mostly preserved as myth, had a plural nature. Such histories imagined the subaltern as autonomous communities. On the other hand, the mythical worlds of the subaltern also hinted at the drastic effects of state regulations in their lives. Mayaram and Skaria thus pointed out the importance of analysing orality and memory of the adivasis to identify alternative histories of resistance.

In the second section titled 'Myth, Memory and the *Uchronic* Spaces of the Adiyas,' I attempt a critical reading of the mythical discourse of Adiyas. I have divided this section into various subsections that explain the mythical world of the Adiyas. Myths, I would argue, provided Adiyas an alternative history of agency. I have mostly relied on personal interviews to access the mythical world view of the Adiyas. My informants belong to both elders and middle aged Adiyas, and they are mostly men. Most of them are folk artists who are involved in the popularisation of certain Adiya rituals. To get a complete picture of the Adiya mythical world view, I also used compilations of Adiya hymns. These compilations were produced by non- adivasi

literary figures in Kerala. Thus, I have made use of the transliterated version of Ravula hymns in Malayalam apart from the memories of Adiyas.[54]

Moreover, I draw on field visits to certain sites which are closely related to the Adiya slave memories. In the first subsection, I discuss in detail, *pulappattu*, a ritualistic hymn that contains the originary myth of the Adiyas. *Pulappattu* talked about an imagined time when the Adiyas led a life of equality in a casteless society. I call this imaginary time *uchronia*, which is a term used by oral historians to talk about imagined timelines. The Adiyas lost this *uchronic* space by interventions from landlords. I go on to revisit Adiya memories to locate certain actual cultural sites that enacted scenes of Adiya subjection. One of these sites is Valliyoorkkavu temple festival, where the Adiyas actually became bonded to a landlord by borrowing goods and money from him. Another such site is *kambalappani* or *kambala* labour, where the labourers were made to work without any breaks. However, what is significant in retracing sites of subjection is that the Adiyas alternatively imagined these sites as sites of adivasi agency and autonomy. Both these sites, according to the Adiya imagination, were appropriated by the landlords. I conclude this section with a reading of *gaddika*, another ritualistic practice of the Adiyas as a popular art form. Unlike the Dalits, it was only in the last decades of the twentieth century that the Adiyas could transform their cultural spaces as sites of resistance. *Gaddika* hymns carry a mythical world that memorised a life of freedom and mobility, prior to the state-imposed regulations. Adiyas popularised these *gaddika* hymns to suit the popular stages in the 1980s. *Gaddika* artists and Adiya chieftains improvised *gaddika* to suit the modern stages of Kerala, thus making the art form an identity of Adiya culture. Moreover, *gaddika* was used as a medium by the Adiyas to register their anguish against the exploitative systems. Along with *gaddika*, *kambalanritha*, a dance form associated with labour on paddy fields was also popularised by the *gaddika* artists. I also point out in this section that the Adiyas could modernise their ritual on the stages provided by the Left Democratic Fronts in Kerala. I have already discussed the role played by the Communist government in transforming the lives of *valli* labourers in the 1950s and 60s. In the 1970s and 80s, the government implemented measures to popularise the art and culture of adivasis. I conclude the

[54] Adiyas speak the language called Ravula, which is a mixture of Kannada and Malayalam. Ravula language does not have a script.

section by arguing that the Adiyas claimed dignity as citizens of an electoral democracy by reinventing their mythical worlds. The Adiyas were already aware of the fact that reclamation of a lost *uchronia* would be impossible in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, the Adiyas popularised their ritual *gaddika* to make the non- adivasi audience aware that slavery was not simply a history of the Adiyas. Rather, authoritarian forces like landlordism and the state regulations were complacent in the creation of a slave history.

3.1. Subaltern Myth and Memory: Cultural Histories of the Agrestic Slaves

Remembering slave experience in relation to modernity has become an important methodology in the context of Afro- American slave history writings. Historians of slavery in the West have identified that the slave experience should be seen as contiguous with colonial modernity. In other words, the slaves' experiences are not antecedent to modernity, but are very much a product of the rigours of modern institutions like the plantations. This larger theoretical framework, identified the African slave experiences as part of the European history of modernity and not simply as an experience exclusive to the slave labourers. An understanding of slavery as modern, was used by the historians of slavery to analyse the art forms and cultural practices of the plantation slaves in a renewed light. Art forms of the plantation slaves, until the early nineteenth century was seen as recourse of amusement for the masters. However, works on slave histories from the West during the latter half of the nineteenth century argued otherwise. Historians of slavery argued that art forms were the main medium through which the slaves negotiated with the exploitations of modernity and resisted the hegemonic institution of slavery. In this section, I would explain briefly some studies on slave history that identified slave experience as a product of modernity. Moreover, these studies pointed out that the art forms of the slaves had transformative potentials to imagine an alternative history of emancipation. I draw from the works of Paul Gilroy, Saidiya Hartman and P. Sanal Mohan for my purpose of analysing the alternative world views offered by the ritualistic hymns of adivasis.

Paul Gilroy, a prominent sociologist and cultural historian of the African American plantation slaves, argued in his work *The Black Atlantic* (1993) that art became a backbone for the slaves' cultural history. Art forms offered the slave a racial consciousness and identity, who were otherwise seen as 'chattels' on the West Indian

plantations. Gilroy opined that the art forms of the slaves allowed one to rethink the Eurocentric idea of attributing slavery exclusively to the blacks (48). Gilroy argued that the black art forms- both dance and music allowed the plantation slaves to visualise slavery as a collective history of Europe. A critical reading of the black art forms, opined Gilroy, would construct a black perspective on modernity (Gilroy 49). The black history that the black art forms enunciate, would critique some of the enlightenment ideals including universality of experience and coherence of the subject, observed Gilroy. Moreover, Gilroy argued that the artistic practices of the plantation slaves offered an emancipation from the Eurocentric history that imagined the plantation history as a history of slave subjugation.[55] Rather, the black art forms projected a past that was antecedent to modernity, which echoed a pre- slave history, as well as the terrors of the plantation slavery. I would suggest here that Gilroy highlighted the significance of slave's imagination. Gilroy, I would say, was hinting at the fact that the Eurocentric history writing could not exhaust the imagination of the slave. Gilroy further argues that at a historical juncture, when literacy was inaccessible to the slaves, the slaves used music and performative traditions in communicating the terrors of plantation slavery. Gilroy also opined that the black art forms reinstated that the temporality of tradition and modernity was contiguous (190- 191).

Moreover, Gilroy identified the political function that the black songs offered for the plantation slaves. Gilroy said that these songs offered a "politics of transfiguration" (37). "Politics of transfiguration," according to Gilroy, offered the emergence of new desires, social relations, and modes of resistance to its erstwhile oppressors (37). The lyrical content of the black music, Gilroy opined, created "a medium in which demands for goals like non-racialized justice and rational organisation of the productive processes can be expressed" (37). Gilroy went on to talk about the convergence of different racial groups spread across the Atlantic in reinventing the black music. This is made possible by the continuous improvisations of the black music

[55] Gilroy discusses here the way in which Frederick Douglass inverted the power relationship between the master and slave. Douglass saw the master's consciousness as simply a representation of the consciousness that is repressed within the slave. The power of the slave, Douglass observed, resided in the fact that the slave choose death over slavery (Gilroy 60- 61).

in the form of public performances. A countercultural realm of popular music began to be created by the artists that narrativised slavery and emancipation (Gilroy 201).

Saidiya Hartman, another cultural historian of African- American slaves, looked at the emancipatory potential that the black art forms and performative traditions could offer. Hartman, in her voluminous work *Scenes of Subjection* (1997), opined that every day practices of the slaves, their songs and dances, all revealed elements of memorising slave experiences but had potentials of resistance. Hartman observed that the minstrelsy performances which depicted black masks often presented the slave as having fun and frolic on the stage. Minstrel shows are a form of American racist entertainment developed during the early nineteenth century. According to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "minstrels are a comic enactment of racial stereotypes." Minstrels were often performed by white men with black masks. These performances had dance and music and caricatured the black people as comic, dumb, lazy and superstitious. Hartman observed that the caricature of the slave as an irredeemable figure of sorrow was a replication of the slaves' suffering on the auction blocks and coffles of the antebellum period. Minstrels also stood for the joyous response of the slave to the tune of the fiddle and the *Bible* lessons offered by the masters after a long week of drudgery. However, the problem with such art forms, for Hartman, was that these performances were effortlessly translated as the slaves' submission to the master. These performances, moreover, confirmed the slaves' inclination to inferiority and slavishness. In other words, minstrels pictured the slaves as creatures with endurance, and thereby their pain as normalised (Hartman 46). Hartman makes another crucial argument here. Hartman observed that the history of slavery and performing blackness did not belong exclusively to the blacks. Hartman observed that black performances in the post- bellum periods also were representative of the white dominance and power, the rearticulations of the condition of enslavement, and the production as racial meaning and subjection in Europe (57).

Hartman made arguments similar to Gilroy while revisiting the actual intentions of the black song and music in the antebellum period. Gilroy hinted at the emancipatory potential of the black art forms. Similarly, Hartman also observed that the fun and frolic of the slaves in the antebellum period should not be understood as an endurance of the pain. Hartman observed without doubt that the songs and dances of the slaves revealed

elements of memorising slave experiences. Hartman identified various "cultural scenes of subjection" that the slaves encountered during the antebellum period. Hartman strategically used plantation documents, theatre performances, slave narratives, legal documents, Freedmen's Bureau papers and missionary records to extract various scenes of subjections that the blacks suffered. However, what is significant about the slave experience was that these experiences narrativised everyday experience of subjection. An important dimension to the art forms thus developed by the slaves was their potentials of resistance. Occasional practices of the slaves' subtle forms of resistance were also memorised in their songs.[56] However, their art forms did not figure up as a complete threat or counter insurgency to the institution of slavery, observed Hartman. Nevertheless, black art forms were successful in creating a context for the collective enunciation of pain and humiliation (Hartman 51).

P. Sanal Mohan, in his *Modernity of Slavery* (2015) looked at the dynamics of memorising slavery in the context of Kerala. Mohan argued that it was the colonial modernity that in fact systematised slavery in Kerala. It was the imperial regime's non-interference in the customary forms of bondages that actually reinstated slavery among the Dalits in Kerala. Given this backdrop, Mohan argued that the Dalits reinvented their collective memory to engage with the developments of modernity. Mohan resorted to archival material of the twentieth century and ethnographic data to theorise the ways in which Dalits memorised slave sufferings. Mohan observed that memorising slavery helped the Dalits in Kerala to critically engage with the foundational aspects of colonial modernity like abolitionism and reformist agendas. Mohan analysed the songs and performances of a Dalit countercultural sect called *Prathyaksha Raksha Daiva Sabha* (PRDS) in central Travancore. Mohan observed that remembering the history as a history of Dalit slavery helped the Dalits to gain a considerable level of agency, even while they narrated their own stories of subjection.[57] 'Slavery,' as a category was

[56] These practices included work slowdowns, unlicensed travel, feigned illness, destruction of property, self-mutilation, dissimulation and physical confrontations with slave owners and overseers, and even killings of the masters by slave woman who got exploited by him. See Hartman 51, 85.

[57] PRDS invented the performative ritual called *Rakshanirnayam*, to commemorate the death anniversary and the annual feast of their founder Poykayil Yohannan. *Rakshanirnayam* reminded the Dalits of their past sufferings through prayer songs. The agonies of slave women, exploitations of labourers on the

adopted by the PRDS to critique the incongruities in the abolitionist stand of the colonial rule (Mohan, *Modernity* 246- 7). Moreover, the PRDS reinvented the Christian myth of the loss of the Garden of Eden and the subsequent enslavement with the slave past of the Dalits, argued Mohan. Thus, Mohan analysed how the Dalits strategically appropriated the concepts of colonial modernity to critique the history of modernity. Mohan drew largely from Gilroy- who talked about the contiguity of modernity and slavery- to argue that Dalit slavery was very much a product of colonial modernity. Mohan also observed that memorising slavery by the PRDS led to a 'politics of transfiguration' which cultivated new aspirations that the oppressed sections had never accessed (*Modernity* 234). These aspirations included demands for incorporation of the Dalit communities into the public sphere. In other words, Mohan argued that narrativising slave memories offered an opportunity for the Dalits to claim citizenship. Claiming citizenship in the modern times, I would say is to claim agency and dignity as humans, which was till then denied to the Dalits. Gilroy, Hartman and Mohan argued that the history of slavery could not be seen as exclusive to the slaves. Rather, slavery in the West and even in the Indian subcontinent was a product of colonial modernity. These historians also argued that it was only the revival of the cultural realms that would allow the slaves to reclaim history as a history of slavery. Moreover, the cultural memory of the slave is not an exclusive realm of resistance. Rather, the cultural memories of the slaves vividly remember their slave history. Gilroy and Mohan observed that it is the remembrance of slavery and the usage of slavery as an imagery to demand equality is important as far as the slave history is concerned.

As far as the Adiyas and Paniyas are concerned in the context of Malabar, I would suggest that the observations regarding slave history made by the above-mentioned historians are relevant. It has already been argued in the first chapter that slavery among the agrestic tribes of Wayanad was a product of colonial modernity. Therefore, it would be logical to argue here that the cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas undoubtedly involve slave history. Ethnographic data revealed that the Adiya and Paniya memories are replete with memories of alienation from lands, estrangement from one's family, incorporation into the caste system and the subsequent slavery under

---

paddy fields, and the cruel punishments that were meted out to the slave labourers were memorised through the prayer meetings usually held at nights, see Mohan, *Modernity* 240- 246.

Hindu landlords. It is thus only consequential that the adivasis preserved their own cultural realms that narrativised slavery, similar to the Dalits of central Travancore. From a wide variety of oral histories and interviews that I have collected, I have identified that the ritualistic hymns are one of the important sources through which the adivasis remember slavery. These ritualistic hymns remember myths related to land alienation and the subsequent subjugation of the adivasis to the landlords. Thus, the performance of such hymns during traditional rituals allowed the Adiyas and Paniyas to remember their history of slavery. As Hartman, Gilroy and Mohan argued, the remembrance of slave history allowed the subaltern communities to simultaneously resist slavery.

However, there is a fundamental difference between memorising slavery by the plantation slaves, the Dalits of Travancore and the adivasis of Malabar. The plantation slaves as proposed by Hartman and Gilroy, immediately responded to the viciousness of slavery in the nineteenth century by institutionalising their cultural memory. The blues, jazz and hip hop became part of the popular culture that reunited the slave diaspora. Similarly, the PRDS, which was founded in 1901, also institutionalised the songs that carried memories of the Dalits labourers. Poykayil Yohannan, the founder of PRDS took immense efforts to create a written archive of the songs that conveyed the history of Dalit slavery in the context of colonial modernity.[58] Thus, the African- Americans and the Dalits were able to negotiate with colonial modernity through popular culture and established institutions. The counter- cultural discourse thus formed, I would argue promised the plantation slaves and the Dalits of Travancore a 'politics of transfiguration,' or an aspiration of new desires for equality and citizenship rights. However, the myths and hymns of the adivasis remained restricted to the private realms. The adivasis were never able to engage with modernity through popularising their songs and artforms in the nineteenth century. The remembrance of adivasi slavery and narrativising oppression never reached the public domains until the last decades of the twentieth century. I would say that even though the adivasis could not institutionalise their history of slavery, they had their private realms where they dealt with forces of modernity. I would thus, in the coming sections try to see how the adivasis, aspired to

[58] Mohan made use of Yohannan's *Golden Lyrics* and *Poykayil Sree Kumara Gurudeva Geethangal*, a compilation of Yohannna's songs.

be part of the modernity discourse by claiming history of modernity as also a history of adivasi slavery.

It is also important to talk here briefly about certain subaltern historians who invented new strategies to study adivasi mythical history. Giving legitimacy to the memories and mythical history of the adivasi communities has always been a task to the historians. In other words, most of the conventional histories chose to prioritise histories of colonialism and nationalism over mythical histories. However, historians like Shail Mayaram and Ajay Skaria recognised the importance of poetico- mythic traditions of the subaltern communities in narrativizing oppression within the backdrop of colonial modernity. Mayaram, in her historical study on the Meos of Mewat, depended on the poetico-mythic narratives of the Meos. Mayaram observed that memory is significant for such cultures who do not possess literacy and who do not have access to the print medium. Thus, mythical narratives were used by the Meos to contest attempts by the state to erase their cultural memory. Mayaram argued that the Meos are a group who are equally subordinated as well as resistant to the state structure. It is the Meo myths that offer resistance to power structures.

Myth is defined as the primary form of the organised collective memory that enabled the community to "preserve a remembered past, conserve community integrity and identity and behold vision of the future" (Mayaram 31). Mayaram observed that a myth is a story, a different way of telling things and a distinctive mode of ordering the world. A study of this mythic world would provide a different dimension to the study of both state formation and ethnic conflict. This process of analysing myths would reverse the subject- object relation in the traditional historiographic accounts: "Folk and vernacular narratives can also interrogate the epistemological and ontological structures of great traditional religion, and state-sponsored enumerative systems of knowledge" (Mayaram 31).[59] Myth is thus a metaphor of identity and for the Meo oral traditions, there was hardly a difference between history and myth, opined Mayaram. However,

[59] Mayaram discussed in detail about the state sponsored violence on the Meos. Meos had to live as refugees in their homeland. Moreover, they were represented as Muslims, who were complacent in instigating partition violence. On the other hand, the Meos visualised themselves as peasants and liminal figures. The Meos inhabited the terrains of both Hinduism and Islam according to their political needs (38, 44).

unlike the adivasis of Wayanad, the Meos had bards who authored oral traditions. The Meo oral traditions, thus preserved, were recited during the rites of passage. I would hint here that though the Adiya and Paniya oral histories were not written, they were memorised by adivasi chieftains, who are also priests. Ritualistic hymns, which were also the sources of mythical history were occasionally recited by the chieftains amongst the community members.

Similarly, Ajay Skaria in his study of the Dangs of Gujarat, analysed the potential of the oral narratives circulated among the Dangs to produce an excess or a surplus production of meanings (18). Since, the oral histories produced surplus meaning, Skaria called them "hybrid histories." Skaria hinted at the feasibility of attributing validity to the excess meanings produced by orality and collective memory. Skaria observed that the Dangs had memories and myths that existed independently, outside the history of colonialism. Dangs called this history, the *Moglai* epoch. Whereas there also existed the *Mandini* epoch, when the Dangs constructed a history around rebellions and insurgencies against British rule. In the *Mandini* epoch, the Dangs imagined themselves as adivasis, who are wild, and who are the other to modernity. Skaria observed that the Dangs were able to establish a fluidity between the *Moglai* and *Mandini goths*. Both the epochs saw rebellions and resistance from the Dangs. However, it was the intervention of the colonial regulations in their lives that allowed the Dangs to create cultural memories to suit the needs of the time. Skaria thus argued that the cultural memory of the Dang adivasi communities could not be treated as either pre-colonial or post- colonial, but that they are hybrid histories, marked by spillages.

Both Mayaram and Skaria observed that the adivasis reinvented their myths to suit their purposes. They used the myths to talk about a past that was free from the interventions of modernity. Nevertheless, the adivasis also used their myths to talk about resistance during the colonial times. What is more significant in Mayaram's and Skaria's observations is that the mythical history is seen as a valid counter history to the history of modernity. Similarly, the Adiyas and Paniyas also make use of their mythical history not only to narrativize history. But they use their myths to break free from the colonial image of the adivasi as the other to the modern citizen. The adivasis also imagine alternative worldviews, through their myths. This world is a world of freedom that they had lost with the interventions of modernity. Studies in oral history already

observed that marginalised histories make a departure from the mainstream histories. Alessandro Portelli, an American oral historian, in his essay titled "What Makes Oral History Different," observed that the marginalised communities talked about not only what they did, but also what they wanted to do and what they thought they were doing (67). Similarly, Portelli argued that oral sources are credible, but with a different credibility ("What Makes Oral History Different" 68). Portelli, in another essay that dealt with working class memory, introduced the term *uchronia,* which could be translated as a 'nowhen event' while dealing with certain events that the marginalised communities imagined as history.[60] For Portelli, *uchronia* is a parallel universe, where things would have taken much different routes from the established history. In a *uchronic* space, the importance of oral testimony lay not in its adherence to facts, but in its departure from it through imagination, symbolism and emerging desire (Portelli, "Uchronic Dreams" 46). Subaltern historians talked about the validity of myths and memories that the marginalised communities invented at different historical moments. The subalterns, including the adivasis, invented *uchronic* spaces for them. I would call these mythical worlds imagined by the adivasis as *uchronic* and *utopic* spaces, as Portelli suggested.

In the coming sections, I would critically look at the mythical histories of the Adiya community. These myths are derived from the ritualistic hymns of *pulappattu*, and *gaddika*. *Pulappattu*, is recited during the post- burial ritual of the Adiyas, whereas *gaddika* is a ritual that is practised to do away with the illness that has affected a person or community as whole. I would also show how the Adiyas imagined a *uchronic* world view in the myth contained in *pulappattu. Pulappattu* in fact laments the loss of a *uchronic* and *utopic* universe. However, the Adiyas did not just stop at imagining 'a nowhen event' and 'nowhere place' for them. The Adiyas effectively historicised the *pulappattu* myth to create dignified identities for them. The Adiyas localised and historicised the *pulappattu* myth by connecting it to the slave transactions at Valliyoorkkavu temple. Moreover, the Adiyas used *gaddika*, another ritual to reclaim the lost *uchronic* space. *Gaddika* is projected as the manifesto of Adiya rebellion and

[60] Portelli modelled the word *uchronia*, after the Greek word *utopia*. Portelli replaced the Greek word *topos* (space) with *chronos* (time). If *utopia* is a nowhere place, then *uchronia* is a nowhen event ("Uchronic Dreams" 46).

resistance against history of slavery. Along with *gaddika*, the Adiyas also perform *kambalanritham* or *kambala* dance, a form of dance the Adiyas performed while working on the fields. I would argue that the performances of *gaddika* and *kambalanritha* on the public stages of Kerala is an act by the Adiyas to remind the audience of a lost *uchronia*. But, the purpose of this performance for the Adiyas, I would say, is not to go back to the 'nowhen' event and 'nowhere' place. But to anchor steadily as citizens in the public spheres of Kerala. While *pulappattu* remained untouched by any aspirations to negotiate with modernity, the enactment of *gaddika* and *kambalanritham* on the public stages is a move towards resisting regimes.

3.2. Myths, Memory and the *Uchronic* Spaces of the Adiyas

In the introduction to *The Oral History Reader*, oral memory is perceived as a device that people use to make sense of their past and to connect individual experience with its social context. Oral memory also helps to see how the past becomes part of the present and how people make use of it to interpret their lives and world around them (Perks and Thomson 3). Here, I want to make it clear that the myths that are transferred from one generation to the other amongst the Adiyas is purely oral. The Adiyas do not possess a documented mythical history in scripts. The Adiyas are a mnemonic community who depend on memory to translate and transfer phenomenology and epistemology. Moreover, the Adiyas do not make a hermeneutic distinction between myth and history. For the Adiyas, the boundaries between myth and history are fluid. Thus, the mythical world that offered originary stories regarding the Adiyas is more or less taken as the history by the community. I would also make an interpretative shift here while dealing with history. I have been mainly reading authoritarian archives of the colonial and post- colonial discourses on the construction of Adiyas and Paniyas as 'slaves' and 'bonded labourers' in the first two chapters. In order to trace an adivasi perspective on slavery as history, I attribute credibility to the mythical worldviews provided by the Adiyas in this chapter. This would be the same methodology in the next chapter as well, as I deal with the mythical universe of the Paniyas there.

In this section of the chapter, I initially analyse the originary myth of the Adiyas found in *pulappattu*. The *pulappattu* myth is significant as it narrates the Adiyas' fall from a *utopian* place and the subsequent alienation of resources. Then, I would show how the Adiyas historicise the originary myths of *pulappattu* by connecting it to the

historical site of Valliyoorkkavu. I go on to show in another section on the *gaddika* ritual that the Adiyas made use of this ritual to project their history of subjugation to the public. Similar is the case with *kambalanritham*, a dance form closely associated with labour practice. Moreover, by the very act of performing *gaddika*, the Adiyas remind the public of their close connections with the landlords of the area. I would thus argue in this section that performing *gaddika* and *kambalanritham*, is nothing but revisiting the history of slavery. But this performance is simultaneously an act of resistance as well.

3. 2.1. *Pulappattu*: The Adiya Imaginary of *Uchronia*

Pulappattu, is the post burial ritual hymn of the Adiyas. *Pulappattu* narrates the origin myths of the Adiya community. The hymn is recited during the post-burial ritual of the Adiyas, called *kuntu*. *Pulappattu* presents narratives regarding creation, exploitation, loss of lands and the subsequent enslavement of the Adiyas as a community. The mythical narrative of *pulappattu* lamented the loss of a uchronic space called *Mavelimanram*. *Manram* originally meant a clan. *Manram* was also used to denote each group of Adiyas who worked under a particular landlord. *Mavelimanram* was the mythical land of unity that the Adiyas lost to the non- adivasi outsiders, according to *pulappattu*. *Pulappattu* is thus also a mythical history of Adiya slavery. For the purpose of recreating a history of Adiya slavery from an Adiya perspective, I resort to various sources for extracting a fuller understanding of the *pulappattu* myth. As a primary source for *pulappattu* myth, I draw on the oral narrations of the mythical story by P. K. Kariyan, the late Adiya chieftain from Kaithavally Adiya colony in Thrissilery. I also rely on K. P. Madhu, an Adiya *gaddika* artist from Kaithavally Adiya colony, for the myth of *pulappattu*. Sukumaran Chaligadha, an Adiya modern poet from Kuruvadweep also gave me insights into the mythical world of *pulappattu*. To make the story more complicated, I also turn to the writings of K. J. Baby for parts of *pulappattu* myth. K. J. Baby, is a prominent literary figure in Malabar. Baby produced *Mavelimanram* (1991), a novel based on the mythical world of Adiyas. Baby was able to construct a novel on the mythical world of the Adiyas by talking to a number of elderly Adiya informants including Mathapperuman from Valliyoorkkavu, Gojjappottaperuman from Thirunelly, and Mutha from Thirunelly.[61] All of these

[61] See Baby 9- 10.

informants, Baby claimed, narrated him different episodes in the *pulappattu* myth. Thus, the narratives of Adiya slavery that I construct in this section, are based on both oral memories from the Adiya informants as well as written records of Adiya memories. Thus, broadly, the resource for *pulappattu* myth is Adiya memories. The temporality of my ethnographic data is the time period between 2018- 2021, whereas Baby depended upon memories collected in the late twentieth century. There are different variants for the *pulappattu* myth according to my informants. However, the narrative of alienation from resources and the subsequent enslavement is a motif that runs through all the narratives.

Kariyan suggested in an interview with me that *pulappattu* is the originary story of the Adiya community.[62] Kariyan narrated the originary story of *pulappattu* thus:

> Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma were the primordial Adiya father and mother respectively. Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma were husband and wife and they lived in a casteless society. Since they did not have any progeny, Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma made human figurines out of mud. But these figurines never spoke, saw, heard or moved. Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma took God's help to make these figurines move. The gods asked the help of Kali or Mali, the fierce goddess to breathe life into the mud figurines. Mali took a fierce form and approached these idols to devour them. Terrified by Mali, the idols started moving and began to flee for their life. Many idols were eaten by Mali. During this flight, the one who went rolling (*urundu*) was called *Udugebaduvan*, those who said *Aathava* in fear became Adiyas, those who said *Emmi* became Paniyas and those who asked *Aarada* or 'Who's There!' became the landlords of Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma. Thus, one hundred one clans were formed on earth.

Kariyan's interpretation of *pulappattu* is significant because he talked about a *uchronic* space where only the primordial Adiya man and woman lived. This land was also a land of *utopia* because there were no caste divisions. It was the interception of a Hindu goddess Kali which led to the creation of different castes. Moreover, Kariyan observed that Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma engaged joyously in agricultural labour before the creation of caste society. Kariyan's narration of the originary story also reveals that

[62] Personal interview with Kariyan, 25 May, 2018.

the subtlety and meekness of the Adiyas which made them subjugated even though they were the primordial ancestors of the human race. I would suggest that the contemporary narration of an Adiya originary myth has references to the hegemony that a caste society brought in. Thus, Kariyan's "no when" and "nowhere place" where the Adiyas originated was soon interrupted with the penetration of a Hindu goddess and the caste systems and clans thereafter. I would here observe that Kariyan pointed to the routes of tutelage of the Adiyas as a community. What is to be concluded from Kariyan's mythical narration is that after the formation of different castes and classes, agricultural labourers began to be ruled over by the landlord castes.

Now, let us look into two variants of this story that Madhu and Chaligadha narrated. Madhu located the origin of Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma in the country of Moodal in Karnataka. Madhu in an interview with me in March 2021, narrated that Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma continued their flight in fear of Mali. They finally reached Pakkamkotta or Pakkam fort, where the Hindu Gods resided. Madhu opined that the Adiya ancestors approached the Gods for shelter from Mali. According to Madhu, the Gods instructed Mali not to harm the newly created men, but only to keep watch over them. Madhu reminded that the Gods were of the opinion that only if the Adiyas were afraid of Mali, the men would be ready to offer prayers and oblations to her. Thereafter, Mali began to keep a continuous vigil over Adiyas. Mali began to assume shapes of rodents, chameleons and fishes to monitor the movements of the Adiyas, observed Madhu. Adiyas could no longer hide on earth, trees and even under water. When Madhu, a man in his forties, narrated the *pulappattu* myth concerning Adiya subjugation, Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma were located in Moodal in Karnataka, a place adjacent to the borders of Wayanad and Karnataka. The flight of Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma is thus from Karnataka to Kerala. Madhu argued that the *pulappattu* myth thus pointed to the origin of Adiyas in Karnataka. Even Kariyan opined that the Adiyas migrated as agrestic labourers from Karnataka to Wayanad along with the landlords. My task here is not to argue for or against this migration argument made by Madhu and Kariyan. But what is more interesting for me is that the Adiyas imagined a time and space outside of the colonial narratives regarding them as ahistorical slaves. While Kariyan constructed a mythical history of Adiya enslavement by throwing clues regarding the introduction of the caste system, Madhu narrativized the role played by a Hindu god in keeping continuous vigil over the Adiyas.

Similarly, Chaligadha also located the journeys of Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma at different places in Wayanad. However, Chaligadha's myth regarding *pulappattu* is slightly different. Chaligadha observed that the primordial ancestors were once caught in a great flood.[63] In order to escape this flood, Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma hid inside a bottle gourd fruit and reached *Pakkam kotta* (Pakkam fort), owned by *Pakkam lord* (a *jenmi*). Chaligadha observed that Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma were enslaved by the Pakkam lord. They were then constantly kept under vigil by the horrific Mali. However, Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma decided to flee to a place of freedom, where they could offer *pula* ritual to their dead ancestors. Their journey to find a suitable place to conduct this ritual is also a flight from slavery imposed by the landlord (Chaligadha). Chaligadha's narration of the elopement of Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma involved references to various places in Wayanad. Chaligadha observed that the primordial ancestors travelled from Thirunelly, to Kallidankunnu, then to Thrissilery and reached Ondayanagadi, they crossed a hair pin curve there and reached Panamaram, crossed places like Panamkutti, Amecha and reached Nadavayal and then Manivyal through Punchavayal. They reached Chaligadha (Chaligadha's native place) after crossing Mundathodu and Mundakara. They crossed the rocks of Thailthalpara in Chaligadha and finally reached Kuruvadweep. In Kuruvadweep, Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma found a suitable place to offer *pula*. Chaligadha observed that Kuruvadweep, where he lives now, was once a place of freedom for Adiyas. Chaligadha's narration of the mythical journey of Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma is important from another perspective as well. References to journeys pointed to the frequent displacement and dispossession that the Adiyas faced. Estrangement of an Adiya man and woman from their relatives is an important theme that Chaligadha brought up in the narrative of *pulappattu*.

Baby agreed with the narrative variation proposed by Madhu, with slight changes in *Mavelimanram*. For Baby's informant Gojjappottaperuman, Melorachan and Keeyoruthi were the primordial ancestors of Adiyas. They belonged to the Karippoor fort of a *jenmi* or landlord where they were slaves. Thus, for Baby, Melorachan and Keeyoruthi were already and always enslaved. They were always in a flight from slavery, in search of freedom, according to Baby. They escaped from the Karippoor fort and reached the Pakkam fort owned by Pakkam Thampuran, another *jenmi* who

[63] Personal interview with Chaligadha, 23 March, 2021.

enslaved them.[64] Baby observed that Melorachan was assigned the duty of collecting timber and clearing forests, whereas Keeyoruthi was admitted to the kitchen as a maid (33). However, Melorachan and Keeyoruthi again tried to escape from Pakkam fort. However, Melorachan and Keeyoruthi were constantly terrified by the presence of the Hindu goddess Mali who pursued them throughout their journey to freedom. Mali was a goddess who was entrusted by the landlords to pursue the slaves if they tried to escape from the forts:

> "Adiyoru bovve ponare njakku/ ombathu thenda undayi baruve/ kothikkudippa ilaneeru/ pirichu kudippa poovakkozhi/ …kappu kayathilu poyi nintho, mannilu kattilu odiyolicho/ aapalline pale, arunarine palle/ …idame valamane njetticho/" (Mali, you are the one who should pursue and punish those 'Adiyas' who tried to escape slavery/ in return you would be given a place to reside where people would worship you/ You would be given tender coconut water and a rooster to feed on/ You should take the form of whirlpools in water and pineapple thorns on land/ you should keep vigil on earth and in forests to frighten the labourers). (Baby 35)[65]

Thus, there are narrative variations in the parts of *pulappattu* that I have used in this section. However, what I found significant in the Adiya mythical memories regarding their originary story is the common thread of displacement and slavery. Kariyan observed that Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma inhabited a casteless, timeless society. For Kariyan, *pulappattu* myth contained the entire history of Adiya dispossession during different time periods. Chaligadha's narrative stressed the attempts by Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma to escape slavery under the landlords. Madhu, on the other hand, talked about the total enslavement of the Adiya ancestors under the *Pakkam* landlords. Madhu observed that the landlords kept a continuous vigil over their slaves by inventing the Mali myth. Thus, Madhu talked about the coercive nature in which the landlords forced their Adiya slaves to work. Madhu also observed that the landlords appropriated the *Pulappattu* myth to suit their needs. Goddess Mali was given a supreme status and the slaves were in fact made to believe that they were under the constant vigil of Mali. Both

[64] Both Karippoor fort and Pakkam fort are mythically located in Wayanad.

[65] Baby quotes this song from the *pulappattu*, the post burial hymn of the Adiyas.

Chaligadha and Madhu used *pulappattu* myth to talk about the history of slavery by the Adiyas. On the other hand, Baby talked about the already enslaved Adiya ancestors who aspired for freedom.

The casteless society that Kariyan talked about finds a recurrence in Baby's narrativization of the mythical world in *pulappattu*. Baby's understanding of the enslavement of Adiyas is dependent on the mythical story that Gojjapottaperuman narrated to him in the late decades of twentieth century. Baby's narrative of *pulappattu* thus involved references to a land of *utopia*, called *Mavelimanram*, which was ruled by the adivasi king *Mavelimanru*. The enslavement of Adiyas, according to Baby's story, was the result of Mavelimanru's loss of his kingdom. Baby narrated the myth so: *Mavelimanram* used to be the land where all the people lived without any caste and class distinctions. There were no landlords to enslave the adivasis in *Mavelimanram* (33). There were no Adiyas, Paniyas and Kurichyas in *Mavelimanram*. Everyone agreed upon the benevolence of humanity. They knew how to cultivate and how to reap the harvest. They believed in the community ownership of goods and property and they shared the harvest among their own people. However, Mavelimanru was defeated by the trickery of three landlords who came as his guests from outside *Mavelimanram*. *Pulappattu* narrated that the outsider landlords stole the soil from Mavelimanru, thus making Mavelimanru's subjects landless. Mavelimanru's *manram* was destroyed and the land was taken over by the landlords (Sachidanandan). Thereafter, the adivasis who were once independent, became slaves under different landlords, Baby observed. The landlords commanded the Adiyas so: "You are our slaves and your job is to abide by our commands. You have to work hard for us to expand the cultivation of these paddy lands, and to convert these hills into plantations" (Baby 31). I would suggest that the mythical memory of the Adiyas narrativized the invasion of the non- adivasi outsiders (the colonial rule and the in- migrants from the Central Travancore area) to Wayanad, at different moments in history. However, Baby observed that the mythical narrative did not stop at the enslavement. The narrative that talked about enslavement also had seeds of resistance in it. Gojjapottaperuman's narrative, I would say, linked episodes of *pulappattu* that I collected from Kariyan, Madhu and Chaligadha. Baby presented a story where Melorachan and Keeyoruthi, the two citizens of Mavelimanram decided to escape slavery under the *jenmies*. Baby observed that Melorachan and Keeyoruthi carried them with the seeds of freedom and decided to plant it somewhere beyond the

surveillance of the landlords. In short, they wanted to set up a *Mavelimanram* somewhere else. However, they could not fulfil their dreams of reaching a *utopia*, where labour would be enjoyable again. Melorachan and Keeyoruthi got enslaved by another landlord called Pakkam *thampuran*. Baby also observed that in the course of time Keeyoruthi got accustomed to the comforts of Pakkam fort. And she no longer wanted to pursue the dream of *Mavelimanram*. However, *pulappattu* revealed that Keeyoruthi's denial of adivasi legacy led to her own death. Melorachan invited Keeyoruthi to enjoy the wild yams, jackfruits, wild honey and clear water on one of their journeys in search of *Mavelimanram* from Pakkam fort. However, Keeyoruthi said that the forest was reminiscent of blood and the streams smelt of buffaloes: "Jagamu jagamu, chorayo naarinteyo…pothuchedichediye nariyebantona, pakkathappante belliya chirekku pontelulannaya" (Baby 37- 38). She wanted to go back to the Pakkam fort to drink water from Pakkam thampuran's silver pond. However, Keeyoruthi got drowned in the silver pond of Pakkam lord when she tried to drink water from it. Keeyoruthi was swept under water and what remained was simply some strands of her hair after the water level went down: "Muttukulana neeru Bedekkulanano…Bedekkulana neeru Mandikkulanano/ Kaliyum Kadechitum jokkeli jokkeli…Mandikkulana neeru thudekkulanano/ Vithumu nellumu jokkeli jokkeli Thoodekkulana neeru arekkulanano/ Thottemu thoduvemu jokkeli jokklei…Nettikkulana neeru thilekkulanana…" (The water began to rise, it began to cover my legs, knees, thighs, hips, neck, nose and finally my head. Melorachan, please take care of the cattle in our dreams, take care of the grains and paddy seeds, take care of our hills and gardens…) (Baby 39).

Thus, some variants of *pulappattu* not only memorised slavery, but also aspired to reclaim the *uchronic* space of casteless society. The founding of a casteless society was never possible for the Adiyas historically. But Portelli suggested the possibility of an alternative universe for the marginalised in oral history. Myth offered the Adiyas an alternative universe, where a casteless society existed. The Adiyas imagined that their history would have been different if Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma (or Melorachan and Keeyoruthi) could reclaim the *uchronic* space of equality and casteless community somewhere else. Mohan observed that it is only through the songs and rituals that the Dalits of PRDS were able to envision an alternative history against the totalising claims of the mainstream history (*Modernity* 220). Similarly, I argue here that the mythical memory of *pulappattu* offered the possibility of an alternate history for the Adiyas even

when it talked about the routes of enslavement. But since this event of freedom from a caste society never occurred, I would suggest that this alternate universe is a *uchronia*, imagined by the Adiyas. Thus, the possibility of resisting slavery was always a leitmotif in the *pulappattu* myth of the Adiyas. This *uchronia*, or *Mavelimanram*, imagined by the Adiyas suggest that they were not always and already slaves. But the Hindu feudal lords or *jenmis* were responsible for their slavery. Thus, the adivasi history effectively argued that the history of slavery does not exclusively belong to the adivasi realms. Rather, it is the history of colonialism and landlordism as well.

Thus, my discussion on *pulappattu* in this section gave insights on the ways in which Adiyas collectively remembered their routes to slavery. However, this imagination was based on a space of *utopia* and *uchronia*. However, there are other memories that the Adiyas collectively preserve which in fact narrated the experiential realms of slavery. In these memories, the *uchronic* space of *Mavelimanram* is actually Wayanad. And every Adiya man and woman, who worked as a *valli* labourer, doubled as Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma. The Adiyas as a community, thus experienced alienation from their own lands. They were destined to work as slaves under the landlords. In the coming sections, I would discuss certain sites, which acted as scenes of Adiya subjection culturally. This is also equally relevant with the case of the Paniyas as well. My purpose to analyse these sites of real subjugation is to show the close connections between myth and history for the Adiyas.

3.2.2. The Scenes of Adivasi Subjection

In this section, I look at certain specific sites where the Adiyas and Paniyas, the *valli* labourers were actually subjected to the ordeals of the slave system in Wayanad. The mythical story in *pulappattu*, that talked about the enslavement of the adivasis, acquires historical importance in certain cultural sites. I would argue in this section that the myths concerning the enslavement of the Adiyas get localised and contextualised in the sites of Valliyoorkkavu temple festival and *kambalappani*. Skaria observed that there were instances when oral memories and myths of the marginalised existed independently of the colonial invasions and there were instances when they blended into each other. In similar lines, I state that the mythical time frame of the Adiyas could be actualised historically. There could be another possibility as well. The scenes of subjection might have led to the creation of myths surrounding enslavement and the

necessity to escape slavery. For me, the causality and effect are difficult to determine here. However, I would make it clear that the myth of *pulappattu* and history fed into each other continuously. I also find it absolutely necessary to analyse the slave experiences of the adivasis in these cultural sites. It is only then that the mythical history is complicated.

Hartman observed that the plantation slave exploits could be traced in the memories regarding certain sites of cultural transactions. These sites, according to Hartman, were auction blocks and the Saturday night prayers. Slave memories extracted from such cultural realms provided Hartman the narratives that could be used to identify the hegemony that the owners exerted upon the plantation labourers. Hartman observed that these hegemonic practises tied the quotidian life of the plantation slaves to the system of slavery, thus restricting any forms of resistance. I have chosen two cultural sites for analysis in this chapter, to trace the memories of Adiya slavery. One is the occasion of the temple festival at Valliyoorkkavu, a shrine in Mananthavady, Wayanad. The temple festival has a lot of historical importance as has been observed in the second chapter. The historical importance was that there occurred occasional slave transactions in the temple premises during the festival. Panoor had observed that the system of *valli* bondage began from the Valliyoorkkavu temple. Contemporary historians like Johnny and Mundakkayam Gopi also mentioned the close relations between Valliyoorkkavu temple festival and slave exchanges. Conclusions on the Adiya memories of slavery during Valliyoorkkavu temple festival is drawn from my field visit to the temple festival in March 2021. Ethnographic interviews that I conducted in 2021 with Adiya elders M. Kalan and his wife Vella from Kundu Chekott Adiya colony in Thrissilery and Karunan from Kavu colony in Valliyoorkkavu were useful to draw insights regarding slavery at the site of Valliyoorkkavu. Chaligadha, shared with me alternative history on Valliyoorkkavu temple festival from an adivasi perspective. M. Kalan and Vella were *valli* labourers during the 1960s under Venkatachala Iyer or Appuswamy who owned lands in Kaithavally, in Thrissilery.[66] M. Kalan and Vella shared with me the memories of bondage that came with the annual festival at Valliyoorkkavu each year. Karunan

[66] Venkatachala Iyer was targeted by the Naxalite attacks that happened in North Wayanad in 1970. The Naxalites confiscated property from him and warned him of consequences if he treated his *valli* labourers as slaves.

was also a *valli* labourer in the 1950s and 60s under landlords near Valliyoorkkavu. Though Karunan belonged to the Paniya community, I depend on his opinions in this section regarding the customary practices that the adivasis observed in the temple during the festival.

Another important cultural site that I analyse in this section to retrace memories of adivasi slavery is the site of *kambalappani* or *kambala* labour. *Kambalappani* is a coercive form of labour practice where the adivasi labour is exploited to the maximum. The sources that I used to read *kambalappani* are again the memories of M. Kalan and Vella. I also draw on the interview conducted with Kariyan, who was also a *valli* labourer under Venkatachala Iyer. Moreover, the earliest reference to *kambalappani* could be found in C. Nair's administrative historiography *Wynad: Its People and Traditions*, published in 1911.

Valliyoorkkavu Temple as a Site of the Slave Market

Valliyoorkkavu temple fair is an important cultural site where the adivasis of Wayanad got together to celebrate the yearly carnival. One of the important sites for identifying the vestiges of slavery among the Adiya and Paniya adivasi communities is the fourteen-day yearly festival at Valliyoorkkavu temple. The patron deity of Valliyoorkkavu shrine is *Valliyooramma*, considered to be an incarnation of Goddess Durga. The deity is worshipped by the adivasi and non- adivasi population of the country alike. However, most of the adivasi elders from the Paniya and Adiya communities who live in and around Valliyoorkkavu temple premises have memories of slavery associated with the temple festival. Valliyoorkkavu festival is celebrated in relation to the beginning of a new agricultural year in the Malayalam calendar. The festival begins in the month of *Meenom* (which falls between the middle of March and the first half of April). The festival opens at 1 *Meenom* (15 March usually) and lasts for fourteen days (until 28 March usually).

Debates and discussions regarding the validity of slave transactions in Valliyoorkkavu were rampant in historical accounts on Wayanad since the twentieth century. Panoor had already opined that the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival acted as a modern slave market. Panoor asserted that the landlords bought and sold Adiyas and Paniyas as commodities. However, historians like Johnny and Mundakkayam Gopi have

different opinions. Johnny, opined that the market at Valliyoorkkavu temple fair was an opportunity for the *valli* labourers to buy commodities like utensils and other household items for the coming year. The labourers however had no money to make a visit to the market and buy goods, observed Johnny. Therefore, the *valli* labourer would ask for advance money from the landlord. The *jenmi* would happily advance money to the labourer. This act reassured the bondedness of the labourer under the same *jenmi* for another year, till the next festival at Valliyoorkkavu (Johnny, *Wayanad Rekhakal* 161). Johnny thus rejected the possibility of a slave market during Valliyoorkkavu temple festival. Mundakkayam Gopi, on the other hand glossed over the role of Valliyoorkkavu temple fair in his discussions regarding slave transactions in Wayanad.[67] By juxtaposing the historians' accounts on slave exchanges in Valliyoorkkavu with memories of the adivasis, I would argue in this section that both the narratives that argued for the existence of slave transactions at Valliyoorkkavu and against it could be true. However, there are landlord narratives that completely rejected the existence of slave transactions at Valliyoorkkavu temple. These narratives presented Valliyoorkkavu temple fair as a site of harmony where the adivasis and non- adivasis interacted freely. Before going into the details of an upper caste myth regarding Valliyoorkkavu temple festival, I would first locate the slave memories that the Adiyas shared with me in relation to Valliyoorkkavu temple festival.

Adiya narratives regarding Valliyoorkkavu temple festival is replete with memories of bondage and slavery. However, these memories are not timeless. They are both from the past and also of the present. They are of the past, in the sense that these memories denote the historical time period between the 1950s and 70s. This is the time when the colonial regime had just left and the modern Kerala state was formed. The contemporaneity of the memories arises from my field work, which is done during March 2021. As oral historians suggested, the memories connect the past with the present. Similarly, Adiya memories of slavery helped them to link their *utopian* space of a casteless society to a time period when they were colonised. Memories also explained the Adiyas the reason for their dispossessions in the contemporary times.

[67] For a discussion on slavery in Wayanad, see M. Gopi 183- 189.

I would now discuss M. Kalan's and Karunan's memories regarding Valliyoorkkavu temple festival. According to M. Kalan, Valliyoorkkavu temple festival was an occasion for the landlords to choose labourers for an agricultural year.[68] It was a site where the *jenmis* hired labourers for their agricultural work. M. Kalan observed that during the 1950s and 60s, almost all the adivasi families from Wayanad would reach Valliyoorkkavu to attend the festival. In fact, the adivasis used to borrow loans from the *jenmi* under whom they worked to attend the festival. The labourer would also get an advance of paddy for the next year (M. Kalan). The amount of paddy grain received from the *jenmi* would be usually 6 *pothis*. M. Kalan says that the price for one *pothi* of paddy was twelve rupees then. His mother and father used to sell two *pothis* (one *pothi* equalled 6 kgs) of paddy and would then go to the festival with twenty-four rupees. This advancement of paddy grain from the *jenmi* is called *kundal* according to M. Kalan. In such cases, the labourer and his family were obliged to work under the same *jenmi* till the next year. M. Kalan also remembered that there were instances when the adivasis would be present at the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair in search of a job. The adivasi families would go to the temple premises with whatever savings they had, including a bamboo mat, some utensils and bare minimum clothes. They would make their journey with all the belongings to the *jenmi's* place the next morning. If there was some money left with the adivasis from the previous year, they would contribute it to the Valliyoorkkavu deity as an offering.

M. Kalan recalled that the Adiyas would ask random landlords who came to the Valliyoorkkavu festival for an advance of money. Advancing money meant that the adivasi became bonded. Then the Adiya or Paniya who had borrowed money from the *jenmi* had to go to the *jenmi's* place at the end of the festival. M. Kalan observed that the agreements between the adivasis and the landlords were oral in nature. He also suggested that the adivasi labourer would take utmost care to abide by the agreement as it was made before the revered Valliyooramma. If anyone tried to escape from the *jenmi's* place, then either the labourer had to pay off the debts or he had to receive punishment for trying to escape. Thus, the closing day of the festival witnessed many more adivasis entering into oral agreements with the *jenmi* who had advanced money.

[68] Personal interview with M. Kalan, 27 March, 2021.

According to Karunan, Valliyoorkkavu temple fair was a site of adivasi slave transactions. Karunan recalled that the temple premises would be filled with the adivasis including Adiyas, and Paniyas on the 28th of March (*Meenom* 14).[69] Adivasis made sure that they attended the closing ceremonies of the temple festival. They would start their journey to the temple a little earlier by 26th of March so that they could reach the temple by the next day. Adivasis would tent near the paddy fields close to the temple premises. They would come prepared with cooking vessels and mats to sleep (Karunan). Earlier, they used to collect firewood from the forests adjacent to the *kavu*. The river Mananthavady, close to the temple, provided them with water. While they peacefully stayed near the temple premises enjoying the festival, buying utensils, ornaments and clothes needed for the next year, the *jenmis* would come searching for labourers at the temple. Karunan explained the process of bringing an adivasi under bondage so:

> The *jenmi* would offer an amount of 15 rupees to a labourer so that he along with his family members would work under the *jenmi* for the next year. This money was called *nippupanam*, translated as money for retaining a labourer. *Nippupanam* was given to the adivasis on the closing day of the festival (28th March). The unwritten agreement between the debtor and creditor was that the labourer should work under the *jenmi* till the next temple festival (15 March of the next year). Most often, the adivasi labourer would remain with the same landlord even after the completion of a year.

My conclusion from both M. Kalan's and Karunan's memories related to the Valliyoorkkavu temple in the 1950s and 60s is that the temple fair actually provided a suitable site for slave transactions and exchanges. Even though there were no written agreements between the debtor and creditor, the market was very much a modern site, where economic transactions happened. The adivasis were cut off from the monetary economy because of the wages that were given to them in kind. The only instance when they wanted money was to acquire some goods from the Valliyoorkkavu market. However, in the course of acquiring money to buy household items and clothes, the adivasis sold themselves off to the *jenmi*. And the cycle continued forever.

---

[69] Personal interview with Karunan, 24 March, 2021.

It is appropriate here to discuss my field observations during the festival at Valliyoorkkavu in March 2021. This is to take the memories of M. Kalan and Karunan to a full circle. M. Kalan and Karunan opined that during the temple fair, all the Adiyas from their respective colonies would unfailingly attend the closing ceremonies at Valliyoorkkavu. This is not because they were in search of jobs under a j*enmi* in the contemporary times. But, for their unfailing devotion to Valliyooramma. Karunan explained to me that there were certain customary rights that different adivasi communities enjoyed during Valliyoorkkavu temple festival. The adivasis hoisted their own flag in obeisance to the deity on 21 March, just seven days after the festival began. Karunan observed that the hoisting of this flag was an act by the adivasis to remember their unconditional devotion to the deity. For instance, Karunan observed that there would be a lot of Paniya and Adiya daily wage labourers who would be engaged in domestic chores inside and around the temple premises. Karunan observed that though the adivasi labour could be seen as a modern-day free wage labour arrangement, the adivasi found this labour as a customary service to the patron deity. I could indeed witness at the temple premises a number of Adiya and Paniya labourers engaged in carrying firewood, cleaning the utensils and bringing plantain leaves for the temple feasts during the festival. There was a Paniya chieftain for the temple, who was appointed to supervise the labourers under him.

Adivasis were given domestic chores inside the temple including the cleaning of temple premises before the onset of the festival. The Paniya *mooppan* or chieftain had the customary right to receive the fire for cooking at the temple from the chief priest of the temple. Community meals would be arranged on all days from the beginning of the festival till its end in the temple. The Paniya *mooppan* was responsible for lighting the stove daily for the community feast at the temple. Cooking and serving food were done mostly by Paniyas belonging to Kavu Paniya colony, near the temple. Adiyas also joined in preparing vegetables for cooking. There were some 6 to 7 Paniya men working in the temple including the *mooppan*. Karunan observed that the adivasis were paid 600 to 700 INR per day for their labour. Besides this the *mooppan* who is a permanent staff of the temple is given 20000 INR per month. Apart from the Paniyas, other communities which held customary rights in the temple included Kurumas, Kurichyas and Adiyas. Kurumas were in charge of knitting baskets to the temple during the festival season. Kurichyas on the other hand were given the responsibility of conducting

fireworks and to accompany the elephants during *arattu* or the closing ceremony of the festival.

I approached Chalan, an Adiya man who was cleaning utensils after a temple feast, for his opinions about adivasis being marginalised as labourers when the upper castes ran the temple administration. In response, Chalan reminded that it was the customary duty of the adivasis to serve the deity.[70] He also mentioned that the goddess Valliyooramma was actually an adivasi deity and that the landlords had hijacked their place of worship. Chalan observed that it was only strategic for them to remain as labourers in and around the temple. Thereby the adivasis could at least fulfil their customary duties. It would also be simplistic for me to conclude here that the adivasis remained as labourers due to their devotion to Valliyooramma. At this point, one would be curious to know the adivasi interest in Valliyoorkkavu temple and its patron deity. I would now go on to discuss certain myths that are associated with the origin of the Valliyoorkkavu temple. These myths include both the recorded, upper caste narratives on the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple and the adivasi myths regarding the formation of the temple. The upper caste narratives claim that Valliyoorkkavu is closely related to another Hindu shrine in Kodungallur, in Kerala. Whereas, the adivasi narratives claim the origin of the temple as intrinsically related to adivasi history, by posing a stark opposition to the Hindu myth. I would discuss only the Adiya explanation regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu and juxtapose this with the recorded myth surrounding the temple. In the next chapter, I would take up the Paniya narratives on the origin of the temple.

One of the earliest references to the Valliyoorkkavu shrine can be seen in C. Nair's administrative history of Wayanad. C. Nair's source was the *Malabar Gazetteer* (1905), written by C. A. Innes. C. Nair invoked Innes and observed that the *Vallurkkavu* temple or Valliyoorkkavu temple's origin is closely related to the Hindu shrine at Kodungallur in the Cochin state (qtd. in. C. Nair). The Naluveettil Nambiars or the Nambiars of the four houses were the oracles of the Kodungallur shrine and they used to frequent the countryside carrying a sword. Two men among them were visiting the Thirunelly temple once in Wayanad. However, they lost their way and were entrapped in a thick jungle. After many failed attempts to find the right way, they decided to take a

[70] Personal interview with Chalan, 26 March, 2021.

bath at the adjacent river. They kept the sword in a nearby ant hill and took a bath and slept thereafter. Soon after they woke up, they found that the sword was missing. C. Nair observed that "a Kurichya boy approached the oracles and informed them that a sword was hanging from a creeper on a nearby hill" (124). The Nambiars soon rushed to the place and attempted to free the sword from the creeper. They addressed the sword, requesting it to disentangle with the words, "Valliyur amma" (O mother! Please Disentangle from the creeper) (C. Nair 124). However, the sword did not come down and the matter was taken to the local chieftains Edachana Nair and Vemoth Nambiar. The Hindu mythology went on to say that the local chieftains came up to the spot and tried to touch the sword and surprisingly it came down and stuck to the ground. This miraculous incident was reported to the Raja of Kottayam, the then ruler of Wayanad. The Raja's visit was followed by an oracular utterance. The utterance stated that the deity of Kodungallur temple wanted to reside in three forms in Wayanad- "as Vanadurga at the place where the sword stuck to the ground, as Jaladurga in the adjoining stream, and in between these two places as Bhadrakali" (C. Nair 124). The Raja of Kottayam thereby built shrines for the goddess as ordered by the oracle. Thereafter, "the place where Bhadrakali resided came to be called *keezhkkavu*, which is downhill; the place where Vanadurga resided came to be called *melkkavu*, which is uphill; and the anthills where the sword was kept while the Nambiars took a bath came to be called *manipputtu*" (C. Nair 126). C. Nair observed that Bhadrakali's shrine is built facing the *manipputtu*.

Eachome Gopi, a local historian and temple trustee of Valliyoorkkavu reasserted the origin story of Valliyoorkkavu as it was narrated by C. Nair. Eachome Gopi, in his mythico- historical work on the legends associated with Vaolliyoorkkavu attributed legitimacy to the Hinduised myth (12- 14). Eachome Gopi suggested that the Hinduised myth that C. Nair reproduced which connected Valliyoorkkavu goddess to the Kodungallur deity is more credible. He thus claimed that Valliyooramma was in fact an incarnation of the patron deity at Kodungallur temple. The above-mentioned myth is closely related to the Hindu shrine at Kodungallur. The shrine at Mananthavady was seen to have been erected with orders from the ruling Raja. The Kurichya adivasi boy appears as just an informer in the narrative who had seen a sword hanging from a creeper. But there are other adivasi mythical narratives regarding the origin of the Valliyoorkkavu temple. Both the Adiyas and Paniyas have their own narratives

regarding the origin story of the Valliyoorkkavu temple. These adivasi myths in fact claim that the Valliyoorkkavu shrine was a place of adivasi worship and that the temple had no connections whatsoever to Kodungallur shrine. The contrasting nature of adivasi myths on the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple to those that are already established is significant. It shows that the Hindu narratives on Valliyoorkkavu temple did not limit the adivasi perception of an alternative myth. I would discuss here one Adiya myth that Chaligadha described regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple.

Rather than narrating a myth, Chaligadha offered a logical explanation to the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple. Chaligadha connected the origin and development of the Valliyoorkkavu shrine to the cattle grazing and food gathering activities of the adivasis in an interview with me. Chaligadha observed that the adivasi communities like the Paniyas, the Adiyas and Kattunayakas had their own cattle and these communities used to take cattle for grazing in the forests. Valliyoorkkavu was such a forested place where the adivasis used to graze their cattle. Chaligadha suggested that as the time passed, Valliyoorkkavu became a meeting place for the adivasis all over Wayanad. As the time passed, the adivasis began to organise their festival of *thira* or *theyyam kettal* or the 'god seeing ritual' at Valliyoorkkavu.[71] *Theyyam kettal* ritual began to attract adivasis all over Wayanad to this place according to Chaligadha. The Valliyoorkkavu goddess, thus has origins in adivasi culture. In the beginning the deity could have just been a stone erection (Chaligadha). Gradually, the *kavu* or shrine developed as a market wherein people began to exchange their goods for other goods. As time passed, ornaments, clothes, utensils and other household materials began to be sold there. This lively market soon attracted the adivasis to this area and their only motive to go for the festival was to buy these products which would be useful for the next year. Soon, this market was hijacked by the landlords and outsiders who came for trade there (Chaligadha). The adivasis who earlier exchanged goods and shared food there now had to advance money from his/ her landlord to buy goods. Thus, the adivasis began to be gradually indebted to work for the *jenmi*, for another agricultural year till the next Valliyoorkkavu festival. The Adiyas, but visualise the duties that they are engaged in the Valliyoorkkavu temple as a re- enactment of the camaraderie between the adivasis.

[71] *Theyyam kettal*, translated as the 'god- seeing' is a ritual in which the adivasis communicate with their dead ancestors and deities through a medium dancer.

They would attend the temple festival to relive a lost time, observed Chaligadha. Thus, Chaligadha had a story of alienation and dispossession to talk about regarding the Valliyoorkkavu shrine. Chaligadha observed that a site which was predominantly claimed as a place of adivasi bondage and camaraderie was hijacked by the landlords. These sites then acted as sites of slave exchanges.

Apart from the memories of slavery that the Adiyas retain, the Adiyas also cherish their yearly journeys to the Valliyoorkkavu temple. The yearly festival at the shrine is an opportunity for the adivasi youth to interact and choose a partner of their liking, Chaligadha opined. Adiya and Paniya songs are replete with references to the journeys to Valliyoorkkavu shrine. The adivasis procured the goods and utensils they wanted for an agricultural year at this temple fair. It was also an opportunity for them to celebrate after a long and arduous agricultural year as *vallippanikkars*. Vella, an elderly Adiya woman and wife of M. Kalan, revealed that Valliyoorkkavu festival is symbolic of a time when the Adiyas found love, hope and fulfilment during the yearly festival.[72] According to Vella, Valliyoorkkavu temple festival offered a backstage for the most elemental aspects of life like wooing, love making and the resultant marriage between the lovers. Thus, the memories regarding Valliyoorkkavu is both painful and celebratory. The memories of the Adiyas that talked about their departure with the *jenmies* to distant lands after the *nippupanam* was paid was definitely painful. However, the Adiyas reinvented narratives and myths for political purposes. The Adiyas imagined narratives that hinted at their dispossession of public places by invasions from the landlords. Moreover, their memories regarding slave exchanges at Valliyoorkkavu presented the landlords as culprits. Thus, it is the mythical way that the Adiyas resort to so as to challenge the entire system of landlordism. I would also suggest here that the theme of invasion, dispossession and enslavement of *pulappattu* myth is sustained throughout the renewed mythical understandings of the Adiyas.

Both Chaligadha and Vella pointed to the fact that the adivasis still visit the temple as they truly believe that the deity is an adivasi deity. The adivasis believe it their customary duty to perform the duties assigned to them at the temple during the festival. Karunan in fact observed that since the goddess Valliyooramma was one among them, the adivasis would offer their oblations to the goddess, even if it meant

[72] Personal interview with Vella, 28 March, 2021.

labour. However, representatives of the temple administration used the adivasis' devotion towards Valliyooramma against them. For instance, Eachome Gopi, one of the trustees of the temple, in an interview with me observed that the adivasis were employed by the temple administration for domestic chores as it was their customary duty to do so.[73] Thus, history repeats itself in the present day as well. The colonial administration stereotyped the adivasis as slaves, attributing it a customary nature. The Adiyas and Paniyas are naturalised as daily wage labourers by the temple administration in the present day. The upper-class communities ruled and regulated their labour without any sense of memories and myths of the adivasis. Eachome Gopi even denied any connection that the Valliyoorkkavu temple had with the slave exchanges (30). Gopi's purpose is to redeem the temple from the history of slave transactions. But to deny the exchange of *nippupanam* at the temple premises would be denying the history of slavery as well. Moreover, I could find some vestiges of slave transactions in the 1950s and 60s at the temple premise during my field visit. An important ritual on the day when the festival commenced involved offering the Paniya *mooppan* or chieftain with a mat (plastic mats are given nowadays, earlier mats made of palm leaves were given) and one *pothi* of rice. I read this ritual as a re-enactment of the enslavement of the adivasis in the temple premises in the 1950s and 60s. If the mythical Adiya served the Pakkam *thampuran*, historically, the Adiyas were bought by the landlords at Valliyoorkkavu. Whereas in the contemporary times, they are still serving the temple administration with their labour. The adivasis still tent at the vast fields near Valliyoorkkavu, the day before the closing ceremony. For the adivasis, it could be symbolic of the communitarian life they had once, as opined by Chaligadha. This is how memory is used by the adivasis to reclaim a history of dignity. But I would also suggest here that the adivasis resting near the temple premises on plastic mats could also be reminiscent of a brutal history of slave transactions shared by P. Kalan, M. Kalan and Karunan.

Kambalappani

Kambalappani or *kambala* labour is another cultural site in Wayanad that the adivasis remember for exploitation of labour. If Valliyoorkkavu temple festival was the site where the slave labour and bondedness began, *kambalappani* was another site of

[73] Personal interview with E. Gopi, 21 March, 2021.

adivasi subjection after the labourer was bought. The mythical story of *pulappattu* talked about the enslavement of Melorachan and Keeyoruthi by Pakkam *thampuran*. The myth talked about the subsequent exploitation of their labour by the landlord. Now, I would discuss in this section, how the actual landlords extracted maximum labour from the adivasis on the paddy fields during *kambalappani*. Moreover, I draw on the memories of former *valli* labourers Kariyan, M. Kalan and Vella to understand the adivasi perspective on *kambalappani*. What I could read from the memories of the *valli* labourers was that they identified *kambalappani* as symbolic of the labour exploitations on the paddy fields. However, some colonial administrative histories connected the practice of *kambalappani* as intrinsically related to the love for song and dance of the adivasi labourers. I would thus present the contradictions between the established narratives and adivasi narratives on *kambalappani.* Mainstream historiographies presented *kambalappani* as a celebration organised by the landlords for his *valli* labourers. However, the adivasis imagined it as an exploitative practice.

Kambalappani is a practice in which the *valli* labourers are called *en masse* to the paddy fields to finish the replanting of the paddy saplings within short periods of time. The labourers at times had to work overnight to finish this task. This labour practice is alternatively called *kambalanatti*. The *jenmi* would advance loads of paddy to the labourers for *kambalappani* as wages. No labourer could keep back from engaging in *kambalappani*. Earliest references to the practice of *kambalappani* could be found in the administrative historiography of Wayanad by C. Nair. C. Nair observed that the adivasis including Adiyas and Paniyas were fond of music and dance. He also suggested that they would not hesitate to work on the fields whole night, singing and dancing to the tune of drum and flute (C. Nair 104). Thus, *kambalappani* was seen as a celebratory occasion for the adivasis by C. Nair. However, Azeez Tharuvana, a historian and researcher of adivasi life and culture in Wayanad presented the other side of *kambalappani* in his cultural- historical study on the adivasis of Wayanad. Tharuvana observed that the practice of *kambalappani* was exploitative (*Wayanattile* 53). *Kambalappani* was practised in Wayanad until recently, Tharuvana observed. According to Tharuvana, during *kambalappani*, the landlord made the *valli* labourer to finish labour that would last for three days in a single day (*Wayanattile* 53). Tharuvana suggested that the labourers were given food and liquor on days of *Kambalappani*. The landlord thus justified the exploitation of his labourers with the advancement of food

and liquor. However, the practice of *kambalappani* is no longer practised in Wayanad (Tharuvana, *Wayanattile* 53). Thus, I would suggest here that *kambalappani* became systematised in Wayanad in the colonial times as this was also the time when the adivasi labourers were brought completely into wetlands cultivation. Hence, C. Nair could make a comment on the celebratory mood of *kambalappani*. C. Nair's opinions on *kambalappani* could be a reproduction of the landlord narratives on the same.

I would now try to discuss certain adivasi perspectives on *kambalappani* as retrieved from their memories. Adivasi memories on *kambalappani* suggest that the paddy fields, a metaphor for agricultural prosperity, became a site for adivasi exploitation. The adivasis had already become slaves as they lost lands for cultivation. And the very fields where the adivasis worked now became sites of exploitation. There are however differences even in the adivasi perspective on *kambalappani*. M. Kalan and Vella narrated that *kambalappani* was an occasion for the *jenmies* to extract maximum labour from the *valli* labourers. According to M. Kalan, the *jenmi* would call two or three of his *valli* labourers the day preceding *kambalappani*. The *jenmi* would arrange for two or three head loads of paddy as wages in advance, to be given to the other labourers. This is to ensure that the *valli* labourers would turn up for *kambalappani* the next day. The duty assigned to the labourers was to finish off the planting of paddy saplings in two days, which otherwise would require ten or fifteen days of labour (M. Kalan). Vella recalled that the *jenmi* created a celebratory mood by asking the labourers to play musical instruments and dance on the fields. She suggested that the women would plant the saplings, listening to the beats of adivasi musical instruments, the *kuzhal* or pipe and *thudi* or small drums. *Kuzhal* and *thudi* would be played by the men on the raised banks of the paddy fields, while the women continuously worked. The men were given *varambu* labour which involved building bunds. The *jenmi* making the adivasi labourers work to their own songs and beats is very similar to the European master making the slave hop and dance on the auction slave in the European slave markets. The slaves responded with songs and dance on the auction blocks in Europe, so that the he/she would be presentable to the buyer, Hartman suggested. Hartman also observed that the slaves were fed with good food and clothing so that they would act presentably (37- 38). Similarly, the *jenmi* advanced food to his *valli* labourers, and organised dance and music on the paddy fields so that the labourers would work

unendingly. Thus, in *kambala* labour, the singing and dancing bodies of the *valli* labourers are used against them.

For instance, Baby in his *Mavelimanram* used a lullaby of the *valli* labourers to show that *kambalappani* was an exploitative practice that affected the entire family. Baby had collected this lullaby during the 1980s. The lullaby presented the situation of a baby who cried of hunger while its mother went for *kambalappani* in the fields. The siblings of the baby desperately tried to rock it into sleep. The elder one sang: "Molukutty bavoom/ Ammayilama perippanum/ Nattinaduvanum poyula" (Sleep my dear, Mother is not here, she has gone for *natti* to replant the saplings). The elder one called the mother back from the fields in the song to feed the baby, to which the mother responded, "Inka njaaru perichumkoode theeruvankani/ kuthake theerade poyalo, thampiran intu kontukaave/ ottala kiraayatte aade" (The saplings are yet to be replanted, landlord would kill us if I come back before the replanting is over, Let the baby cry for a while) (Baby 157). This lullaby epitomises the hardships of a mother who desperately wanted to feed her new born. Yet she cannot feed her baby as she is afraid of the landlord's wrath. The baby on the other hand is a victim of the *kambalanatti* system, where its parents would be away for long.

Kariyan, the late *gaddika* artist and chieftain of Kaithavally Adiya colony, however presented his memories of *kambalappani* differently. Kariyan's memories of *kambalappani* relate to the1950s and 60s. Kariyan, in an interview with me in 2018, observed that all the *jenmis* who owned the lands would not have the resources including the labourers to till and cultivate the fields. According to Kariyan, those *jenmis* sought help from the adivasis: "Agricultural communities like ours do not like to keep the lands barren. Paddy is the goddess of prosperity for us. It is the paddy fields that gave us sustenance. Thus, all the labourers of an area would sow the fields in a day" (Kariyan). For Kariyan, the *kambalappattu* and dance were an invigorating element to the labourers. The labourers would be energised with the beats and they would not get tired easily, observed Kariyan. Kariyan's memories regarding *kambala* labour asserted agency to the Adiyas as agriculturalists whereas, M. Kalan and Vella talked about the element of exploitation in the practice. Kariyan does not simply limit his opinions about *kambalappan*i as an assertion of agency to personal interviews. Rather, Kariyan toured the public stages of Kerala with *kambalanritham* or *kambala* dance. This dance form is

a replication of the dance of men and women on the paddy fields of Wayanad during *kambalappani. Kambala* dance would be presented on stage by Kariyan's troupe to assert the identity of Adiyas as agriculturalists. A detailed discussion of *kambalanritham* performances on public stages would be discussed in the next section of this chapter. I appreciate Kariyan's efforts to present a dignified history of Adiyas. However, the rigours of *valli* labour is latent in these performances as the history of Adiya exploitation is undeniable. Thus, what is more important here is the ways in which the adivasis try to counter the exploitation faced by them during *kambalappani* by inventing dignified narratives surrounding it.

I would conclude this section by pointing out that songs of adivasi communities, sung during *kambalappani* acted as another medium of resistance to oppression and bondage. The lamentable themes of *kambalappattu* counterbalanced the excessive pleasure displayed on the paddy fields. Thus, scenes of subjection are also scenes of resistance, as Hartman and Gilroy suggested. Though the adivasis could not collectively unite under an institution to challenge the system of bondage, they communicated resistance through their songs. These songs were granted down to generations as memories. *Kambalappattu* that I could collect during the course of fieldwork mostly related to Paniya life. Thus, I would reserve a detailed discussion of the elements of resistance in Paniya *kambalappattu* to the next chapter, which is on the Paniyas. I have already identified that the Adiyas preserve a history that reminded them about the routes of dispossession and tutelage. *Uchronic* space of *pulappattu* is localised and historicised in the cultural scenes of Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani*. I would now go on to discuss in the next section, the ways in which Adiyas make strategic use of their ritualistic practice of *gaddika* and *kambala* dance to project their history as agricultural slaves. Moreover, they use these rituals to claim dignity as modern citizens in contemporary times. I would say this act is a political attempt to restore a *uchronic* space of equality in the post- electoral Kerala state.

3. 2. 3. New Space of Resistance: *Gaddika* or the "Song of Peace"

The *valli* labourers for a long time was caught within the colonial discourse of slavery and bondedness with no escape from it. It was with the CPI's interventions in the life of the *valli* labourers, during the 1950s that they began to claim an identity as bonded agricultural labourers. It was also around this time that the adivasi issues began

to be discussed in the political stage of Kerala. By the 1960s and 70s, a renewed interest in the adivasi art forms began in Kerala. It is decipherable from the memoirs of P. Kalan that Communism took roots in Wayanad with the literacy classes that were brought along by the CPI activists. P. Kalan learnt to read and write from such classes organised by the party volunteers. This moment of acquiring literacy was another historical juncture when P. Kalan decided to reform some of the superstitions in his community. In P. Kalan's memoir, Rajagopalan observed that he was influenced by the Communist government's efforts to bring the adivasi art forms on to the public stages in the 1970s. The efforts of tribal departments, installation of KIRTADS (Kerala Institute for Research Training and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Tribes) in 1972, and encouragements from forest departments played crucial roles in bringing the adivasi art forms to the public spaces in Kerala (Rajagopalan 53- 54). P. Kalan, who was also a CPI (M) member by the 1960s, decided to bring *gaddika*, a ritual of the Adiya community, as an art form to the public. The aim of P. Kalan in reinventing the practice of *gaddika* was to project it as the cultural capital of Adiyas and also as symbolic of their exploited identities. Thus, the debates and discussions regarding the adivasi bondedness in Wayanad came to a full circle with P. Kalan's endeavours to present his community's plight, through an adivasi art form.

Given the 1970s milieu of Kerala and its renewed interest in the adivasi art forms, I would in this section, try to analyse *gaddika*, as an art form that the Adiyas adopted to represent themselves in the public domain of Kerala. The Adiya identity came to be synonymous with *gaddika* with constant efforts by artists-cum-activists from the community. *Gaddika*, which is primarily an Adiya shamanistic ritual, in the 1970s began to be reinvented as an art form by P. Kalan. I observe here that the mythical realms of dispossessions in *pulappattu* remained privately amidst the community members. However, *gaddika* brought to the stage the anguish and uproars of an exploited community. I would suggest that *gaddika* was strategically adopted by the Adiyas to communicate exploitation. My primary resources for reading *gaddika* include the memoirs of P. Kalan, ethnographic interviews with *gaddika* artist Kariyan, done during 2018 and 2019 and insights from *gaddika* artists K. P. Madhu and C. K. Binu, collected during 2021. Kariyan is from Kaithavally Adiya colony, in Thrissilery, whereas Madhu and Binu are from Kundu Chekot Adiya colony, Thrissilery. All these *gaddika* artists belonged to North Wayanad. Madhu and Binu helped me collect *gaddika*

hymns by reciting these hymns to me. Kariyan who was actively a part of the *valli* strikes during the 1960s followed the footsteps of P. Kalan in presenting *gaddika* to the public stages. Madhu and Binu are artists in their forties. They learnt the art of *gaddika* from P. Kalan in the 2000s and began to tour the stages of Kerala with the art form. Madhu and Binu also train students who are enrolled block wise for learning *gaddika*. *Gaddika* classes are an initiative by the state government to promote adivasi folk forms and the trainers are paid for their classes. Ethnographic interviews were done during a time period between 2018- 2021. Moreover, field visits to the Kerala state sponsored tribal art festival called 'Gaddika,' also helped me record *gaddika* performances on public stages. Moreover, for a fuller version of *gaddika* hymns, I have made use of the compilation of adivasi songs by M. R. Pankajakshan, a retired Malayalam teacher from Mananthavady Government School in Wayanad. Pankajakshan's compilation of adivasi songs is titled *Kerala Bhasha Ganangal: Waynanttile Adivasikalude Pattukal*.[74] Pankajakshan collected Adiya songs over a period between 1984- 89 in North Wayanad. In the preface to this book, G. Bhargavan Pillai observed that Pankajakshan took immense efforts to record the adivasi songs and hymns by frequenting the Adiya hamlets. Moreover, this book was the result of a project organised by Kerala Sahitya Akademi in the 1990s to make an archive of adivasi songs. As far as the Adiya songs are concerned, Pankajakshan collected *gaddika* songs (ritualistic hymns), *pey* songs (songs of exorcism), marriage songs, lullabies and fun songs. Thus, I use ethnographic interviews, compiled archives on *gaddika* hymns and field visits to the actual performances on stage to have a complex picture of *gaddika*. All the *gaddika* hymns that I had accessed are variants of the hymn from North Wayanad region. [75] I would divide this section into subsections to discuss the ritualistic importance of *gaddika*, the close relations that the *gaddika* hymns have with Adiya life and culture and the reinvention of *gaddika* as an art form by the Adiyas in the 1970s. *Gaddika*, by the 1980s became a part of the modernity project and began to be projected as the cultural identity

[74] This book is a compilation of hymns and songs collected from the adivasi communities including Kurichyas, Adiyas and Kushavas.

[75] Madhu and Binu observed that *Gaddika* hymns varied in mythical narratives, vocabulary and tune as one moved from South Wayanad to North Wayanad.

of the Adiyas. Thus, by the 1980s, the Adiyas began to historicise their myths of dispossession.

Gaddika as Ritual: A Site of Adiya Assertion

Gaddika, is yet another ritualistic practice of the Adiyas like *pulappattu*. Mayaram, in her introduction to *Resisting Regimes*, suggested that the history of subaltern resistance is a history of suffering as well and that the idea of resistance should not be seen as the other of docility/ servility (9). Similarly, the Adiyas used their ritualistic realms to offer resistance from within the systems of bondage. Through *gaddika*, the Adiyas could present a cultural history from an adivasi perspective. As opposed to the colonial historiography that imagined the Adiyas as beggars and slaves, the Adiyas offered themselves a history of will and power through *gaddika*. Nevertheless, the ritual was practised within the power structure of bondage and landlordism. According to Kariyan, *gaddika* is conducted to cast off the evils that affected the society of which the Adiyas too are a part of. Evils manifested in the form of diseases and natural disasters. The word *gaddika* means 'peace' and the act of performing *gaddika* is called *marineekkal* or casting away of diseases. G*addika* involves chanting of hymns, dance of the possessed shamans and offerings to the deities. The ritualistic hymns of *gaddika* are never written down. These hymns are uttered in the Ravula language of the Adiyas. *Gaddika* hymns are thus often handed down orally to the younger generation of shamans (Kariyan). *Gaddika* is performed during three important occasions, according to Kariyan.[76] The primary and most important occasion during which *gaddika* is performed is when a community member is sick. For the Adiyas, illness is not simply a physical ailment, but it is the result of an attack from the evil spirits. The evil spirit should be casted away by the powerful interventions of the Adiya deities. One chief Adiya deity who casts away illness is Mariyamma, observed Kariyan. *Gaddika* performance would propitiate the presence of various deities who are capable of protecting the community from further attacks. The second occasion during which *gaddika* is performed is to thank the adivasi deities after a community member had recovered from a certain illness. At such occasions, the ritual practised is known as *pooja gaddika* (the word *pooja* could be translated as 'worship').

[76] Personal interview with Kariyan, 24 Feb, 2019.

When *gaddika* is performed for the common well- being of the entire locality, the practice is then known as *nadugaddika* or (*gaddika* for the locality) (Kariyan).

It is a chief shaman, called *thammadi*, who presides over *Gaddika*. He is assisted by a number of Adiya shamans. *Thammadi* would pray for the sick person with offerings. He would offer prayers in praise of Mariyamma, Lord Siva, Siddhappan, Malakkari, Jogiyachan and Pookkari Magatheyyam. As the propitiation progresses, *thammadi* would dance with vigorous bodily movements around a lighted lamp to the tune of Adiya musical instruments, *thudi* and *kuzhal*. *Thammadi* and other shamans would slowly be possessed by Mariyamma. *Thammadi* asks the goddess to cast off the evil spirits. Indu Menon, a researcher who works with the department of anthropology at KIRTADS, made detailed descriptions on the ritualistic *gaddika*. Menon observed that the climax of *gaddika* is marked by the breaking of a coconut by the *thammadi*, accompanied by chants. *Thammadi,* possessed by Mariyamma, then gives revelations as to why a person was sick and the remedies to be done to prevent further ailments. These revelations are called *karikambuli* (Menon 30). The remedial measures would often be done by making offerings in the form of rice, coconut and betel nuts to the dead ancestors and other Adiya deities.

Nadugaddika, on the other hand, is performed not simply for the Adiya community, but for the entire locality, including a hierarchy of people from the landlords to *valli* labourers. When it comes to *nadugaddika*, the Adiyas assume subjectivity and power over all the other communities of the locality. Kariyan observed that the entire locality would ask the Adiyas to perform *nadugaddika* in their households irrespective of religious differences. *Nadugaddika* is often performed in the month of July just after the Kottiyoor temple festival at Thrissilery.[77] *Nadugaddika* is performed continuously for seven nights by a group of *thammadis*. Kariyan also reminded that the performers would not sleep for seven nights, lest the spirits might escape Mariyamma. Preparations for a *nadugaddika* could be discernible from Madhu's explanations regarding the ritual. Initial preparations for *nadugaddika* often happened at

[77] A famous shrine dedicated to Lord Shiva in Wayanad, where the Adiyas are entitled to perform special offerings during the annual temple festival.

a household belonging to Evila *chemmam* or Evila family.[78] Madhu informed that for *nadugaddika*, the performers would begin from a raised platform called *Marimandapam*. They get dressed there as Mariyamma. The group would sometimes split into two. These groups perform *nadugaddika* in different parts of a locality. This ritual is continued for seven days. These groups would then unite at a fixed place during the seventh day and would then offer *mari* or illness to a river. The disease-causing evils are symbolically carried by the performers in a portable shrine called *gudi*. *Gudi* is a symbolic shrine for Mariyamma (Madhu). *Gudi* was finally disposed of in a nearby water body and the letting go of the *gudi* symbolised safety from diseases and good luck for the next agricultural year.

The myth behind *gaddika*, according to Kariyan, was related to the visits of goddess Mariyamma to Wayanad. Mariyamma is a powerful goddess who protected the Adiyas from *bhoothas* (demons) and *prethas* (ghosts) since the Adiyas were born. The myth behind *gaddika* is an adivasi version of the *Yakshayaga* story of the Hindu mythology. In the *Yakshayaga* story, Lord Siva was infuriated by the death of his beloved Sati at the hands of her father Yaksha. Lord Siva had therefore sent his clan of *bhoothas* to interrupt and wreak havoc in Yaksha's *yaga*.[79] Adiyas believed that Lord Siva's *bhoothas*; after destroying Yaksha's *yaga*, arrived at Kottiyoor temple, a famous Shiva shrine in Thrissilery, in Wayanad and began destroying the entire locality. The Adiyas, being the residents of Wayanad, asked for help from their goddess Mariyamma to save their locality from the *bhoothas.* Mariyamma assured the Adiyas that she would destroy the *bhoothas.* She asked the Adiyas to assist her in the process. According to the myth, Adiyas were asked to walk with Mariyamma in the entire locality to get hold of all the *bhoothas*. It is believed that Mariyamma drove the *bhoothas* away with a cane and she carried them all the way to Karnataka, thus freeing the people of Thrissilery from further disturbances from the *bhootas*. This mythical story is narrated as a hymn during the *gaddika* performances, observed Madhu. The hymns narrate the journey of

[78] *Chemmam* denotes a family and each *chemmam* has a presiding deity for them. The deities assigned to a particular *chemmam* are worshipped only by the respective *chemmam* members. Madhu belonged to Kalakkottu/ Mommattu/ Uthire *chemmams* whose presiding deity is 'Mariyamma.'

[79] A ceremonial offering to the Hindu gods for their blessings.

Mariyamma through the lands of Wayanad from Karnataka in search of the *bhoothas*. Praises are showered on Goddess *Mariyamma* who helped the Adiyas to free their lands from the deadly *bhoothas*. I would suggest here that this myth regarding the crucial intervention of Mariyamma in Adiya lives is important. The myth behind the practice of *gaddika* presented the Adiyas as agents for a social cause; which is to save the people of a locality from evil spirits and ensuing diseases. Thus, the *thammadi*, an Adiya priest, who is also a *valli* labourer, is presented as a saviour of the society.

N*adugaddika* is thus a medium for the Adiyas to metaphorically assert that they are powerful enough to make a culture and society move forward peacefully. Such cultural practices of power and agency were lost in the colonial archives regarding Adiyas. I would argue that the Adiyas used *nadugaddika* to metaphorically talk about the continuity between the landlords and *valli* labourers. Agricultural labour of Adiyas were exploited for the increased production and thereby the prosperity of landlords. Similarly, the sacred realms of the Adiyas are also employed for the well- being of landlord classes. *Nadugaddika* was also historically important as it suggested that the bonded labourers were not an entity outside the forces of modernity. *Nadugaddika* thus is a symbol of the history of slavery in which both the adivasi and the non- adivasi engaged. Nevertheless, the Adiyas were able to offer a narrative of agency from within the hegemonic systems through such cultural practices. This engagement of Adiyas with the landlords' life through their rituals, is another instance where the adivasis tries to break free from the grand narratives of modernity. Skaria had already pointed out the power of the hybrid histories to provide a 'politics of hope' to the adivasi that freed them from romantic environmentalism and othering by the forces of modernity. For Adiyas, *gaddika* offered a 'politics of hope,' to reassert their agency amidst the history of colonialism, migrations and subsequent dispossessions. In fact, memorising and reiterating the *gaddika* hymns is itself an act of retaliation within a system of subjection.

Gaddika Hymns and the Adiya Mythical World

Gaddika hymns are a vast repository of the Adiya mythical world in the Ravula language. *Gaddika* hymns also revealed certain cultural aspects of Adiya lifestyle and history associated with the community. Though *gaddika* artists including Kariyan, Madhu and Binu could only recollect the hymns dedicated to Mariyamma, Pankajakshan's compilation of *gaddika* hymns consisted of prayers dedicated to various

Adiya deities. The reason for this discrepancy according to Madhu was that the *gaddika* artists now recollected only that much of the hymns that was required for the stage performance. Whereas, Pankajakshan would have collected these hymns from various *thammadis* from the Adiya hamlets during the 1980s. The deities to which the *Gaddika* hymns are dedicated included Mariyamma, Shuvani (Shiva), Malakkari, Mallappan, Pookkari Magatheyyam, Thirunelli Jogiyachan, Chikkamma, Valloorамma and Siddhappan, according to Pankajaskshan.[80]

According to Madhu, *gaddika* hymns begin with a description of the creation of the world, sky, earth, sun and moon. Once the creation of nature is narrated, the chants go on to describe the birth of sun, moon, Lord Shvanu and Mariyamma: "Aakashavum bhoomiyum onnaki ottichayi, poomi pooloka ottiyakondano…santhiranu ottittaye, suriyanu ottittaye…" (the sky, earth, the world, sun and moon were formed). Since Lord Shvanu and Mariyamma are the chief deities of the Adiyas, the ritual is performed only after these deities are propitiated. Mariyamma is said to be born in a place called Mangala near Mysore.: "Mangala nattithathalli Maari ottithava" (Madhu). Madhu observed that Mariyamma visits north Wayanad from her shrine at Alapalli during the Malayalam month of *Midhunam* (June- July) just before the harvest festival in the paddy fields of Wayanad. In addition to the description of the place where she was born, the *gaddika* hymns also talk about the beautiful jewelleries with which Mariyamma was adorned when she began her journey from Karnataka to Wayanad. One of the important instances in the *gaddika* song is the description of certain diseases like smallpox and chickenpox, whose seeds Mariyamma would carry away from the Adiya locality to the Mysore district: "aarava kallukku banuthiroga, aarava kallukku vasooriya roga, keerloka sheemekku ezhunthu vanthathillai" (Mariyamma has descended to the lands to carry away the diseases including chicken pox and smallpox) (Madhu). The hymn then goes on to describe the places that Mariyamma covers as she takes away the diseases to Mysore. There is a description of the places including Mangala, Moodala, Moodenahalli and Alapalli in the hymn. The Adiya myths claim their close connections to Mysore. The journeys that Mariyamma took from Karnataka to Wayanad and back are symbolic of the itinerant nature of the Adiyas. Mariyamma is described as looking out to the Malayala kingdom from her shrine at Allapalli in Karnataka: "Kannethi noditha

[80] Personal interview with Pankajakshan, 24 March, 2021.

Malayalarajya/ Malayalarajya nodakka chanda/ Ooru keri ellam thirukane vantha/ Pathinettu roga gadilu thumbitha…" (Mariyamma looked from her shrine towards Malayala kingdom (Kerala) which appeared beautiful to her/ She visited the entire locality to sends away eighteen diseases on a vehicle to Mysore) (Madhu).[81]

Gaddika hymns dedicated to other deities also make frequent references to the journeys of the deities from Karnataka to Mysore. There are similar references to the journeys of other deities across the borders in other hymns. Hymns compiled by Pankajakshan include references to the deities like Malakkari, Thirunelli Jogiyachan, Chikkamma and Valluramma who have itinerant nature.[82] Similarly, Madhu observed that the *kambalappattu* which accompany *kamabalanritham* (*kambala* dance) on stage also have references to deities frequenting from Karnataka to Kerala. For instance, Madhu talked about Karimala Muthasssi, an incarnation of Mariyamma travelling through various hills and plains of Wayanad where paddy cultivation happened.[83] They would travel from various places in Karnataka to Wayanad to carry away the disease-causing evils. Moreover, these deities share crucial relations with the Adiyas as a community. Certain hymns talk about the birth and residence of the deities in the hills. Hills are the imagined places of a casteless society for the Adiyas, suggested Binu, another *gaddika* artist.[84] For instance, the hymns dedicated to Malakkari talked about the birth of this god from the hills. Malakkari is an incarnation of Lord Shiva in the form of an adivasi who resided in the hills and forests, observed Binu. Malakkari is described as the one who ruled the plains and hills together: "Asha muttava deshathe mele uliyanuttano/ Poomiva mooru mandala volike uliyanuttano/ Poomigare thane gareneyya uliyanuttano" (Pankajakshan 272). Similarly, Thirunelly Jogiyachan took his birth amidst the hills and rocks (Pankajakshan 285).

Moreover, there are close references to the Adiya lifestyle in the descriptions of these deities. For instance, the deities like Malakkari, Pookkari Magatheyyam and

---

[81] As recited by Madhu in a personal interview with me on 27 March, 2021.

[82] See Pankajakshan 273, 274, 285, 305, 307, 312.

[83] Karimala kotta, Vellimala kotta, Neelimala kotta and Cholamala kotta are the hills that Karimala Muthassi visited.

[84] Personal interview with Binu, 28 March, 2021.

Jogiyachan are supposed to visit the vast paddy fields, where the Adiyas cultivated.[85] In the hymns dedicated to Malakkari, it is observed that the entire community of the masters and their labourers would offer prayers to Malakkari with rice and lighted lamps as oblations: "Mekkotte karuthalum keekkotte chettadiyanmarum/ Echil kuppe theendi thikkeyalli/ Oruthirikkathittu nayarim bechu parenchukitty…" (Pankajakshan 275). The implication here is that *gaddika*, a ritual of the Adiyas, had commands over the landlord community as well. There are references to the traditional goods and utensils that the Adiyas use in the hymns dedicated to Jogiyachan. Kariyan observed that Jogiyachan took birth as an Adiya *mooppan* or chieftain. Jogiyachan built a place of residence for him and brought household items like winnow, a traditional mortar for husking rice, pots and other utensils: "Kuthine ulakkayo chembinteye Jogi/ Cherinoru muramokke chembinteye/ Kudukkayu madukkemu chembinteye Jogi…" (Kariyan). The reference to winnow, mortar and pots are highly symbolic of an agricultural lifestyle of the community. Jogiyachan's appearance is also not grand. He wears copper bangles and earrings like the Adiya men and women do. Jogiyachan is thus symbolically an Adiya agricultural labourer, who led a humble life.

Kariyan recalled that the Adiyas were an agricultural community who travelled from places of Coorg and Mysore in Karnataka to Wayanad in Kerala. For Kariyan, the deities were the Adiyas themselves. The mythical world of the Adiyas was their history as well. Kariyan observed that since Ithiyachan and Ithiyamma came to Wayanad from Karnataka, the community members originally belonged to Karnataka. Kariyan also said that the Adiyas became enslaved under the landlords in Wayanad, whereas they used to lead an independent life prior to migrations to Wayanad. I would suggest here that Kariyan's mythical world could not be totally dismissed. This is because prior to the colonial regulations of the lands and forests, Adiyas might have led a peaceful life of shifting cultivation in the forest. And these forests might have bordered both Kerala and Karnataka. It was only during the nineteenth century, with the settlement around paddy cultivation that the Adiyas became subjects of the Malabar district. Thus, I suggest that when the Adiyas talk about their deities moving freely from Karnataka to Wayanad and back, the Adiyas are hinting at a time when they were free from state-imposed regulations. In other words, the itinerant deities are symbolic of the Adiyas

[85] See Pankajakshan 274, 283, 284, 285.

prior to enslavement. Thus, the Adiyas, through a reiteration of the chants, talked about their history of enslavement as well. Their mythical worlds were regulated by the forces of modernity and the Adiyas then became bonded.

Gaddika and Kambalanritham in Popular Culture

I have already observed that by the 1970s, there had been an increased interest in adivasi art forms and traditions in Kerala. Thus, *gaddika*, which remained as a ritual since then was reinvented as an art form. *Gaddika* was soon performed on the public stages of Kerala in an attempt to make it popular. In this section, I look at the transformation of *gaddika* as a popular art in Kerala. The main objective of this transformation, I would say was to project *gaddika* as a resistance to slavery and bondage. *Gaddika* became an artistic medium for the Adiyas to talk about the routes of servitude. To arrive at such a conclusion, I would depend on the memoirs of P. Kalan, which came out in 2012 and my field visits in 2018 and 2019 to the tribal festival 'Gaddika' organised jointly by the state government and KIRTADS. P. Kalan, the CPI (M) leader from the Adiya community was also a *gaddika* artist. P. Kalan's life was crucial in the formation and revival of *gaddika* as an art form. On the other hand, the Communist governments in Kerala during their tenures organised the tribal art festivals to promote such endeavours from adivasis. Thus, 'Gaddika,' the tribal festival provided a remarkable stage for the Adiyas to convey their resistance to the non- adivasi audience. The Adiyas used this stage also to perform *kambalanritham*, another form of dance closely associated with agriculture. 'Gaddika' was organised for the first time in 2006 and the festival was organised continuously till 2011 under the Left Democratic Front led by V. S. Achuthanandan. When the ruling front changed in 2012, 'Gaddika' ceased to happen. It was again in 2016 with the Left Front government coming to power that 'Gaddika' was organised. Before going into the details of stage performances of *gaddika* and *kambalanritham*, I would discuss P. Kalan's life as a *gaddika* artist and his contributions in transforming *gaddika* as an art form.

Through the purgation of the art form, P. Kalan was able to reveal to the public the superstitions that coloured his community and the necessity to sieve out the outdated customs and traditions that would stand in the growth of the adivasi communities. P. Kalan was the first *mooppan* or adivasi chieftain to perform *gaddika* on public stage in 1984 at Thiruvananthapuram in Kanakakunnu palace. A. K. Nambyar, in the memoirs

of Kalan observed that this performance was organised by the troupe called 'Gaddika Kalasamithi.' 'Gaddika Kalasamithi' was founded by Kalan along with other performers from the community including M. V. Kalan, M. Mantan and Karumban (Nambyar 37). Valli, who belonged to P. Kalan's troupe, could recollect that *gaddika* has been performed in over more than hundred stages (Valli 128). Therefore, a ritual which was considered as pure shamanism got popular. It was the imbibing of Communist ideals that prompted P. Kalan to understand the fact that *gaddika* was not actually a cure for the diseases. P. Kalan, as a *mooppan*, made the community aware that it was the medicines that were administered to the patient during the ritual that worked on illness" (Rabija 131). Gilroy suggested that black music like the blues and jazz connected the slave experiences of the diaspora. Similarly, P. Kalan wanted to project *gaddika* as an art form that reminded the Adiyas of their slave history. Moreover, *gaddika* in P. Kalan's hands became a site of resistance. Nambyar, in P. Kalan's memoir, observed that Kalan broke the traditional patterns of ritualistic *gaddika* by communicating with his audience in the middle of the performance. P. Kalan introduced alienation effects of the European theatre into the performance of *gaddika* (Nambyar 37).[86] He also occasionally made the audience aware of the art that *gaddika* is by interrupting the performance with speeches. Kariyan, who learnt the art of *gaddika* from P. Kalan, observed that speeches made by P. Kalan in the middle of the performance would usually be in Malayalam. Kariyan described *gaddika* as an uproar against hunger, exploitation and helplessness of the Adiyas in Wayanad during an introductory speech to a *gaddika* performance in 2019. Moreover, the chanting of the ritual became an uproar when it came as an art form to the public. P. Kalan used *gaddika* as a medium to present on a global platform the challenges that are faced by the Adiyas as a community in the contemporary times (Nambyar 85).

I would suggest that P. Kalan was crucially aware of the necessity of becoming both traditional and modern at the same time. P. Kalan, as an Adiya chieftain, had all respects for the community's rituals. He presented on stage, only that part of *gaddika* where the performers danced to the accompaniments of chants. Other rituals in curing a

[86] Alienation effect is a term used by Bertolt Brecht to talk about the distractions that a playwright introduced in the middle of the drama. These distractions acted as a medium by which the audience got aware of the artificiality of the theatre.

sick person were avoided on stage. Yet, P. Kalan was more interested in the artistic value of *gaddika* and the depth of myths that the hymns carried. He realised that if *gaddika* could be popularised, then the artform could become the identity of a community. In P. Kalan's performance of *gaddika*, the *thudi* and *kuzhal* resonated the Adiya slave history. A communist social reformer like P. Kalan never wanted to restrict *gaddika* as a secret shamanistic practice inside the Adiya hamlets. Rather, he tried to combine the elements of tradition with modern so as to present the contemporary struggles that the Adiyas as a community faced. According to Kariyan, P. Kalan symbolically made use of the musical instruments like *thudi* and *kuzhal* to give voice to the Adiyas to make the audience aware of the routes of Adiya slavery. Thus, for P. Kalan, *Gaddika* was not simply a medium to make the Adiyas aware of the slave history, rather, he wanted to make the non- adivasi audience to remember the slave history of adivasis. Johnny, in the memoir of P. Kalan, rightly remarked that Kalan transformed *gaddika*, a mystic ritual into a guerrilla warfare ("Kalante Gaddika" 63). With the death of P. Kalan in 2007, his brother, Kariyan took initiatives to revive *gaddika*. Kariyan, along with other young *gaddika* artists from North Wayanad renamed 'Gaddika Kalasamithi' as 'P. K. Kalan Smaraka Gothrakala Samithi' or 'P. K. Kalan Memorial Gothra Kalasamithi.' They had also instituted 'P. K. Kalan Gothrakala Gaveshana Kendram' (P. K. Kalan Folk Research Centre) during 2011 in Mananthavady to impart the Ravula language and the art of *gaddika* to both adivasis and non- adivasis who were interested in learning the artform. I would now briefly discuss the details of the 'Gothrakala Samithi's' performance on stage, so as to give a complete picture of P. Kalan's reinvention of *gaddika* on modern stages. Kariyan's troupe included Sarith, Velli, S. K. Kariyan, Raju, C. K. Binu, Narayanan, Vijesh, Aneesh, Shivasankaran, Vijeesh and K. P. Madhu.

Performance of Kariyan's troupe also followed similar strategies of P. Kalan to make the audience aware of *gaddika* as an art form. Kariyan, the chief vocalist of the performance, would make an introductory speech about the Adiyas. In his introductory speech to the *Gaddika* performance in December 2018, Kariyan commented that the Adiyas were a community who once cultivated vast areas of lands. Kariyan also observed that the Adiyas, who were the rightful heirs of vast paddy lands in Wayanad

had become *valli* labourers under the *jenmies*.[87] This enslavement, according to Kalan, was caused by the alienation of adivasi lands. Though Kariyan did not accuse anyone particularly for adivasi deprivation, his speech implied that the Adiyas had to become *valli* labourers only after the intervention of colonial modernity. Kariyan's troupe also introduced *kambalanritham*, along with *gaddika* on stage. Kariyan observed that while *gaddika* is performed as a prayer for the rich harvest, *kambalanritham* is closely related to the practices of agriculture on the paddy fields as was observed earlier in this section. *Gaddika* performance would begin on the stage just as the audience is made aware of the significance of *gaddika* and *kambalanritham* and the importance of Adiyas as agriculturalists on the fields of Wayanad.

The stage performance would be conducted by a group of ten or eleven artists who are variously engaged in singing the hymns, dancing and playing *thudi* and *cheeni*.[88] Ritual oblations to gods would be avoided on stage, as it would be inappropriate to propitiate the deities on stage, observed Kariyan. During *pooja gaddika*, the *thammadi* would usually sing three hymns praising *Mariyamma*. The chanting of these hymns would take a maximum of six hours. *Pooja gaddika*, which would begin by eleven at night would often last till the daybreak. However, during stage performances, vocalists would usually shorten the lyrics according to their preferences and time constraints. The men are adorned in brighter clothes on stage for the visual effect. They are adorned in bright coloured jewelleries on stage. The men might or might not wear jewellery in the ritualistic settings in localities. They cover their heads with red satin cloth during the stage performances whereas the ritual simply demands the covering of the head with a white cotton cloth, observed Madhu. While the stage performance is organised with a group of ten or eleven artists, the ritual is conducted by even six members. There are no separate vocalists for the ritual, the dancers chant the hymns themselves. Artists thus try to present *gaddika* as an artform on the stage within seven or eight minutes, without losing its essence.

[87] Introductory speech made by Kariyan for *Gaddika* December, 2018 at Pilicode, Kasaragod.

[88] Observations on stage performances are based on the recordings of *Gaddika* and *Kambalanritham* in Dec 2018, at Pilicode and Feb 2019 at Attingal.

Similarly, *kambalanritham* is improvised on the secular stage. The dancers change the style in which they drape their sarees during *kambalanritham*, which would begin just after the *gaddika* performance. The dancers would drape themselves in sarees similar to the Adiya women. They would tie the red satin cloth covering their heads into a bun. *Kambalanritham* symbolised both men and women dancing to the beats of *cheeni* and *thudi* on the actual paddy fields. *Kambalanritham* on the stage is improvised with the dancers presenting a visual treat to the audience by dancing with lighted lamps on their heads. Madhu opined that the Adiyas never dance with lighted lamps on their heads for rituals. Binu suggested that the *gaddika* artists add visual treats to the rituals of *Gaddika* and *kambalanritham* on stage and that improvisations were necessary to elevate a ritualistic tradition into a popular art form.

Gaddika and *kambalanritham* performances, I would suggest, not only make the Adiya folk traditions popular, but these performances would open up ways to understand the social and cultural relations that the Adiyas share with the non- adivasis as well. Adiyas also reminded the audience through such performances that their myths and religiosity were not simply superstitions that drove them further into slavery. Rather, performances of Adiya mythical history on secular stages would portray the Adiya as agents in the cultural history of Kerala. The Adiyas also established through these performances that they were not a group of pre- colonial romantic entities, who kept themselves isolated from the Malayali mainstream. Rather, they re- establish the inseparability of their slave history from modernity. I would conclude this section by reiterating the main objective of the Adiyas when they reinvented *gaddika* and *kambalanritham* as a popular art form. The main objective of popularising these traditional rituals was to communicate the rigours of slavery that the Adiyas faced as *valli* labourers. Thereby, the Adiyas tried to project that the history of *valli* bondage was not simply a history of Adiyas. Adiya artists tried to complicate their history by popularising hymns that hinted at a time when the Adiyas moved freely and cultivated independently. *Gaddika* hymns imagine a mythical time when the Adiya deities moved freely across borders, over hills and plains. Since, the Adiyas are aware of the impossibility of reclaiming such a mythical time, they register their dispossession through the uproars and vigorous bodily movements on stage. Mohan observed in his study on memorising slavery that history should be called upon to perform certain tasks for the present, both political and cultural. The PRDS for instance, reinvented their

mythical histories (which were mainly oral) so as to make them appear as valid history (*Modernity* 284). Similarly, *gaddika* artists also made use of their mythical history as an orientation to the future and to claim history from an adivasi perspective as valid. As Kariyan observed in one of his speeches, it was only the *vallippanikkars*, who could labour and offer prayers to the landlord's prosperity. And it is in their understanding of Adiya history as dignified agriculturalists that their agency remained.

In this chapter, I have discussed the ways in which Adiyas as a community remembered their history of slavery. I have argued that memory became an important device with which the Adiyas remembered their history of subjugation. I have discussed both mythical and historical memory of the Adiyas and argued that these two realms intermixed at times. Memories allowed the Adiyas to make sense of their present and also to orient themselves to the future. Mythical history of the Adiya origin found in *pulappattu* acted as the frame narrative for the chapter. *Pulappattu* myth reminded the Adiyas of a lost *uchronic* space of equality, where they lived amidst a casteless society. Mythical ancestors of the Adiyas however lost this *uchronic* space with invasions from the non- adivasi landlords. *Pulappattu* also hinted at the possibility of reclaiming this lost space by acts of resistance. However, history was different for the Adiyas, and they lost their freedom in cultivation with forces of modernity. Adiyas had to suffer the ordeals of bondage as *valli* labourers under the landlords of Wayanad. Therefore, I have identified and revisited two crucial scenes of adivasi subjection through their memories and my own fieldwork in one of these sites. These sites were the annual festival at Valliyoorkkavu temple and the labour practice of *kambalappani*. I attempted to trace the memories of slavery that the Adiyas experienced at these sites by ethnographic method. Adiyas remembered Valliyoorkkavu temple festival as a site where bondage began. *Kambalappani* was recollected as an exploitative labour practice, where the *jenmies* extracted maximum labour from his *valli* labourers. Thus, I argued that the loss of mythical *uchronia* was very much historical as well for the Adiyas.

I further argued in this chapter that the Adiyas did not simply lament the loss of a *uchronic* space and their history of slavery. Rather, they invented methods to reclaim agency as agriculturalists. *Gaddika*, a propitiation ritual and *kambalanritham*, a dance form closely associated with labour were reinvented as art forms by artist- activists from among the community like Kalan and Kariyan. *Gaddika* was popularised by the efforts

of P. Kalan during the 1980s with support from the Left Democratic Fronts in Kerala. Thus, *gaddika* was used as a medium by the Adiyas to register their anger against the dispossessions and exploitations of the *valli* labourers. *Gaddika* and *kambalanritham* were thus used as a medium to communicate effectively with the non- adivasi Malayali audience. Ritualistic hymns combined with the bodily movements of the artists produced interest in the audience. Thus, the Adiyas wanted themselves to be identified as part of modernity. The Adiyas remembered their mythical worlds and improvised their hymns to assert their history with dignity. Their aim was also to claim equal rights as citizens of the modern Kerala state. Thus, the history of bondage and slavery is now employed by the Adiyas to simultaneously offer resistance to subjugation and to reclaim those political spaces denied to them by the grand narratives of history. I would discuss the myths and memories of the Paniyas in the next chapter through a similar ethno-historic methodology. I would analyse there in detail the ways in which the Paniyas use their collective memory to remember the history of colonial modernity and slavery thereafter.

Chapter 4

Cultural Memory as History: The Paniya Social Imaginary of their Slave Past in the Colonial Context

Paniyas, being the largest adivasi community in Kerala have been subjects of anthropological inquiries from the late colonial period. The earliest anthropological study on the Paniyas was carried out by Edgar Thurston as was described in the first chapter. Thurston categorised the Paniya as a landlord's man and as a slave who was given to animistic instincts. He observed that the Paniya would not hesitate to do any crimes (Thurston 58- 59). Later, most of the post- colonial works that came out on the Paniyas gave thrust to the idea that they were slaves under the landlords of Wayanad. Thurston, a colonial anthropologist, stereotyped the Paniyas as slaves on the paddy fields of Wayanad. He also suggested that the Paniyas worked as slaves to the English planters who bought lands in Wayanad from the native landlords (Thurston 59). Panoor reintroduced the issue of slavery and bondage among the Paniyas in the 1960s. However, the Paniyas were objects of administrative gaze for a tribal development officer like Panoor. Panoor argued that it was the superstitious religious beliefs that prevented the Paniyas from accessing the benefits of modernity (81). After Panoor, a number of anthropologists attempted to study the Paniya cultural traditions, which Panoor called superstitious. Many important studies have come from anthropologists like P. Somasekharan Nair, P. R. G. Mathur and A. Aiyappan.

P. Nair's anthropological study on the Paniyas, which was published in 1976, recorded for the first time the mythical originary story of the Paniyas in a land called Ippimala or Ippi hills (58- 59). P. Nair made this observation after having conducted ethnographic interviews amidst the Paniyas of North Wayanad in the 1970s. He concluded that the originary story of the Paniyas talked about them being tamed into paddy cultivation from the forests. Similarly, Aiyappan, in his anthropological study on the Paniyas of Wayanad, also discussed this originary story of the Paniya ancestors which hinted at the domestication/ taming of the Paniyas who were till then wild/ jungly (6). Aiyappan observed that the Paniya ancestors, after being caught by a landlord, agreed to the landlords to collect firewood from the forest to cook rice (6). While P. Nair did a detailed study of the life, language and traditions of the Paniyas, Aiyappan

gave importance to the oral culture of the Paniyas. Aiyappan made great efforts to record the ritualistic chants associated with the Paniya rituals wherever possible. Mathur's study of the Paniyas, published in 1977, highlighted the identity of Paniyas as bonded labourers. Mathur observed that the Paniyas were traditionally engaged in a system of bonded labour called *kundalppani* (95). These prominent anthropologists have tried to bring the specificity of the ritualistic traditions of the Paniyas which were described as animism for a long time. However, they did not attempt an ethnographic history of the Paniya community. Mythical memories and historical facts regarding slavery among the Paniyas remained as two separate realms in the above-mentioned works. Thus, I would attempt an ethnographic history of the Paniya community in this chapter, by revisiting Paniya memories regarding their social imaginary. 'Social imaginary' is a concept introduced by the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor. Social imaginary allows the community members to make sense of their cultural and social practices like rituals and festive events. Thus, social imaginary is a shared understanding within a society regarding "how things should work in a community life" (Lyon and Taylor 656). I would also try to offer a counter historical narrative on the Paniya enslavement as told from a Paniya perspective. What is significant in such a reading is that colonial modernity emerged as a defining moment in which the Paniyas were transformed from a nomadic community to settled cultivators.

I have divided this chapter into three sections broadly. In the first section titled 'Cultural Sites of Subjugation and Resistance,' I have discussed various ways in which the Paniyas memorised Valliyoorkkavu shrine and *kambalappani*. These two sites were actually historical sites where the Paniya labourers were subjected to the trials of bondage. I have discussed in this section how the Paniyas created alternative narratives of dignity around these sites through their memories. For this purpose, I have relied on the concept of "scenes of subjection" proposed by Saidiya Hartman in her historical study on the slave memories of the plantation slaves of Europe. Hartman used the metaphor of "scenes of subjection" to describe various instances where enactments of domination on the slave bodies happened. Hartman observed that such instances of extreme pain and subjugation were also used by the slave strategically to register his/ her pain. But registering the slaves' pain was not the original purpose by which such scenes of domination were practised. Adopting largely from Hartman, I would, in the first section, try to read the exchange of Paniya labourers at the Valliyoorkkavu shrine. I

would also analyse the Paniya memories regarding *kambalappani,* an exploitative labour practice since the colonial times. The primary materials that I use for revisiting the sites of subjection are the Paniya memories. For memories regarding *kambalappani*, I draw upon the songs associated with the practice called *kambalappattu* and these songs are accessed during my interviews with a Paniya folk performer, Vinu Kidachulan. These memories are about a period between the 1950s and 60s. Moreover, I juxtapose these memories with the recorded data on these cultural sites in the colonial archives. I would then see how the metanarratives on these sites of subjection differ from the imagination of the Paniya community. In reading the archival and ethnographic data together, I attempt to build an ethnographic cultural history of the Paniyas. In this history told from the Paniya perspective, the Paniyas imagine themselves as a community who are acutely aware of the adverse effects of colonial modernity on their migratory living habits.

In the second section titled, 'The *Uchroni*c World of the Paniyas,' I would do a reading of *penampattu*, the post- burial hymn. *Penampattu* is an oral tradition of the Paniyas which presents the originary myth of the community. This ritualistic hymn is memorised by the Paniyas during the death of a family member. My primary materials in accessing *penampattu* include ethnographic interviews with various Paniya shamans and a folk performer who have memorised these hymns. I have also drawn on a compilation of *penampattu* by a non- adivasi activist figure from Wayanad. *Penampattu* transcends the personal realm of a death in the family to the political realm as the hymn explains the routes of enslavement of the Paniya ancestors. I would suggest in this section that *penampattu* presented a Paniya perspective on the history of colonialism in Wayanad. The hymn discussed a narrative which pointed to the loss of resources and displacement of the Paniyas from the hills of Wayanad. Expansion of the forests and the imposition of land revenue hindered the availability of resources to the food gathering Paniyas. However, the colonial archives described this process of colonisation as bringing the tribes into civilization. Nevertheless, the reimagination of such colonial routes of subjugation was aimed to aspire for liberation from all forms of subjugation, at least symbolically.

In the third section titled 'Popularising *Penampattu* and *Kambalappattu*,' I discuss attempts by young Paniya folk performers in popularising the mythical and folk

realms of the community. In this section, I borrow the concept of "politics of transfiguration," which was introduced by Paul Gilroy (and also adopted by Sanal Mohan) in his study of the slave memories as resistance in the context of modernity in Europe. I discuss in this section, the attempts by the Paniyas to popularise *kambalappattu* and *penampattu* on the secular stages of Kerala. I argue in this section that such attempts by the Paniyas to popularise their mythical/ folk memories were to reclaim spaces of dignity and equality in the public spheres of Kerala. I draw partly on personal interviews with folk performers and partly on their stage performances to read the dynamics of popularising mythical memories. Thus, memory became a useful tool for the Paniyas in the present times to invent new aspirations for the future. The Paniyas thereby expanded the potential of their ritualistic realms into the public stages so that the Paniya cultural history became a counter argument to the stereotypes that dehumanised them.

4.1. Cultural Sites of Subjugation and Resistance

In the previous chapter, the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani* were discussed as two cultural scenes during which the Adiyas and Paniyas experienced subjections to slave labour. I have also found out that these two sites also offered the adivasis with alternative narratives to talk about their cultural and mythical history. Some Adiya alternative narratives that dealt with the appropriation of these cultural sites by the Hindu landlords were discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, I would again go back to these sites- Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani*- to see how the Paniyas perceive these sites. Therefore, repetitions of certain arguments made in the third chapter- regarding the Adiya narratives of cultural scenes of subjection- are inevitable in this chapter too. These sites are clearly cultural instances where the Paniyas were subjugated similar to the Adiyas. Moreover, I also argue that these sites of subjection offered the Paniyas with alternative myths to memorise the past and resist the discourse of subjugation.

Post- colonial administrators like Panoor blanketed the existence of Adiyas and Paniyas as bonded labourers transacted during the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair (23, 72). Whereas the native colonial administrators like C. Nair observed that *kambalappani* was the occasion where the adivasi love for music and dance were visible (C. Nair 104).

However, the Adiyas and Paniyas offered their own perspectives on both these sites as opposed to the colonial and post- colonial narratives. I would therefore in this section try to discuss the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani* from a Paniya perspective. I would show that such cultural scenes of subjections were reinvented by the Paniyas to remember the intervention of authorities, both landlordism and the colonial state power in their lives. The colonial state policies that were intended to civilise the adivasis were seen by the Paniyas as an intrusion into their customary practices. The Paniyas resented these colonial intrusions in their mythical and folk worlds. In the coming section, I would discuss the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and the ways in which Paniyas memorise their past related to this site.

4.1.1. Remembering Valliyoorkkavu

The Valliyoorkkavu temple fair is historically significant for the Paniyas as it was for the Adiyas. Local historians have varied opinions regarding the slave market at Valliyoorkkavu temple fair. Yet, the discourse surrounding slave exchange at the temple fair was principal in creating the category of 'bonded' to define the Paniya labourers. Saidiya Hartman observed that the slave market in Europe was a site where symbolizations of dominations were made explicit through dominations and enactments of power. Such demonstrations of power included forcing the enslaved to witness the tortures and executions meted out to the slaves (Hartman 8). However, such displays of power where the *valli* labourers were subjected to corporal punishments at the site of Valliyoorkkavu temple fair were not recorded historically. Even the ex- *valli* labourers did not recollect any instances of extreme violence and display of slave bodies during the temple fair. However, the symbolizations of domination occurred in a different manner at the Valliyoorkkavu temple premises. The *valli* labourers were not made to perform to create a spectacle for the buyer. However, P. Kalan observed in his memoirs that the Paniyas and Adiyas waited silently at the temple premises waiting for the landlord to come and inspect them (Tharuvana, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte" 6). Thus, the reduction of the bodies of the labourers into commodities was a common phenomenon in both the European slave market and the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair. I would discuss in this section, certain alternative narratives that the Paniyas invented to define their relationship with the temple. The Paniyas made use of their memories to create contending narratives regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple.

Metanarratives regarding the origin of the Valliyoorkkavu temple connect it to the famous shrine of Bhadrakali at Kodungallur in Thrissur district, which was part of the erstwhile Cochin princely state. According to V. T. Induchudan, who wrote a history of the Kodungallur temple, the shrine was built by the kings of Chera dynasty during the thirteenth century AD (xiii). This shrine of Bhadrakali at Kodungallur was managed (for both *pooja* and administration) by the landlord castes called 'Atikals' since the sixteenth century (Induchudan 119). This narrative relating the origin of Valliyoorkkavu to the Kodungallur shrine could be used to justify the present-day administration of Valliyoorkkavu shrine by the landlord families of Mananthavady in Wayanad. C. Nair in his account of the origin of the Valliyoorkkavu temple observed that the Kottayam Raja had entrusted three local chieftains to arrange for the *pooja (*the act of worship) at the temple. These local chieftains were Cherangote Nambidi, Edachana Nair and Vemoth Nambiar. And since then, the family descendants of these three local chieftains were the traditional trustees of the temple. For instance, Eachome Gopi, one of the traditional trustees of the temple, observed that he belonged to the family of Vemoth Nambiar. [89] I would therefore suggest that the myth that connected the origin of Valliyoorkkavu to the Kodungallur shrine is a pointer to the encroachment of lands in Wayanad by the Raja of Kottayam, assisted by the local chieftains. Since the Raja of Kottayam was supposed to have ruled the country during the sixteenth century, the myth points to the early stages of land encroachments (where the adivasis freely moved around) by the Hindu landlords. Moreover, the myth legitimised the administration of the temple by local chieftains as was done at the Kodungallur temple. The temple trustees now argue that the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival is a symbol of harmony between the adivasis and non- adivasis of Wayanad. Eachome Gopi opined that it was the customary right of the Paniyas to carry fodder to the temple and wash the utensils used for cooking during the festival. It was the Adiyas who did the cutting of vegetables for the festival. The Kurichyas had the customary rights to carry fire lamps in front of the elephants during the climactic possession of the Valliyoorkkavu temple festival. The history of land encroachments that happened in the early sixteenth century was justified

[89] Personal interview with E. Gopi, 21 March, 2021.

by arguing that the adivasis were given certain customary rights during the temple festival.

However, the Paniyas had their own myths regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple. These myths were closely related to their life in forests and hills. The Paniyas claimed that the patron deity of Valliyoorkkavu temple was in fact an incarnation of a Paniya woman. Karunan, a Paniya elder in his seventies, from Kavu Paniya colony, near Valliyoorkkavu temple observed that the origin of Valliyoorkkavu is closely related to the food gathering habits of the Paniyas.[90] The *keezhkkavu*, or the smallest shrine that is located downhill, according to Karunan, was the original place where the Paniya goddess prevailed. Karunan narrated an adivasi myth behind the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple as opposed to the myth related to the oracles from Kodungallur. Karunan opined that Valliyooramma was goddess Kali who lived amidst them as a Paniya woman. The deity was called Karinji. Karinji used to travel from the banks of the river Mananthavady to collect firewood and edible wild tubers to the nearby hill. While Karinji was pregnant, she went to the opposite bank near the hills to collect tubers. She began to experience labour pain while she was on the opposite bank. She came back swiftly and gave birth to a baby girl, who is considered as the reincarnation of goddess *Kali*. This baby was delivered on the banks where the *keezhkkavu* is now located. According to the Paniya belief, the place where Karinji sat for labour became *thazhekkavu* or *keezhkkavu*, and the place where she built a small tent for bathing the baby became *manipputtu* later (Karunan). In order to comfort Karinji, the Paniya people who inhabited there gave her food, water and firewood for sustenance. The goddess became happy with the Paniyas who served her and resided at Valliyoorkkavu with her baby girl. Karunan observed that the 'measuring the rice' ritual and the 'lamp lighting rituals' at the beginning of the temple festival is a reminiscence of the Paniya people's service to a Paniya mother. It is Karinji's daughter Kali who resides in the shrine uphill and Karinji began to be worshipped in the shrine downhill. Thus, for the Paniyas, Karinji is the revered *Valliyooramma*.

Thus, the Paniya myth regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple is closely related to life and birth. There are no oracles, landlords and Rajas in the Paniya myth

[90] Personal interview with Karunan, 24 March, 2021.

regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu. Paniya people are the only characters here and their ordinary life of food gatherings and collecting fodder is the action in this mythical story. It was the domestic relations, including the taking care of a baby and providing food and comforts to a mother that takes centre stage in the adivasi narrative regarding the Valliyoorkkavu temple. Such ordinary activities are presented with a touch of the spectacular as the Paniyas believed that Valliyooramma assumed the form of a Paniya woman. Karunan also made it clear that the temple authorities were appropriating such an adivasi place of worship by building pedestals for the deities. Building pedestals for a deity was not part of the adivasi culture in Wayanad (a raised platform with a deity is very common around the temple premises), opined Karunan. The temple authorities claim that these pedestals were raised to honour the adivasi gods. However, Karunan observed that building new pedestals for the deities every year is an attempt to Hinduise the adivasi gods. Thus, Karunan is also aware of the appropriation of an adivasi site in the present day by the temple administration who belong to the landlord castes. Yet, for the Paniyas, Valliyoorkkavu shrine was related to a myth that highlighted the camaraderie between the Paniyas as a clan.

A similar mythical story that connects the origin of the temple to the communal harmony among the adivasis is narrated by Vinu Kidachulan, a poet and folk performer from the Paniya community. In a personal interview with me, Kidachulan noted that Valliyoorkkavu was a *kavu* or small shrine in olden days and that the shrine could not be called a temple as it is known today.[91] The mythical history of Valliyoorkkavu that Kidachulan narrated is a recollection of his grandmother's opinions on the origin of Valliyoorkkavu shrine. Kidachulan observed that this shrine was occasionally visited by the adivasi communities of Adiyas, Paniyas and Kattunayakas. Kidachulan asserted that the shrine was not a Hindu site of worship. Rather, he observed that Valliyoorkkavu shrine used to be a place where the adivasis got together in the past. Kidachulan denied any legitimacy to the established narratives linking Valliyoorkkavu to Kodungallur temple. According to Kidachulan's story, Valliyoorkkavu was found by a Paniya man called Choondra. Choondra once went to graze his cattle in the forests and found a sword hanging amid the creepers. He heard some echoes simultaneously. Choondra

[91] Interview with Kidachulan, 20 March, 2021.

informed his community members about this strange occurrence. The Paniyas believed that from that day onwards, the adivasis began to worship the place as a shrine. Adivasis worshipped the sword that was found there. Kidachulan claimed legitimacy to his story by commenting that the Paniyas used to worship such things like swords, sickles and other tools used for clearing forests and reaping the harvest.

Gradually, the adivasis began to give oblations to this site where Choondra found the sword (Kidachulan). Adivasis developed this place into a site of get togethers gradually. Whenever they visited this place, they would bring eatables like rice and vegetables and they cooked and ate there. Cooked food was shared among the community members gathered there. Kidachulan opined that this adivasi culture of cooking food on the go and sharing it amongst the assembled members was appropriated by the Hindus as the community feast in the temple. The adivasis, in this process of cultural appropriation, were side-lined to become labourers in the temple. Now, the temple priests observe untouchability with the adivasis, according to Kidachulan. Kidachulan's story behind the origin of the temple thus presents a Paniya man as the actual founder of the temple. Moreover, what I found interesting here is that Kidachulan highlighted that part of the established myth around Valliyoorkkavu where an adivasi spotted the sword hanging from a creeper. In the established myth, a Kurichya adivasi boy was an informant to the oracles from Kodungallur that their missing sword was hanging from a creeper. However, to present the myth from an adivasi perspective, Kidachulan highlighted that it was in fact a Paniya man who found the sword and listened to certain echoes. Moreover, it was the Paniyas as a community who developed this site into a place of worship. Kidachulan's narrative regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu shrine is similar to that of Karunan's narrative as both these myths attributed agency to the Paniyas. Valliyoorkkavu is therefore remembered by the Paniyas as a cultural site where active interactions between the Paniyas happened. Kidachulan and Karunan also related the shrine to the cultural history of the Paniyas as cattle grazers and food gatherers in the forests and hills. Moreover, both Karunan and Kidachulan argued that later, this site was appropriated by the landlords who formed the trustees of the temple.

Thus, reinventing myths and memories to reclaim lost spaces of hills and forests was an important strategy that the Paniyas resorted to. Such memories of resistance are

however very much recent. The alternative myths regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu temple were narrated during my fieldwork in 2021. I would therefore suggest that the Paniyas actively invoked their memories to construct a dignified present for themselves. Paniya memories regarding the origin of Valliyoorkkavu claim that large areas of forested lands were alienated from them. This process of displacing them from the forests affected their cattle grazing and food gathering practices. Similarly, the Paniyas claimed that places of adivasi worship were gradually converted into Hindu sites of worship. The expansion of paddy cultivation and the implementation of regulations over the use of lands even affected the religiosity of the Paniyas. Valliyoorkkavu temple fair gradually became a site where the Paniyas waited for an advancement of money from the landlords.

The Paniyas could not resist at the Valliyoorkkavu temple when they were bought by the landlords. Nor could they escape the landlord's dominion once they became *valli* labourers. This situation was in contrast to the plantation slaves who resisted domination by short term flights from captivity to praise meetings, quilting parties and illicit visits to lovers (Hartman 66). However, the Paniyas did not remember any such acts of defiance once they were bought as *valli* labourers. However, the situation of *valli* labourers were different from the plantation slaves. Almost all the places where the adivasis gathered independently were taken over by state regulation and they had nowhere to go. Even their religiosity was penetrated with the established upper- caste myths. Thus, in the present times, the Paniyas resort to memories to generate counter- histories. These counter- histories allowed the Paniyas to claim that they were the rightful owners of the hills and forests. They also claim that when they were displaced from the forests, they were forced into slave systems. The appropriation of Valliyoorkkavu shrine by the Hindu landlords is only one such instance. Thus, reclaiming lost spaces is one way for the Paniyas to resist past scenes of subjection and to historicise these sites to tell an adivasi story. In the next section, I would discuss similar scenes of subjection where the Paniyas are subjugated. This is the site of *kambalappani*. However, the Paniyas again have their own myths regarding the appropriation of their labour practices by the landlord when they remember *kambalappani*. Moreover, the Paniyas reinvent the songs that accompany *kambalappani* called *kambalappattu* to narrate counter-histories from a Paniya perspective.

4.1.2. *Kambalappani* and *Kambalappattu*

In this section, I would venture into a discussion about the *kambalappattu* or *kambala* songs, the folk songs of the Paniyas. *Kamabalappani* as an exploitative labour practice and as a site of subjection for the *valli* labourers had already been discussed in the previous chapter. It would be significant to observe here that *kambalappani* was practised on the fields accompanied by dance to the tune of *kuzhal* and *thudi*. The songs that accompanied the Paniya dance on the fields are called *kambalappattu.* *Kambalappattu* is the folk song of the Paniyas that they sang while sowing and harvesting the fields. The significance of *kambalappattu* is that the songs conveyed crucial understandings regarding Paniya perspectives on exploitative field labour, which is the *valli* system. *Kambalappattu* is another source of memory that I make use of in this section to construct Paniya perspectives on slavery and exploitation. These *kambalappattu* are reinvented by the Paniyas to remember their cultural history. I would suggest that the *kambalappattu* imagined for the Paniyas an alternative space of existence before bondage. Moreover, these songs are memorised and handed down to generations orally to remind the community of the dispossessions they faced with the advent of modernity. *Kambalappattu* in fact act as a counter history to the colonial stereotypes regarding the *valli* labourers by imagining a life of freedom and mobility for the community. Moreover, these songs are a counter narrative to the colonial archives and the landlord narratives which talked about the happy state of *valli* labourers under their *jenmies*. Thus, *kambalappattu* are another realm where memory played a crucial role in defining the identity for the Paniyas for the present. In order to access certain *kambalappattu*, I depended on Kidachulan, who rendered *kambalappattu* to me during personal interviews.

Kambalappattu are those songs that the Paniyas sang during *kambalappani*. I have already discussed in the previous chapter that *kambalappani* was an exploitative practice, where the *valli* labourers were made to work without any breaks. The previous chapter gave an Adiya perspective on *kambalappani* by a reading of their memories regarding this practice. However, mainstream narratives have presented this practice as a celebratory occasion for the Paniya and Adiya *valli* labourers. I would discuss in this section, how the Paniyas present counter-narratives to the recorded history that presented *kambalappani* as a celebratory occasion. Moreover, I would discuss the

Paniya worldviews regarding shifting agriculture and food gathering practices that they lost with the intervention of the colonial regulations. I depend upon interviews with Kidachulan for Paniya views on the practice of *kambalappani*.[92] Kidachulan's memories regarding *kambalappani* are significant as his memories regarding this practice was handed down to him by his grandmother who was a *valli* labourer. Moreover, the *kambalappattu* that I analyse in this section are recorded during various discussions with Kidachulan at the field in March 2021. Kidachulan claimed that the *kambalappattu* that he acquired were passed on to him by his grandparents who were politically aware of the evictions that the *valli* labourers faced. Kidachulan claimed that the history of the Paniyas as a community were preserved only through such songs. He also opined that such songs are now reinvented by the community for political claims.

Before going into the Paniya perspectives on *kambalappani*, I would present an instance in colonial anthropology that depicted the *valli* labour as a celebratory occasion. Thurston who made an anthropological study on the Paniyas made a significant observation on the *kambalappani* of Paniyas. Thurston made a remark about the women planting paddy saplings accompanied to music and beats of drum on the paddy fields. Thurston observed it was highly amusing to see the Paniya women planting paddy saplings on the fields with the accompaniment of wild yells hou! hou! (68). Moreover, Thurston suggested that the Paniya women sounded like hungry dogs who were working along with singing (68). Clearly, Thurston is speaking here about the *kambalappani* of Paniya labourers. I have already observed that the replanting of the paddy saplings is the occasion for *kambalappani* and that the *jenmi* wanted this job to be finished without any breaks. It is clear from Thurston's description that he had dehumanised the *valli* labourers when he observed that they howl like hungry dogs while planting saplings. Nevertheless, the scene was amusing for a colonial anthropologist who was already caught within the colonial slavery discourse regarding the Paniyas. I would discuss here another narrative regarding *kambalappani* and *valli* labour from the perspective of someone belonging to a landlord class. Pankajakshan, a descendant of landlord Warrier caste at Vemom, in Mananthavady observed that

[92] Kidachulan has also made his debut in the Malayalam film industry by composing songs for the movie *Pada*, which was released in 2022.

administrators like Panoor exaggerated the labour system in Wayanad, calling it slavery.[93] Pankajakshan (who is in his sixties) opined that he has never seen any landlords treating their labourers as slaves and that *kambalappani* was a celebratory occasion for the *valli* labourers. He observed that the landlords organised a treat for the *valli* labourers on the fields with dance and music for *kambalappani*. Pankajakshan further observed that the labourers would find it more interesting to work when the labour is accompanied by music and dance, which the *valli* labourers were naturally disposed to.

I would suggest here that while the sight of Paniya women planting paddy saplings was amusing for Thurston, the other side of the story is equally relevant. The *valli* labourers were in fact hungry like "wild dogs." Also, Pankajakshan was right when he argued that the *valli* labourers found amusement in the dance and music, which accompanied *kambalappani*. The *valli* labourers found the dance and music as channels to divert their pain and anguish of being subjugated to such extreme labour circumstances. Karunan, a Paniya *valli* labourer during the 1950s and 60s in North Wayanad, observed that *kambalappani* was the most difficult labour practice for the *valli* labourers, especially women. According to Karunan, the *jenmi* would advance some paddy to his *valli* labourers on the day prior to *kambalappani*. The *valli* labourers were thus obliged to be present for *kambalappani* in the early morning. The *valli* labourers were not allowed to articulate their miseries or voice their rights. Karunan recalled that the labourers often went to the fields on empty stomachs. The labourers would be given a glass of sugarless black coffee and a bun from the *jenmi's* place before they proceeded to the fields (Karunan). They had to finish off this simple meal in one or two minutes as taking a lot of time for drinking coffee would affect the time allotted for working on the fields. Once *kambalappani* began, no one was allowed to go back to their huts or rest in between. Even the food was prepared by women on the banks of paddy fields. Minor sickness should not avert any labourer from finishing off *kambalappani*. Moreover, pregnant women also had to perform these excruciating tasks. Karunan observed that it was the beats of *thudi*, the indigenous drum and the songs that gave some relief to the Paniya labourers. Karunan observed, "the labourers tried to

[93] Personal interview with Pankajakshan, 24 March, 2021.

forget the pain of bending knee deep in mud for longer hours by singing and dancing on the fields." While Thurston and Pankajakshan denied the pain of the *valli* labourer on the paddy fields during *kambalappani*, Karunan, a *valli* labourer claimed that the Paniyas also had bodies which suffered and agonised in pain. Thus, the description of *kambalappani* as a joyous occasion for the *valli* labourer could be paralleled to the denial of pain of the slave bodies in European slave markets. Hartman observed that the slave markets, with their festivity and pageantry of the coffle, disavowed the pain of the captive. Submission in such occasions was often perceived as wilfulness (Hartman 36). Similarly, authoritative narratives on *kambalappani*- both colonial and landlord narratives- highlighted the sight of *valli* labourers dancing and singing joyfully while engaging in field labour. However, the pain inflicted on their bodies was denied under the veil of ostentatious displays of mirth and celebration.

Kambalappani is therefore memorised as an exploitative labour practice by the former *valli* labourers of the Paniya community. However, the younger generation of adivasi communities remember *kambalappani* as closely related to the food gathering and hunting expeditions of the Paniyas prior to colonialism. For instance, Kidachulan observed that most of the songs that are sung in accompaniment to the field labour were sung by the Paniyas even before they were settled around paddy cultivation. For Kidachulan, *kambalappattu* are reminiscent of a Paniya life prior to colonisation. The Paniyas used to travel in groups to collect honey, to fish and collect edible roots and leaves when they had access to vast areas of forests (Kidachulan). The Paniyas used to lead a nomadic life in the past, Kidachulan observed. The Paniyas used to travel in groups which included hundred to one fifty members. They utilised the resources of a place; including food, fodder and water; when they settled somewhere. They used to cultivate on the lands where they settled for a year and would then move on to another place allowing the land on which they previously settled to replenish (Kidachulan). They would fish out only big fishes to eat and would leave the small fishes to grow and reproduce. They would replant the crown of the tubers into the earth and would only use the other end of the tubers for eating as this would allow the plant to grow back and produce the next cycle of tubers. Kidachulan's explanations of a past life of the Paniyas are revealing as his narrative presents the community as shifting cultivators and food gatherers. They were also hunters.

According to Kidachulan, the Paniyas would take baskets, *Kuramba* or fish traps, musical instruments of *kuzhal* and *thudi* and other wooden tools for digging. While some people used to work in groups searching for food, some people would play musical instruments. Energised by these tunes, people would finish their task of food gathering rapidly (Kidachulan). Kidachulan argued that the *jenmies* later exploited the love of the Paniyas for music and dance for their agricultural purposes. Field labour that would normally take a month to finish would be finished within three or four days when the labourers were exposed to the songs and beats of their tradition. Now, the songs that were originally sung during the Paniya food gathering expeditions came to be known as the *kambalanatti* song. These songs were originally associated with happenings in the daily lives of the community members when they used to go for food gathering. *Kambalanatti* song now accompany agricultural labour on the fields.

Kidachulan's opinions regarding the history of *kambalappani* and *kambalappattu* are in stark contrast to memories regarding *kambalappani* by Karunan. I would suggest here that the multiple adivasi narrative regarding *kambalappani* points to the privilege of memory that is transmitted orally. Memories regarding *kambalappani* on the paddy fields as an occasion of celebration for the *valli* labourers were already inscribed in the colonial archives and it got some fixity. However, adivasi memories of this practice are multiple. While some adivasis highlighted the exploitative nature of *kambalappani*, some pointed at the appropriation of a celebratory past life of the adivasi by the *jenmi* for extracting more labour. Paul Connerton, a social anthropologist, in his work on the importance of ritual performance in recollecting the past, suggested that the oral societies blurred the distinctions between the mythical and the historical. Connerton observed that it was only inscriptions that fixed and prioritised one set of accounts regarding the world over the other (76). However, there is a possibility of innovation and improvisation in the adivasi memories as they are lively, told and performed and not inscribed. Thus, Kidachulan reinvented a historical account regarding the practice of *kambalappani* as something that was appropriated by the *jenmi*. This narrative was also useful for Kidachulan to define and interpret the *kambalappattu* in a specific way. Kidachulan claimed that the *kambalappattu* could be remembered by the Paniyas so as to project an alternative past of Paniya freedom from bondage. Moreover, such memories allowed the community to organise futuristic goals to claim dignity. I would now discuss certain *kambalappattu* that Kidachulan repopularised to understand a

cultural history of the Paniyas. Kidachulan acquired these songs from his grandmother who was a *valli* labourer and he attempts to use these songs now for resistance against the *valli* system.

***Kambalappattu*: A Lament or A Revolt?**

Kambalappattu that Kidachulan rendered as memory during my field work deal with a variety of topics regarding the cultural history of the Paniyas as a community. These songs are recollections of a past history of the Paniyas. The adverse effects of migrations to Wayanad on the Paniyas, the forced evictions of Paniyas from their lands, the agonies of working for longer hours on the paddy fields and the hegemony exerted by the landlord on the slaves all form major themes of *kambalappattu*. However, these songs are also reminiscent of a past life of food gathering and hunting by the Paniyas. Thus, these songs I would suggest should be read as both a lament and revolt against landlordism and state policies.

In one of the *kambalappattu* that Kidachulan acquired from his grandmother, the situation of the Paniyas is presented through personifying crabs. Crabs are a staple diet in the Paniya cuisines and the food gathering expeditions of the Paniyas involved catching crabs. A male and female crab are paralleled to the *valli* labourers in this song. Moreover, these crabs talked about the threats that they might face from migrant birds. They discuss amongst themselves that the migrant birds are eyeing them: "Kunduchi kunduchi, ninnala va, ninne, ninne, ninne/ Kulavayya kulavayya, ninnala va, ninne ninne ninne…" (Kidachulan).[94] The migrant birds who tried to catch the crabs out of their hiding places to feed on them are paralleled to the migrant people who tried to extract adivasi labour. The crabs decide to dig deep holes for shelter inside the soil: "Kundu manthi kanju kundili noonthu mandili noontho" (Let us dig a deep pit and hide inside it) (Kidachulan). However, the crow who is a native bird saw them inside the deep pit. The crow tells them that he would suck the life blood out of these crabs and would leave the shells and remaining parts to the other migrant birds: "Nenjukka kuthi,

[94] The male crab addresses the female one as Kunduchi and the female one addresses the male as Kulavayya. They are reminding each other of the possible threat that they are going to face from the crow.

neyneeru kudichu/ thaliyum kombum chadiduve naarum ninne, ninne, ninnee..” (Kidachulan). The song on the surface denoted the situation of crabs who are pulled out from the pits to be eaten up by the crow. It could also denote the act of catching crabs by the Paniyas from the deep pits. However, the song has a connotative meaning, according to Kidachulan. The song is an expression of the situation of the adivasi labourers under the landlord. Landlords, symbolised by the crow, would feed on the Paniyas, symbolised by the crabs. The implication of the song is that the landlord would force the Paniyas out of their lands and bring them under the landlord’s dominion. Then the landlord would exploit the Paniyas as a crow feeds on the crab. The landlord would then sell the Paniyas to the migrants, mostly English settlers and immigrants from Travancore.

Crabs are also closely related to adivasi life. Crabs were a staple diet in the adivasi food culture. However, crabs are no longer to be seen on the fields of Wayanad as the use of tractors prevented the crabs from penetrating layers of the soil. The soil got solidified that even water could not percolate. Crustaceans like crabs could no longer survive in such fields, Kidachulan observed. It is significant to observe here that the ecosystem that helped the crabs to sustain was depleted by the introduction of the modern agricultural tools. Similarly, indigenous people like Paniyas could no longer claim any rights to the lands in Wayanad, with the introduction of modernity. Aiyappan in his socio- economic study on the aboriginal tribes of the province of Madras, observed that the colonial administration found extensive forests hitherto untapped which can be exploited for valuable timber and forest produce. But the administration found that these forested lands were rapidly denuded by the *poonum* or shifting cultivation, practised by the hill men. The administration wanted to reserve some of these forests to ensure regular rainfall and avoid freshes on the plains (Aiyappan 8-9). The traditional form of shifting cultivation by the adivasis were thus considered as detrimental to the forest conservation policies. Thus, the adivasi communities including the Paniyas lost the forest areas for practising independent cultivation practices. Thus, the state policies were complicit with the *jenmi* who could then use the Paniyas as *valli* labourers. The Paniyas who lost their forests with modernity are similar to the crabs who were fed by the crows. The native landlord then sold his *valli* labourers to the migrants, when the lands were sold or transferred.

Certain songs that are sung during *kambalappani* talk exclusively about the hills and plains and the cultivations that are part of these hills. The song titled "Angudu male ingudu male…" (It is our hills here and there…) celebrated the hunting and fishing journeys of the Paniya community including men, women and children through the hills of Wayanad. This song talked about the happiness of the community members on watching the products of their cultivation including the spinach plants and bottle gourds on the hilly terrains. The lyrics asked the community members to be lively like the vegetables and leaves: "Mazhayathu nattoru cheera vithu pole…veyilathu nattoru poothan vithu pole…" (Be like the spinach seeds sown during the rains and the bottle gourd seeds planted during sunshine) (Kidachulan). The Paniyas advanced the hilly terrains watching each and every cultivation of these hills done by them. They claim themselves to be the sons and daughters of Wayanad hills. Fun songs that Kidachulan memorised had references to trees and plants that were so close to the lives of the Paniyas. One such song talked about the importance of *kolimaram* or 'Koli tree.' Latex collected from this tree is used as an adhesive to seal *thudi*, their percussion instrument. Wild pineapple plants also get mentioned in these songs. *Kaithola* or the leaves of wild pineapple plants were used in making earrings for women. They would also plant wild pineapple plants in the paddy fields due to its property to hold more water. There are also references about the Paniya people advancing through the streams and ponds collecting molluscs and hunting crabs. I would suggest that such songs are now recollected and performed by the community in the present times not simply to evoke nostalgia regarding their past life. But these are also songs that reminded the community members the ways in which colonial state policies penetrated their lives. Aiyappan observed that the Madras Forest policies implemented by the colonial state levied taxes for grazing cattle, for timber, for leaves and even for fuller's earth, a useful ingredient in the making of huts and utensils for the adivasis (Aiyappan 9). Levying of taxes thus prevented the adivasis from accessing forest resources freely. Moreover, they were punished for trespassing the forests. A native newspaper report of the early twentieth century observed that the conversion of large forested tracts into plantation was majority aimed at "civilising the hill tribes" ("Reports on the Forest Administration of Madras"). The report also observed that if the tribes behaved in a manner that is found against the rules of the forest department, then it is the duty of the administration to

civilise the tribes by punishing them. Thus, it is the history of state interventions in the life of the Paniyas that they remember through these songs.

In another song titled "Malayadivarathu" (In the Valleys), the Paniya man describes a girl whom he liked. The girl is described as working in the valleys to cultivate *manippullu* or broom grass. Cultivating broom grass is closely related to the adivasi culture as they are used in making indigenous brooms. Moreover, *manippullu* symbolises the hair locks of an adivasi woman who had drowned in the pool of a landlord in one of the myths. The reference to *manippullu* in the *kambalappattu* is a reminder that the Paniyas are no longer allowed to engage in their hill cultivation practices. Moreover, this song is a subtle reminder of the mythical story of exploitations that the adivasis had to face at a landlord's place, observed Kidachulan. The Adiya myth of exploitation of their primordial mother and father Melorachan and Keeyoruthi was already discussed in the previous chapter. It has been observed that Melorachan and Keeyoruthi, the ancestors of Adiyas were subjugated as slave labourers in a landlord's fort. *Manippullu* is closely associated with this myth of adivasi subjugation.

K. J. Baby observed in his *Mavelimanram* that Melorachan invited Keeyoruthi to pursue their dream of planting the seeds of *mavelimanram*, a lost *uchronia* in distant lands. But Keeyoruthi never wanted to endanger her life with attempts to escape the landlord's fort. She was completely taken over by Mali's fear and moreover, was habituated to the Pakkam fort and its comforts. However, Keeyoruthi got drowned in the silver pond of Pakkam lord when she tried to drink water from it. Keeyoruthi was swept under water and what remained was simply some strands of her hair after the water level went down.[95] The Adiyas believed that Melorachan collected these strands of hair and threw them away. According to the myth, *manippullu* grew where the strands fell on the ground. Thus, the narrative regarding the creation of *manippullu* discussed the struggles of resisting slavery and the consequences of submitting to the hegemony of the slave system. Thus, the references to *manippullu* in *kambalappattu*, I would say, offered insights into the mythical history of the adivasis as a community. This *kambalappattu* thus indirectly hinted at the loss that the adivasis suffered with the hegemony of the state and the landlords. The state policies even denied the Paniya the

[95] For more details regarding this myth, see Baby 36-37.

right to cultivate hills. If they cultivated hills, then they had to pay taxes to the government. However, a *valli* labourer could not pay taxes as he was already under bondage to the *jenmi*.

Kidachulan recollected certain lullabies which referred to *vallippani* and *kambalappani*. The lullaby titled "Ninakkoru valli paadi kalithava…" (I will sing a lullaby for you…) perceived the difficulties that the Paniya children faced within the system of *vallippani*. The lullaby presented a situation where both the parents had gone for *valli* labour on the fields. The elder child here comforts the younger one in the cradle with the lullaby. The situation is such that the parents had long gone for field labour while the baby cried searching for its mother. The Paniya couple had to return with the *valli* from the paddy fields so that the family could cook something. The elder one mellowed the baby down by saying that its hunger would be abated once the mother returned. The other members of the family also had to wait for the meagre *valli* that the parents would bring from the fields. They are waiting under the leaking roofs as it rained heavily in the Malayalam month of *Kanni*.[96] It was difficult for them to even cook the *valli* given by the *pappan* or landlord as the furnace was wet: "Appa varatte aduppili theeyu pukappan/ amma varatte aduppili theeyu pukappan…Kannimatham vanthu kattakkalavum purantha/ Kayalarivintha mannum madum nananja/ injane kayyu thayambicha pappane valli" (Let father and mother come to make fire to cook/ *Kanni* month brought us burdens/ Our furnace and floor are equally wet with rain/ We only have landlord's *valli* which was obtained with hard labour…) (Kidachulan).

The lullaby discussed the difficult circumstances in which the *valli* labourers lived in small mud huts near the paddy fields. They were hardly protected from rain. Moreover, they were not able to make fire to cook the meagre *valli* provided by the landlord. The lullaby is a description of the experiences of the *valli* labourers during the *Kanni* month, which immediately came after the month of *Chingom*, which is the month of harvest. When the landlord enjoys his place with the abundant harvest from his fields, the *valli* labourers are always hungry. Such lullabies are clear evidence to the fact that the *valli* labourers were never able to abate their hunger with the customary allowance that the landlord provided them. However, the colonial archives observed

[96] *Kanni* is a Malayalam month that falls between the months of September and October.

that the customary allowances including cloth, oil and grains, kept the *valli* labourers contented. However, these allowances hardly sufficed to meet the requirements of the labourers' family.

As a conclusion to this section, I suggest that *kambalappattu* carry the weight of resistance in the themes that they deal with. These songs presented the cultural history of the adivasis as linked to the discourse of slavery/ bondage. Such an intensely political theme is conveyed through metaphors, and symbols from nature, that are so close to Paniya life. *Kambalappani* became a space that has appropriated the celebratory songs of the Paniyas, which they recited on their food gathering expeditions. Nevertheless, the Paniyas used *kambalappani* as a site of resistance by narrating their cultural history through *kambalappattu*. The landlord community perceived *kambalappani* as an occasion of celebration for the *valli* labourers. However, it was also an occasion of commemoration for the Paniyas about their slave life. Hartman discussed in *Scenes of Subjection* that the black slaves were often asked to sing when the coffle departed from the slave market to plantations. The intention of making the slaves sing was to veil the sorrow of the slave from being separated from his/ her family. Hartman observed that the slaves often turned the song into a farewell dirge. Thereby the coerced performance became veiled articulation of the slaves' sorrow (Hartman 36). Similarly, the Paniya labourers were also made to appear as a happy lot while singing and dancing on the paddy fields for *kambalappani*. However, the songs that they performed during *kambalappani* offered a counter-narrative to the landlord who presented *kambalappani* as a pleasurable occasion for the *valli* labourers.

After having examined the Paniya counter narratives regarding the historical sites of subjections: Valliyoorkkavu temple and *kambalappani*, I would discuss in the next section, the exclusively mythical world of the Paniyas. The mythical worlds are memorised and re- enacted by the Paniyas during ritualistic occasions. The mythical worldview of the Paniyas is worth discussing as it presents the loss of certain *uchronic* spaces of freedom for the Paniyas. If *pulappattu* provided such a mythical history for the Adiyas, the originary myth of the Paniyas is presented through their post- burial song called *penampattu*. *Penampattu* gives a mythical dimension to the history of colonial modernity. The ritualistic song as and when remembered by the Paniya community provide them with opportunities to remember the routes of slavery.

4. 2. The *Uchronic* World of the Paniyas

In this section, I would discuss the mythical history of the Paniyas as is narrated in their ritualistic hymn called *penampattu*. *Penampattu* is a hymn that is chanted during the occasion of a post- burial ceremony called *pul*a. The significance of *penampattu* is that the hymn contained the originary myth of the Paniyas as a community. This myth is important for me as the myth is also a remembrance of the routes of Paniya slavery. *Penampattu* imagined a *uchronic* space called Ippi hills, where the Paniyas roamed around freely. However, they lost this *uchronic* space and subsequently became slaves of the landlords in Wayanad. Moreover, the myth talked about the creation of the different caste groups and the subsequent destiny of the Paniyas to become slaves of the soil. Thus, the Paniyas held their own versions of history of servitude as opposed to the mainstream histories. Mohan argued that history of slavery was remembered by the Dalit communities to make sense of their present (*Modernity* 284). Similarly, what I found significant about the Paniya myth of *penampattu* was that they used the myth to make sense of their present situation. The history of colonial state regulation and the subsequent 'taming' of Paniyas into the caste system on the plains was preserved as mythical history in the collective memory of the community. In the introduction to *Oral History Reader*, Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson suggested that the importance of oral history lay in its ability to register the voices of those people who usually go unrepresented and unheard (ix). Similarly, I would discuss in this section, the ability of *penampattu* to imagine a Paniya perspective of history. Moreover, I suggest in this section that the Paniyas reinvent *penampattu* by hinting at narrative variations regarding the routes of slavery. Thus, *penampattu* also began to be developed as a site of resisting subjugation by the Paniyas.

For the purpose of building a Paniya narrative on slavery, I have collected *penampattu* hymns from Channakkan and Chala, two *attalis* or shaman who are entrusted to preserve the genealogies of the community. Channakkan and Chala also narrated the originary story of Paniyas. Channakkan is an *attali* from Nachattil Paniya colony in Vellamunda. Chala is an *attali* from Armatt Paniya colony, Meenangadi. While I met Channakkan at his residence, I met Chala during my participant observation of *pula* ceremony in Armatt Paniya colony. Thus, the interview with Channakkan was lengthier and I could have a larger picture of the *pula* ceremony along

with accessing the originary narrative in *penampattu*. However, the meeting with Chala happened during the actual ritualistic occasion and Chala was forbidden from speaking more. Thus, I could only access the originary story of the Paniyas from Chala. I also depend upon personal interviews that I conducted with Kidachulan, from Chulliyode Paniya colony, from Kolimoola, at Sulthan Bathery for accessing parts of *penampattu*. Kidachulan is also a poet and is engaged in a mission to collect and compile *penampattu* hymns from different *attalis* in Wayanad. Kidachulan explained to me the different routes of Paniya servitude as was suggested in *penampattu*. Apart from the Paniya narratives regarding their originary myth, I also depend on the compilation of *penampattu* hymn by E. T. Raju, an activist- cum- literary figure in Wayanad. Raju made a compilation of the *penampattu* hymns by consulting various *attalis* in Wayanad during the 1980s. My observations regarding Raju's compilation of *penampattu* is strengthened by personal interviews with him. Thus, my primary material for writing this section is retrieved both from an adivasi and non- adivasi perspective. My field work in meeting experts on *penampattu* was done during March 2021. My argument in this section regarding *penampattu* is that the ritualistic hymn provided an opportunity to the Paniyas to remember their stages of enslavement. Remembering stages of enslavement not only allowed the Paniyas to have a historical sense of their present servitude. But it also allowed the Paniyas to reinvent *penampattu* as sites of resistance by hinting at the retaliatory potential of their ancestors.

I have already discussed in the previous chapter that the Adiyas as a community were able to recollect their history of servitude during ritualistic occasions. Ritualistic hymns, which were performed during each occasion, became a site for the Adiyas to reflect on their mythical worlds and originary accounts. The Adiyas as a community were thus able to circulate among themselves, a historical account from the Adiya perspective. This act of remembering the routes of servitude was important, I would say. This was because adivasi conceptions of alternative world views and historical imagination acted as a counter narrative to the colonial historiography that perceived the adivasi as an ahistorical entity. The Paniyas, are also a community who were equally dispossessed like the Adiyas. Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, in their study on the property rights dynamics among the hill communities of Wayanad, observed that the state regulations, including the forest conservation policies and implementation of revenue on land and cultivation affected the Paniya access to hills and forests for food

gathering and shifting cultivation practices. Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, in this article, identified various stages in which the indigenous communities of Wayanad, including the Paniyas were dispossessed of free access to land and resources.[97] These stages were in-migrations of Gounders and Chettys to Wayanad during the period between 500- 1400 AD, the rule of Kottayam and Kurumbranad Rajas during 1400-1766, the rule of Tippu Sultan during 1766- 1792 and the subsequent British rule of Wayanad from the 1800s. Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam argued that the Paniyas were co-opted as slaves in paddy fields with the earliest in- migrations to Wayanad (1206). They also argued that the Paniyas as a community were left behind as a fugitive community during the colonial administrative regime when land ownership titles began to be regularised. The reason was that the Paniyas did not have a concept of private property ownership, and they were not aware of the importance of having ownership titles (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 1222).[98] However, Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam paid attention to the other side of the story of dispossession, from a Paniya perspective.

They drew from *penampattu*, one of the oral histories of the Paniyas that talk about the Paniya originary myth. I observed that Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam used the mythical history of the Paniyas to discuss the reasons for the historical dispossession of the Paniyas with respect to land ownership. *Penampattu* is defined as a mythical history of the Paniya people starting from the early forefathers. It would be recited at the death of a community member and would be repeated on the death anniversary for three consecutive years (Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 1190). Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam concluded that according to the Paniya belief system, claiming ownership to land was forbidden by the community. They drew evidence for this conclusion from *penampattu*. According to *penampattu*, the God distributed lands to different communities on earth. However, the Paniyas were only given a fist- full of soil

[97]See Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 1206, 1207 and 1212.

[98] During the colonial regimes, occupation, instead of cultivation, became the basis for land ownership. The indigenous communities could not occupy land for more than a year as they had to then pay heavy taxes to the administration, See Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam 1220.

and the God commanded them to work on the paddy fields, according to Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam. Thus, the Paniya forefathers never owned any piece of land and the successive generations believed that they should abstain from owning lands as was done by their forefathers. This was significant, observed Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam, as the Paniyas believed that owning lands privately would disturb the soul of a dead ancestor (1194). Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam thus concluded that the codes and conducts in the mythical history of the Paniyas itself forbade the access of land resources to the Paniyas. However, I want to make a comment on the resource that Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam used for their observations on *penampattu*. Such a narrative of *penampattu* that talked about the divine commands from God prohibiting land ownership gained prominence in the 1990s. They used parts of *penampattu* in their article from a book called *Penappattile Chettadiyar* (1999), written by E. T. Raju.

In a personal interview, Raju observed that he came to Wayanad as a migrant from Central Travancore, almost six decades back in the 1960s.[99] Raju, became a close associate with certain NGOs in Wayanad like HILDA and VOICE (both Christian organisations) that worked amongst the adivasis. HILDA started to work among the adivasis of Wayanad during the 1980s and VOICE, during the 1990s. Both of these organisations were interested in the literacy programmes amidst the adivasis. These organisations were also involved in claiming rights for the adivasis in Wayanad. Raju observed that it was in the 1980s that he got immense opportunities to work closely with the Paniyas of Wayanad. Efforts by Raju to compile *penampattu* also began in the 1980s. Raju observed that he depended on a number of Paniya *attalis* or shamans who preserved the genealogy of the Paniyas for a compilation of *penampattu*. According to Aiyappan, the "*attali* is a combined hymnist, ritualist, and medium dancer engaged for rituals in honour of the gods, the spirits of the dead and for exorcising evil spirits who possess persons especially women and children" (81). Thus, *attali* is thus a shaman held in great esteem as he facilitates ancestral visits to the Paniyas by getting into a state of trance on spirit possessions. Channakkan, an *attali* from Chulliyod colony at Kolimoola suggested that it is the *attalis* who preserved the genealogy of the Paniya community in

[99] Personal interview with Raju, 19 March, 2021.

their memories.[100] They would hand it down orally to the next generations (Channakkan). Raju's efforts to make a compilation of *penampattu* by consulting different *attalis* resulted in the book called *Penappattile Chettadiyar*. Later, Raju published another book called *Eppimalayude Thazhvaram* (2011), which talked about the life and customs of the Paniyas from their birth to death. In the publishers' note to *Eppimalayude Thazhvaram*, V. Philippose, the then director of VOICE, observed that the book was part of the project of documenting adivasi culture by VOICE (Publisher's Note). Raju depended on his fieldwork among the Paniyas, especially *attalis* from the community, during the 1980s for this book as well. Ritualistic hymns of *penampattu* form an important discussion when Raju talks about the rituals associated with death among the Paniyas. Raju compiled the *penampattu* hymns in such a way that the hymns in Paniya language (transliterated in Malayalam) are followed by corresponding explanations in Malayalam.[101] The explanations given by Raju to the hymns are useful for a Malayali reader who is not adept in the Paniya language. This method of compiling *penampattu* would help the reader to navigate smoothly through the mythical world of Paniyas.

In *Eppimalayude Thazhvaram*, *penampattu* narrative discusses about the Paniya belief that they were slaves. Raju observed that *penampattu* presented the community as *chettadiyar* or the 'slaves of soil.' *Chettadiyar* is derived from the Malayalam words *cheru*, meaning 'soil' and *adiyar* meaning 'serfs.' *Penampattu* is narrated in such a way that the Paniyas are defined as those groups of people who could not own lands when the God distributed lands to different caste groups (Raju 77). Raju observed that the Paniyas were too late to arrive when the God distributed lands. Since the Paniyas were the last to arrive at God's presence, there was hardly any soil left to be distributed. Given this circumstance, one God called Kalimarathampuran gave the Paniyas a fist-full of soils and commanded them to lead their lives toiling in the soil (Raju 77). However, what I found significant here is that Raju does not provide any hymns that actually correspond to the above-mentioned narrative regarding the divine command regarding the enslavement of Paniyas. Whereas Raju was able to provide most of the

[100] Personal interview with Channakkan, 25 March, 2021.

[101] Paniya language do not have a script and has close connections to Tamil and Malayalam.

hymns that correspond to his narration regarding the mythical history of the Paniyas. An explanation to this gap, I would suggest, would be the fact that Raju might have collected parts of *penampattu* from different *attalis* or shamans. Another possible explanation for such a narrative variant that attributed slavery to the Paniyas as a group would be the particularity of the 1980s when Raju was collecting parts of *penampattu*. The 80s was the time immediately after the abolition of bonded labour in Kerala. The Paniyas and Adiyas, who were the *valli* labourers were defined as bonded labourers, who were landless. Raju, himself was part of NGOs that stood for the cause of landlessness and dispossession faced by the *valli* labourers. Since Raju compiled *penampattu* as part of documentation of Paniya culture by the NGO called VOICE, the issue of landlessness was highlighted. The Paniyas themselves wanted to project their landlessness to the state governments in Kerala. The only way forward for them was to resort to their mythical worlds which talked about their landlessness and their situation as *chettadiyans* or 'slaves of the soil,' with the division of people into caste groups. Moreover, this reference to *chettadiyan* is significant from a historical perspective as well. I have already observed in the first chapter that the administrators like Baber pointed that the slaves of Malabar were held under the same tenures as the land was held and that the slaves were bondsmen attached to the soil (Answers of T. H. Baber 4-6). Thus, the relationship of slaves like Paniyas to the land was that of bondage and not of ownership was pointed out by the colonial archives.

The Paniyas through *penampattu* wanted to put forward the argument that they were slaves and that their situation was to be emancipated. I would suggest that this attempt by the Paniyas to present their situation as that of slavery through collective memory is similar to the attempts by PRDS to memorise slavery. Sanal Mohan argued in his study on memorising Dalit slavery that the PRDS invented various symbolisms and images to talk about their enslavement (*Modernity* 246- 7). And it was only through metaphorical language that the Dalits could imagine a history of subjugation.[102] The

[102] Images that the Dalits invented to memorise slavery were *adima kanneer* (slave tears), *adima makkal* (slave children), *adima yugam* (slave era), *adima sareeram* (slave body) *adima nukam* (slave yoke), *adima changala* (slave fetters), *adimayola* (slave pamphlet), *adima bhavanam* (slave dwelling), *adima rakshanam/adima vimochanam* (slave emancipation), *adima vargam* (slave tribe) and *adima sthambham* (slave pillar).

invention of such images helped the PRDS to attempt at a project of history from the slave's point of view. Similarly, the Paniyas wanted to present their story of dispossession in metaphorical language, using images and symbols. *Penampattu* is thus significant, as it narrates the story of the Paniyas as 'slaves of the soil,' from a Paniya perspective.

Raju's compilation presents the Paniyas as a community who were at fault for their destiny as slaves in the paddy fields. This narrative of God- prophesied slavery for the Paniyas attained legitimacy as it got recorded. Moreover, political historians like Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam depended on this narrative of the god- prophesied enslavement of the Paniyas as a legitimate source of oral history. Raju's attempts to make a compilation of the *penampattu* is commendable. Raju had collected and compiled a vast resource of mythical history of the Paniyas, which otherwise would have gone unrecorded. Moreover, Raju had pointed at the history of dispossession of the Paniyas in his compilation. However, I would argue that attributing legitimacy to the narrative variant of *penampattu* compiled by Raju would reduce the multiplicity of the Paniya narratives on their mythical worlds.

The narrative variant of *penampattu* which talked about the Paniyas at fault for their future as *chettadiyans* was nowhere to be found in the contemporary variants of *penampattu* that I could collect during my field work. Rather what the *attalis* in the present times stressed was their imagination of an alternative world called Ippimala, where they inhabited a privileged life of food gathering and shifting cultivation. These narrative variants imagined the Paniya forefathers as independent shifting cultivators and food gatherers who were pushed into the plains. Raju's compilation of *penampattu* understood this capture and taming of the Paniya ancestors as total subjugation for the Paniya community. However, what is interesting in the contemporary variants of *penampattu* is that these variants highlighted the potentials for the Paniya ancestors to resist captivity and to escape systems of slavery, rather than focusing on their dispossession. Thus, in the following discussions, I would try to analyse the complexity and multiplicity of the mythical history of the Paniyas as is narrated in *penampattu*. Before going into a detailed discussion of the imagination of an alternative world view of the Paniyas in *penampattu*, I find it important here to discuss the ritualistic settings of *pula*, the post- burial ceremony of the Paniyas and the importance of performing

penampattu during *pula.* Observations on the *pula* ceremony depend on my field visit to Armatt Paniya colony in 2021.

4.2.1. Ancestral Worship and Spirit Possession

Penampattu is also called the 'shadow song' of the Paniyas. The Paniyas believed that the dead men resided amongst themselves as *nekal* or *pena*, terms used in the Paniya language to denote a shadow. Aiyappan, in his anthropological observations on the religious beliefs of the Paniyas noted that the Paniyas believed that a human being has a spirit called *pena*. *Pena* is inactive when a person is alive and becomes more active when a person is dead (Aiyappan 88). Thus, the dead men are an extension of the living in the form of a shadow. Paniyas believe that dead ancestors reside amidst the living and that they are capable of intervening at decisive moments during a person's lifetime. Nurit Bird-David, a cultural anthropologist, who worked on the Kattunayaka tribes of the Nilgiris, observed that for the Kattunayakas, the death of a person is a transition from the living plurality to the plurality of the dead (86). Similarly, the Paniyas too established a constant communication with their ancestors and gods through spirit possessions and trance dancers. Channakkan, a Paniya shaman, in an interview with me, told that the ancestors are called back from their abode to preside over marriages, to treat a sick person and for the post-burial ceremonies during shamanic séances.[103] Channakkan said that the dead are celebrated every year in a ritual called *valiya pula* or the 'Grand Pollution' ceremony, organised during the Malayalam month of *Kumbham* (which falls between the second half of February and the first half of March). During *valiya pula*, both the Paniya deities and ancestors give a visit to the family members. The meeting with ancestors and gods is called *theyyam kanal* or 'meeting the god' ritual. In this ritual, the ancestors visit the family through a shaman and warn the family of impending dangers. This shaman is called *attali,* who is a spirit medium. The continuum with the dead clan of the community is symbolically conveyed through the installation of a raised platform called *thiramana* or *thina* (made of clay and cow dung) inside every Paniya household. Lamps are lit and food is offered before this platform during special occasions. The Paniyas believed that death is the result of an attack from an evil spirit. Kidachulan observed that the evil spirit would possess a

[103] Personal interview with Channakkan, 25 March, 2021.

person if he/ she has breached any customary laws. The *attali* can decide on the penalties for breaching customary laws and he receives offerings on behalf of the ancestors. Aiyappan also observed that when a person is dead, his *pena* would still be in the possession of the evil spirit (143). The evil spirit has possessed the dead person because he/ she has sinned. Kidachulan made it clear that breaching a customary law amounted to committing a sin by the Paniyas. The *attali* would help the dead man's *pena* free from the torments caused by the evil spirits. This liberation of the *pena* from torments happens during the p*ula* ceremony. *Pula* ceremony which is observed when a family member is dead is called *karimpula* (Channakkan).

It is significant to make a comment on the Paniya belief of life after death here. Channakkan said that the Paniyas believe that the shadow has three parts, one part resides at *thiramana*, another one in *keeyurlokam* or netherworld and the third part with the Paniya ancestors in a mythical hill called Ippimala or Ippi hills. K*eeyurlokam* is defined as a hell- like scenario by Kidachulan. According to Kidachulan, the *pena* would suffer tortures in *keeyurlokam*. There would be torments like walking through a narrow bridge hung above a pit of fire, and suffering in pits full of centipedes (Kidachulan). Baby observed that *keeyurlokam*, is a hell like scenario, where even the *pena* had to toil for the landlords (40). As the *pena* has three parts, the family members have to observe three *pulas*, during consecutive years. Raju observed that after the successful completion of the first *pula* or *karimpula*, immediately after the death, a part of the shadow goes to Ippimala. However, one part still remains in the *keeyurlokam.* During the next *pula*, called *kakkappula*, the part of the shadow that has gone to reside with the ancestors in Ippimala, comes down along with other ancestors. During the climax of this *pula* ceremony, a part of the shadow would still remain in *keeyurlokam*, enslaved by the landlords. It is only during *adakkampula*, observed during the second year of death, that all the parts of the shadow would reach Ippimala (Raju 94). The shadow would then join other shadows in Ippimala who attained liberation from slave labour.

Thus, I want to suggest here that the very attempts of Paniyas in conducting a death ceremony is to attain total liberation from the systems of bondage. Thurston has observed that the Paniyas were transacted as and when the landlord wanted to sell or mortgage his land. He further mentioned that in the 1850s the English planters bought

lands from the native landlords along with the Paniyas living on it, who were practically slaves (Thurston 58). Paniya bondage was something that continued even after the abolition of slavery in Malabar in the 1840s. There is evidence to suggest that the Paniyas were sold between native landlords as well in Wayanad. For instance, a bamboo document in Malayalam, preserved in the ethnology department at Government Museum, Chennai, is regarding the transfer of a Paniya man as a slave from one *jenmi* to another. This bamboo document is a written agreement of the sale of Matan Paniyan, son of Velli and Chantan, a *jenmom* slave belonging to Veera Rayiravan of Kurumbranad (a talook of the erstwhile Malabar district) of Aattu palace to Kundaranjhiyil Raman and Chundan of Muppattina *amsom* (revenue village) and *desom* (a district) of Wayanad (*Bamboo Document 21/ 35*). Thus, it is of no surprise that the Paniyas wanted to escape slavery, at least symbolically by conducting a death ritual called *pula*. The tormented *pena* who wants an escape from drudgery and attainment of a solemn existence among the Paniya ancestors is a metaphor for the Paniya labourers themselves. *Keeyurlokam* is used as an image to reflect the slave system in their lived realities. Thus, I would say that the very purpose of conducting a death ritual is to escape mortal realms of enslavement. The *pena* has a method to talk about the rigours of slavery to the family members. This recounting of the history of subjugation is done through the recital of *penampattu*, or the shadow's song. Thus, for the Paniyas, death was the only escape from slavery. And history itself suggested that no laws or regulations could free the Paniyas from systems of bondage in Wayanad. *Penampattu* recital manifests the power of Paniya memory in transcending the mortal realm of enslavement to a solemn existence amidst their ancestors in Ippimala.

The *attalis*, who are the keepers of *penampattu*, held themselves in great esteem. This reason was that it was only through the *attali* that a family member could attain liberation from enslavement. Channakkan claimed that the gift of spirit possession and the hymns of *penampattu* were received as dream visions: "Lengthy hymns like *penampattu* could not be learned, but are a gift of revelation from the ancestors. *Attali* is a man of courage and patience as he has to deal with the spirit of a dead person. He is a man of great memory and knowledge. He has to free the *pena* from its mortal torments" (Channakkan). However, what I deduced from the interviews with various *attalis* is that long narrative hymns could not be acquired overnight, but are a result of improvisations. *Attali* is entrusted to take the *pena* to the Paniya ancestral abode called Ippimala or Ippi

hills during the *pula* ceremony. The Paniyas believe that reaching Ippimala freed the *pena* from the reality of enslavement and all the sins of a lifetime (Channakkan). Chala, another *attali* mentioned that the narration of *penampattu* during the *pula* ritual is also a recital of the mythical history of the community. *Penampattu* begins with the recital of an individual's history, but gradually it proceeds to the recounting of a mythical history. *Penampattu's* importance is in its mythical narration on the enslavement of the Paniyas, who were once independent food gatherers and shifting cultivators. According to Chala, an *attali*, the primordial mother and father of the Paniyas were called Uthamma and Uthappan respectively and they lived in the mythical hill called Ippimala or Ippi hills.[104] The climax of the recital of *penampattu* offers the dead spirit an opportunity to reach Ippimala, thereby symbolically freeing the dead man from the systems of bondage. An analysis of the text of *penampattu* shows the ways in which the Paniyas employ their collective memory to present the cultural history. *Penampattu* offers a different narrative on the stages of enslavement of the Paniyas as a community. These stages are the capture of the Paniya ancestors and their hills by the plain landlord, the forced settlement of the ancestors around paddy cultivation, introduction of the ancestors and their children into the caste system, and the hereditary enslavement of the subsequent generation of Paniyas. This is however, the colonial history that closed in on the independent livelihoods of the adivasis by imposing state regulations. For me, the Paniya narratives regarding colonial history suggested that the Paniyas were not happily enjoying the customary *valli* system under 'kind treatment' of their masters. This is a counter narrative to the colonial history that argued that the Paniyas were hereditary slaves who enjoyed the benefits allotted to them by the master. Moreover, provincial administrators opined that the slave never had the "will to raise himself" (Baber, Answers of T. H. Baber 15) and that he did not "understand the advantages of freedom" (Bevan 14). The narrative of *penampattu* also showed that the Paniyas understood what freedom meant for them and they had a will to raise themselves from degradation. The improvisations on *penampattu* by different *attalis* make the community aware of their mythical and cultural history during each *pula* ritual. Moreover, the recital of *penampattu* opens up ways for the community not only to remember their stages of

[104] Personal interview with Chala, 28 March, 2021.

enslavement but also on the necessity to break free from the colonial discourses of subjugation attributed upon them.

Penampattu recital begins with the *attali's* description of the situation of the *pena*, immediately after death. The *pena* explicates the difficult circumstances in which he/she has been caught in immediately after death in *keeyurlokam* or the netherworld. Channakan observed that the difficulties in *keeyurlokam* are in direct proportion to the obedience of the *valli* labourers during their lifetime. Tharuvana observed that the myth regarding *keeyurlokam* or the netherworld would have been propagated by the hegemony of the landlords and this myth got wide popularity among the *valli* labourers. Tharuvana also suggested that the younger generation of Paniyas are not aware of the myth of *keeyurlokam* (*Wayanattile* 53). Thus, I would suggest that the dating of the originary story of the Paniyas could be around a conjecture in history when the Paniyas lost their freedom of mobility. Therefore, I would argue that *penampattu* gains more significance within the history of colonial modernity. Colonial modernity was the time when the adivasis came totally into the circle of civilization. Thus, the concept of *keeyurlokam* also gains more significance within the colonial context as it was then that all the Paniyas had to unfailingly work as *valli* labourers. The *pena*, through the *attali* would narrate episodes of torture in *keeyurlokam*. The relatives would then start to sob, evoking a performative realm. *Attali* would describe the sins of a person's lifetime that caused the man/woman to die. The family members are obliged to listen to the dead persons' sins and also to forgive those sins. The kinfolk would then ask the *attali* to take measures for the *pena's* redemption. A sense of collective sin is evoked through the *attali* at this point. The *pena* would at this moment request his/her relatives to pray for its redemption from the sufferings at *keeyurlokam*. Chala, the *attali* of the particular *pula* ceremony- that I witnessed on 25 March, 2021- then recited the hymns where the *pena* requested his/ her family members not to repeat the mistakes that he/ she had done: "Thanumporum kuthikkalanda adimpidim koodikkalande/ Enik kani, enik kani koodiparanju kanda…" (Forgo your selfishness/ do not quarrel among yourselves/ I am sick/ I am very sick). I would comment here that the sickness that the *pena* suffered is from the torments at *keeyurlokam*. And the torments at *keeyurlokam* are similar to the *valli* labour under the masters when the *pena* was alive. The personal experience of slavery is elevated to a shared one when the community members sob for the *pena*, who was suffering in *keeyurlokam*. *Keeyurlokam* thus acted as a metaphor for the landlord's

dominion and his paddy fields in Wayanad. As soon as the sufferings of the *pena* at *keeyurlokam* is narrated, the narrative would transform into a narration of the originary story of the Paniya community. The personal experiences of subjugation and sufferings would be taken over by a narrative of the history of Paniya subjugation. I would go into a detailed discussion of the originary myth of the Paniyas in the next section. I would also analyse the various literary devices that the Paniyas employ to narrate their originary story. This originary story is significant as it envisages an alternative history to the community.

4.2.2. The Originary Myth and the Loss of *Uchronic* Spaces

Charles Taylor argued that ordinary people imagine their social surroundings through images, stories and legends. Taylor also suggested that cultural and social practices made sense only if the community has a wider grasp of how they got to where they are. I draw from Taylor's concept of social imaginary in this section to suggest that *penampattu* provided the Paniyas a 'social imaginary' to remember their slave pasts. The relationship between understanding of a practice and the actual practice is double-sided (Taylor). Similarly, the practice of *penampattu* carried the understanding of slave pasts and it is the slave pasts that made the practice of *penampattu* possible. One of the important objectives of the recital of *penampattu* during *pula* ceremony is to remind the Paniyas of their cultural history. And this cultural history is narrated from a Paniya perspective, by the *attali*. It is through the recital of *penampattu* that the community is reminded of their transition from food gatherers in the hills and forests to slaves in paddy cultivation. I would discuss this narrative of transition as the Paniyas perceive in this section. I would deal with the enslavement of the Paniya ancestors, their settlement in paddy fields, the formation of Paniya clan and a total alienation of the Paniyas from all available lands by their assimilation into the caste system.

The Enslavement of the Primordial Ancestors

The primordial mother and father of the Paniyas were called Uthamma and Uthappan respectively.[105] Though *penampattu* narratives vary in style, vocabulary and details regarding the personal history of the dead person, all the versions agree upon the

[105] Personal interviews with Channakkan, Chala and Kidachulan.

events leading to the enslavement of Uthappan and Uthamma. Channakkan narrated that Uthappan and Uthamma were siblings and that they inhabited the mythical *Ippimala* or Ippi hills. The narrative projects *Ippimala* as a *uchronic* space that existed between the sky and the earth. Thus, the mythical space of Ippihills is a metaphor for Wayanad, where the adivasis led an independent life prior to invasions. For instance, Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam notes that the Paniyas sustained largely on shifting cultivation and food gathering practices prior to the in- migrations to Wayanad (1192- 94). Kidachulan suggested that Uthappan and Uthamma were engaged in food gathering, hunting and shifting cultivation practices on Ippimala. Chala observed that the Paniya ancestors gathered wild tubers and timber from the forests. However, on one such food gathering expedition, Uthappan and Uthamma were captured by a Gowder, a plain landlord. Chala narrated to me the episode of enslavement of Uthappan and Uthamma. While Uthappan and Uthamma were living peacefully in the hills, one *oorali*, or an assistant of a landlord saw them and caught them in a nest. The *oorali* informed about his catch to the Ippimala landlord, who was a Gounder (*attalis* in north Wayanad observed that the landlord was a Chetty, as Chettys were the landlord castes in North Wayanad). Uthappan and Uthamma, who were caught in a nest, were brought to Ippimala landlord's place. Chala observed that the Ippimala lord initiated the ancestors into communicating with other people ("*koottam koodan padippichu"*) and gave them clothing to cover themselves ("*karikkan mundu koduthu")*. Uthappan and Uthamma were thus 'tamed.' This brother and sister grew up under the care and kindness of Ippimala landlord, observed Chala. Uthappan and Uthamma were then taken to the paddy fields for cultivation. They were asked to sow the seeds, to replant the paddy saplings and to harvest the produce. Since they succeeded in paddy cultivation, and the landlord realised their ability to cultivate food crops, Uthappan and Uthamma were given a place in the paddy fields of the Ippimla landlord. They were given the status quo of agriculturalists on the lands of the landlord. Then, huts and wells were made for their stay near the fields. Chala thus pointed to the enslavement of Uthappan and Uthamma as a process of their initiation into civilization. The landlord is described as a caring patron figure. However, there is no doubt that the freedom of mobility for Uthappan and Uthamma were lost in this process of initiation into paddy cultivation. The reference to giving them clothes or *karikkan* is important signifier as *karikkan* was provided customarily to the *valli* labourers when they were bought during the Valliyoorkkavu

slave market. Thus, this episode of enslavement is an instance where the Paniyas are culturally hegemonized.

There is another narrative variant of the enslavement of Paniya ancestors which was narrated by Kidachulan. Kidachulan also observed that Uthappan and Uthamma used to frequent the hills and forests of Wayanad as food gatherers. During one such trip, they were spotted by the domestic helpers of Ippimala Chetty, one of the oldest landlord castes in Wayanad. The landlord decided to trap the indigenous people of the hills to supplement his labour power for paddy cultivation, Kidachulan observed. Kidachulan narrated the process by which the ancestors were trapped by the landlord. The ancestors were baited with cooked food (Kidachulan). As Uthappan and Uthamma were food gatherers, they got attracted to cooked food. When they came to taste the food, they were tied with a rope. It is believed that the landlord's men caught Uthappan and Uthamma with ropes made from indigenous plants like *thuva* and *manali*. The ancestors were then scared by barking dogs. Uthappan and Uthamma were caught in nets as they ran away from the dogs (Kidachulan). The myth of the Paniya ancestors being caught thus evokes a picture of wild animals being hunted inside the forests by humans. In fact, the Paniyas resented the treatment they received similar to wild animals. The Paniyas thus had memories about the landlords and the colonial state trying to 'civilise' them. In fact, most of the colonial reports on the Paniyas stereotyped them as wild and rude. Mundakkayam Gopi, even talked about the process wherein a Paniya man was 'tamed' after he was brought as a *valli* labourer under the landlord. Mundakkayam Gopi notes that the practice of taming a Paniya was called *mettiyil kettal*. He described *mettiyil kettal* as a practice in which the *jenmies* and their men used to tame the Paniyas who were forced to come out of the forests. Those who happened to come out of the forests were tied to a long pole, called *okkal* and they were beaten black and blue until the fear of the *jenmi* gripped the Paniyas (M. Gopi 185). Mundakkayam Gopi observed that not all Paniyas were settled around paddy cultivation in the early twentieth century. However, with a steady increase in wetland cultivation, the demand for labour increased and this forced the *jenmies* to look for more agricultural labourers who would work for meagre wages. The loss of available forest lands for sustenance also forced the Paniyas to settle as *valli* labourers (M. Gopi 184). Provincial reports on slavery in Wayanad also suggested that the slaves were flogged and chained. Such practices of imprisonment and taming of a Paniya are memorised in the narrative which

recounted the capture and taming of Uthappan and Uthamma who came out of their hills.

Kidachulan narrated the hymns that corresponded to the entrapment of Paniya ancestors. These hymns recounted how the ancestors were chained by their hips, arms and legs: “Ippimala Uthi, Ippimala Uthappanum vanthupoyilava/ Arakku arachangalaittu kaikk kaichangalaittu/ Kalukku kaalchangalaittu enenchelumakatte…” Thus, the mythical story of taming the Paniyas was very much part of history as well. Kidachulan went on to suggest that after the process of taming, the Chetty made them settle near the paddy fields by giving them food, clothing and a hut. However, Kidachulan also suggested that Uthappan and Uthamam tried to resist their capture by escaping from the nets, multiple times. However, the landlord would find them out each time they tried to escape (Kidachulan). This episode where the ancestors attempted to escape is similar to a *valli* labourer trying to escape from bondage. As colonial administrators observed, the slave was punished into subjugation each time he/ she tried to escape (Bevan 38).

Letters dated as early as 1813, are available from the forest department collections of Malabar which reflect the colonial project of bringing under control the hills and forests of Malabar and Canara. For instance, J. H. Cherry, Acting Secretary to the government, wrote a letter in 1815, suggesting the implementation of new regulations on forest conservation in Malabar and Canara. Moreover, fines would be imposed on those inhabitants of Malabar who were found cutting timber or uprooting saplings from the forests, without the prior permission of the Chief Conservator of forests (Cherry). Therefore, it could be argued that the forced settlement of the Paniyas around the paddy fields is the story of colonial modernity extending its control on the adivasis. The displacement of the Paniyas from the hills and forests is a result of the increased control on the forest areas by the colonial state regulations. Implied in the forest conservation policies of the colonial administrators is the idea of nurturing certain pieces of land which would be rich in timber trees, one of the main sources of government's revenue. Also, the government allowed certain groups of people to cut and export timber trees from the forests with the prior permission of the forest conservation officer. Those people who would be able to obtain this prior permission would certainly be the landlords of the period and agents for the colonial government.

Food gatherers like Paniyas, who are the inhabitants of Malabar forests were left with no scope in collecting forest products like wild tubers and timber.

The Paniya Clan and the Caste system

Penampattu narrative talked about the life of Uthappa and Uthamma after they were enslaved as *valli* labourers. Channakkan, Chala and Kidachulan narrated the episodes where Uthamma gave birth to the Paniya clan for increasing the slave population of the landlord. Since they were siblings, Uthappan and Uthamma did not wish to engage in the sexual act. Most popular variants of *penamppattu* identify the landlord as guilty of arousing sexual desires in the siblings. Chala narrated that the landlord, desperately wanting to populate his slaves, hid the *bathiramkotta* plant, with itchy leaves, on the siblings' mat. The siblings scratched each other to relieve themselves and finally ended up in sexual union thus becoming man and woman below their waists and brother and sister above their waists: "Arenuthazhe aanumpennum thirinjupoyina/ Arenemele angalempengalum thirinjupoyina…" (Chala).

The landlord's regulation of Paniya sexuality ejected more slave labourers into wetland cultivation, who would eventually settle around paddy fields. The historical fact that the *jenmi* consciously encouraged sexual union between their slave labourers however could not be overlooked. Baby observed in one of the footnotes in *Mavelimanram* that the landlord would continuously check if the Paniya women were pregnant so that more slave children would be available for sale (40). However, *attalis* like Channakkan argue that the ancestors consciously decided to be man and woman below their waists. Such a narrative regains Paniya agency in their sexuality. Intercourse is normalised here as an instinctive urge to pass on the genes by Kidachulan. For Kidachulan, "being man and woman below the waist and siblings above the waist should not be read as a symbol of loose morality, but it denoted gender equality among Paniyas." Uthappan and Uthamma were not biological siblings. Yet, they shared the cordiality that existed between a brother and sister. Kidachulan's and Channakkan's observations regarding Paniya sexuality are also important if we are to revisit the descriptions of Paniya sexuality in the colonial archives. Paniya men are especially stigmatised for their loose morals by anthropologists like Thurston as was discussed in the first chapter. Therefore, *penampattu* narrative asserted that it was the landlords who controlled even the sexuality of the Paniyas.

For the narrative regarding the formation of a Paniya clan, I draw on the *penampattu* narrative compiled by Raju as it is an elaborate one. Chala could only say that Uthamma gave birth to ten children and the population grew. Chala also observed that the human population was then divided into different castes by God's providence. Channakkan observed that all the people belonging to different castes and communities are the children of Uthappan and Uthamma. One hundred and one *kulas* or clans were formed from these Paniya children, observed Channakkan. However, Raju gave detailed explanations regarding the division of human population into different castes. However, it is also significant to see that the time is not ahistorical here, as the Paniyas claim. Rather, I would say that the time period is the nineteenth century, the moment of colonial invasion. The Paniyas perceive the formation of different castes after they were enslaved into paddy cultivation by the landlords. Therefore, the introduction of the Paniyas into the caste system of the plains is narrated as mythical history in *penampattu*. When the Paniyas argue that different castes were formed and the Paniyas were reduced to slave castes, they are hinting at their assimilation into the plains.

I would turn to Raju's narrative of *penampattu* for a detailed inquiry into the perception of agriculture and caste by the Paniyas. Uthamma gave birth to ten children at Ippimala, according to Raju's compilation of *penampattu*. The eldest daughter was called Unnichirutha. Unnichirutha was a bird who had two brothers and seven sisters. The eldest brother was called Mudavankandan (who married his seven sisters except Unnichirutha) and the youngest one was called Odukkan (Raju 73). The history of Paniyas as agricultural labourers begins with the episode of Unnichirutha laying an egg which contained the one hundred and one seeds that were needed for a year's cultivation (Raju 74). Mudavankandan, along with Uthappan sowed the seeds all over the land making it worthy of living. Buffaloes were procured from Kurumbalakotta (a place of mythical importance to the Paniyas) and the lands were tilled. The narratives about tilling the land and acquaintance with cattle for cultivation are pointers to a long history of the Paniyas as hill tribes who were engaged in independent cultivation practices. The growth of population and differentiation of the people into different castes is substantiated by two variants of a narrative. The most popular one by Raju says that Padichavan or the creator of Paniyas decided to split the population into different castes, giving them lands to sustain on the earth. The Paniyas did not get lands for themselves as they were late to approach Padichavan, as was observed in the beginning

of this section. Paniyas thus became labourers of the soil, where the other castes who could access lands became their owners. This narrative of *penampattu* that pointed to the landlessness of Paniyas is very much historical as well.

Proposals for reassessment of the lands and modification of land revenue took place in the early nineteenth century. The colonial administration decided to collect a certain share of produce from the immediate cultivators. Robert Rickards, the principal collector of Malabar during the period between 1803- 4 observed in 1804 that land became a saleable property with the settlement of revenue (1752). Warden's report on the revenue administration of Malabar published in 1815 observed that the available lands would be divided into revenue divisions. Warden observed that the talooks of Malabar were to be divided into *hoblies*, *hoblies* into *deshoms* or villages and each *deshoms* into *parambas* or fields. The introduction of the land revenue in Malabar was clearly an effort from the colonial administration to extend their legislative purview to the cultivation of hills and forests as well. Clementson in his report on the revenue administration of Malabar published in the early twentieth century talked about the profits for the government with the imposition of land revenue. He observed that the province of Malabar which was in a declining state with respect to cultivation, improved with the imposition of land revenue for cultivation, both in plains (paddy cultivation) and hills (*poonum* cultivation) (A Report on Revenue 1). Moreover, native newspaper reports of the nineteenth century suggested that the government began to demarcate the available lands of Wayanad into privately owned and government owned. One of the news reports in the daily *Malayala Manorama* observed that "the government has resolved to plant boundary stones all over Wynaad" ("Planting of Boundary Stones" 4). For this purpose, several Europeans and Eurasians and Natives had gone to Mannanttody, in Wayanad. They visited and surveyed the hills and forests, measured the ground and fixed the boundary stones. The report further observed that the government would then procure revenue from the settled lands ("Planting of Boundary Stones" 4). As Kjosavik and Shanmugaratnam observed, with the advent of colonial rule, land ownership began to be decided based on occupation (for a minimum of three years) and not based on cultivation (1220). Thus, the Paniyas who were mere slaves of the soil could not obtain any property rights on the lands. Through *penampattu*, the Paniyas conveyed this dispossession through an alternative narrative. Implementation of land revenue and demarcation of boundaries led to the displacement of Paniyas from the

forests and hills. Even their *poonum* cultivation practice was brought under the land revenue system. Thus, the Paniyas had no other option but to be bonded as *valli* labourers. Moreover, occupation of the Paniyas as the lowest castes, as narrated in *penampattu* is nothing but the forced integration of the Paniyas into the caste system into the plains. The Paniyas who were the hill tribes till the advent of colonial rule became the outcastes with their settlement around paddy cultivation. There is another variant of this narrative regarding the marginalisation of Paniyas as slaves of the soil. According to the narrative by Kidachulan, the children of Paniya ancestors travelled to different directions and established their own *chemmams* or families in four directions. Uthappan and Uthamma continued staying in the Ippihills. Paniyas who settled in different directions were attacked by the gods of landlords like Chavundi and Veeran. Paniyas thus got scattered. This scattering of Paniyas in different directions from their families led to their enslavement. Alienation from one's own family and displacement into different directions led to the loss of autonomy over lands. Both the narrative variants regarding the settlement of Paniyas as *valli* labourers imply their alienation from Ippimala, loss of cultivable lands and subsequent enslavement. The enslavement of primordial ancestors under the landlords thus gave way to the enslavement of their children as well. Thus, the Paniyas perceived through their myth that servitude was inheritable. The history of Paniya enslavement as told through *penampattu* is therefore the history of colonial land regulations and the expansion of paddy cultivation by the landlords by forcefully displacing the Paniyas.

Bondage and Liberation of the Shadow

Raju's compilation of *penampattu* throws light on the origin of sin among the Paniyas and their perception of atonement. The Paniyas believed that death was the result of sinning. According to the Paniya belief, the act of disturbing nature and incestual relations were the two grave sins. They believed that the Padichavan prophesied illness and mortality to the Paniya clan as punishments for committing these sins. The concept of transgressions and punishments for transgressions are related to bonded labour. The deliverance of the dead from this bondage after death was inversely proportional to the number of sins that he/ she committed (Raju 79). Atonement for the sin of irreverence to nature was a prayer to the ancestors to keep the young generation of Paniyas informed of the importance of agriculture. The next sin is related to the

forbiddance of sexual relations and marriages from one's *chemmam* or family. Divine hymns that were advised by Padichavan were to keep the Paniya members informed of the possible sins like adultery, destruction of nature and selfishness. These hymns would work as medicines for illness as well.[106] However, these hymns are not easily accessible according to the Paniya myth. I would suggest here that the difficulty in finding the right hymns to treat the family member is symbolic of the difficulty that the Paniyas faced to escape bondage. Moreover, the attempts to treat the shadow is futile, as the person had already died. Pe*nampattu* is thus a movement from the present status of the *pena*, to its past and again to the present. However, nowhere could the *pena* enjoy freedom as it was always and already tormented inside the systems of bondage. The journeys of Kavilamkutti Pariyathi, a Paniya deity, in search of medicines for the dead man's sin is a powerful reminder for the community members of their nomadic nature before being subjugated into slavery. Moreover, this journey could also be read as symbolic of Paniya displacement from one field to another by the *jenmi*. However, freedom for the *pena*, as was observed in the beginning, would be attained only after the successful completion of three consecutive *pulas*. It is believed that at the third *pula* or *adakkampula*, the *pena* would finally reach Ippimala, a symbol of freedom and liberation to the community.

The collective memory of *penampattu* thus makes the Paniyas aware of their history as food gatherers and independent cultivators who were forced into paddy cultivation. Though the Paniyas do not make any explicit comments regarding the temporality of the loss of their *uchronic* space of Ippimala, I have argued that this time period is the colonial modernity. The enslavement of the ancestors, introduction of Paniya clan into the caste system of plains and alienation of the clan from Ippimala are powerful reminders of the Paniya routes of bondage during the colonial times. *Penampattu* is also an occasion that collectively evokes the memories of subjugation of a community. For the Paniyas the remembrance of slave past was intrinsically ritualistic and was not political. However, the objective of the *penampattu* recital had political implications, I would say. The strong resentment and refusal to bondedness is revealed

[106] The sacred hymns are made accessible to the shadow through the *attali*, who gets possessed by the deity called Kavilamkutty Pariyathi, see Raju 84- 86.

through the recital of the hymn at each death ceremony. Death, for the Paniyas is the only and ultimate liberator from slavery. Even the reclamation of freedom at Ippimala is difficult as the *pula* ceremony has to be enacted thrice for the purpose. It is also a political statement by the community for equality in contemporary times. However, the Paniyas were not able to institutionalise *penampattu* as the PRDS could do with their songs or Adiyas could do with *gaddika*. *Penampattu* is thus a powerful device of memory that the Paniyas reinvent to talk about their routes to subjugation and ways to resist this subjugation.

4. 3. Popularising *Penampattu* and *Kambalappattu*

In the previous chapter, I have examined how the Adiyas popularised their mythical memories to imagine new aspirations for the community. Secularising mythical realms allowed the Adiyas to aspire for a dignified identity in the present times. Attempts at secularising/ popularising the Adiya cultural history began in the late decades of the twentieth century. This was also made possible by the re- enactment of *gaddika* by P. Kalan on the public stages of Kerala. However, the Paniyas and their cultural realms were not popularised until the contemporary times. One major reason for the delayed entry of the Paniya cultural traditions into the public realm of Kerala was that a figure like P. Kalan did not emerge from the community. Thus, until recently, mythical histories and folk traditions remained as memories amidst the community members. However, the Paniyas have realised the transformative potential of popularising their mythical traditions recently. The Paniya mythical culture also got introduced into the popular realms through 'Gaddika,' the tribal festival organised by the Left Democratic Fronts in Kerala. *Kambalappattu* and *penampattu*, during the traditional occasions, offered the Paniyas a symbolic liberation from subjugation. I would now discuss in this section the liberatory potential of these two traditions on the public stages of Kerala. The young generation of Paniyas organised music bands that popularised *kambalappattu* to suit the public stages of Kerala. Moreover, folk performers from the community attempted to bring *penampattu*, the ritualistic hymn of Paniyas into the popular stages as P. Kalan reinvented *gaddika* on the popular stages. I would discuss in this section, the attempts by two bands, namely 'Thudithalam Gotharakala Sangham' and 'Kamabalam' in reinventing *kambalappattu* on the secular stages of Kerala. I also discuss the individual attempts by the Paniya folk performer

Vinu Kidachulan to secularise *penampattu* on stage. My argument in this section is that the Paniyas re- enacted their mythical memories on the secular stages of Kerala as an act of resistance to the colonial metanarratives that stereotyped them. Thus, the Paniyas attempt to actively challenge their position as a subjugated community.

However, my attempt is not to argue that popularising their memories allowed the Paniyas to completely overturn the authoritarian history regarding the community. Rather, the Paniyas were able to produce a new site of contention and resentment. As James Procter in *Stuart Hall* notes, popular culture is not always associated with revolutionary resistance and opposition. Popular culture, according to Hall, is a 'contradictory space,' a site of continuous negotiation. It is a site of containment and resistance (Procter 25- 27). Given the hindsight that popular culture is a site of containment and resistance, it is important to discuss the popularisation of mythical memories through Paniya bands. However, I would not go into a detailed analysis of the performative aspect of the bands, including the various stage performances of the bands and audience reception. Rather, I would limit my discussion to those performances that I was able to access through field work and digital media. These performances should be read as exemplars to support the larger argument that I am making regarding the importance of memorising slavery by the Paniya community. Thus, the focus of my discussion is not on the formal aspects of popular culture, but on the didactic aspects of it.

4. 3.1. The Paniya Bands

Paniyas claimed themselves to be an indispensable part of the agricultural fields of Wayanad by bringing out *kambalappattu* on the secular stages of Kerala. However, what is innovative in the popularisation of *kambalappattu* by the Paniyas is that they presented *kambalappattu* along with the traditional Paniya dance form called *vattakkali*. For instance, the band called 'Thudithalam Gothrakala Sangham,' from Sulthan Bethery in Wayanad performed *kambalappattu* on the stages of 'Gaddika' in 2018 and 2019 with an accompaniment of dancers who performed *vattakkali* on stage. 'Thudithalam Gothrakala Sangham' was led by Aneesh Amarakkuni, a Paniya folk performer from Pulpally in Wayanad. The band was formed in 2016 by a group of enthusiastic adivasi folk performers from the Adiya and Paniya community. According to Prasad, one of the Paniya vocalists of the band, the main objective of the band was to bring *kambalappattu*

on the secular stages of Kerala so that a renewed interest in adivasi culture would be created among the Malayali public.[107]

A brief discussion on *vattakkali* of the Paniya community would be significant here. *Vattakkali*, a dance form of the Paniyas, is an indispensable part of their culture. In *vattakkali*, men, women and children would dance in circles, accompanied with rhythmic body movements in semi circles. *Vattakkali* is performed accompanied by the music of *kuzhal* and *thudi*, the traditional music instruments of the Paniyas. *Vattakkali* is performed during all functions in a Paniya household including birth, menarche, marriage and death. *Vattakkali* could last for hours in a household and it involved men, women and children. During *vattakali*, the community members would be involved in joking about others, reciting stories and folktales. According to Amritha, a youngster from Kavu paniya colony in Valliyoorkkavu, *vattakkali* is a channel for the Paniyas to release their repressed sadness and the stories of sufferings on the fields.[108] Moreover, *vattakkali* offers the Paniyas a chance to relieve themselves from the arduous tasks that they were liable to do on the fields. Amritha opined that even in contemporary times, life is not easy for the Paniya community. Men and women had to work as daily wage labourers and the children were required to offer helping hands as labourers on the fields. The elder people are mostly involved in the domestic chores. It is thus, the cultural practice of *vattakkali* that offered them channels to divert their agonies. Thus, the cultural realms offered the Paniyas the space to engage with and discuss various forms of subjugation within the community. Likewise, the *kambalappattu* of the Paniyas, as was discussed in the previous sections, also offered them the opportunities to remember and resist agonies on the fields. Karunan suggested that *kambalappattu* was often accompanied with *vattakkali* on the paddy fields.[109] Karunan's memories were vivid regarding *vattakkali* and *kambalappattu* on the paddy fields. He recollected that some men would play *kuzhal* and *thudi*, while the women replanted the paddy saplings. A group of men and women would be performing *vattakkali* while another

[107] Personal interview with Prasad, 24 Dec, 2018.

[108] Personal interview with Amritha, 24 march, 2021.

[109] Personal interview with Karunan, 23 March, 2021.

group planted saplings. The Paniyas used to forget hunger on the paddy fields dreaming about the handful of grains that would be given as the coolie (Karunan).

Vattakkali, the dance form and *kambalappatu,* the songs that accompanied *vattakkali*, thus conveyed a strong sense of community and oneness of the Paniyas. *Vattakkali* is closely associated with *kambalappani* as the songs that accompany *vattakkali* during *kambalappani* would be about the agricultural life of the Paniyas and their cultural history as food gatherers and hunters. 'Thudithalam Gothrakala Sangham,' while performing *vattakkali* and *kambalanatti* on the stages of 'Gaddika,' combined the two art forms into a single performance. The band used modern musical instruments like keyboard, drums and guitar to improvise *kambalappattu* and to create a spectacle on stage. K*ambalappattu* songs are also called as *nattippattu* or *panippattu*, which meant songs sung during *pani* or labour, according to Aneesh Amarakkuni. The band is led by artists including Prasad, Baiju Kottayil, Saji Vannathara, Kannan Ambalakkunnu, Ratheesh Kaloor, Asokan Kolloor, Shaiju Ambalakkuni and Aneesh Amarakkuni. While the vocalists performed *kambalappattu*, the dancers performed *vattakkali* and *kambalanatti* on stage. The dance team included mostly intermediate students from the Paniya community. *Vattakkali* performances for 'Gaddika' 2018 were led by Aiswarya, Sumi, Sheeba, Sukanya, Deepa and Vijitha. The performers dance in their traditional costumes, holding dried paddy stems, to symbolise the planting of saplings on the fields. The dancers would be dressed up in white dhotis called *mundu*, tied over their chest. The women also wear a red satin cloth tied around their waists called *urumala*. They would be adorned with *choothumani*, the traditional ear studs, *mudachil*, a necklace made of beads and *kalles*, which are the long neck pieces made of coins and beads. The troupe would limit their performances to seven or eight minutes. The dancers simulate the planting of paddy saplings on the stage while the vocalist sang *kambalappattu*. The dancers would also move in circles, with their bodies moving up and down to resemble the harvesting on fields. Thus, the band was able to project their identity to the non- adivasi audience. The Paniyas remember their history of subjugation through the *kambalappattu* songs. However, when it came to the popular stages, the entire performance became a celebration of agriculture. The audience might miss the signified conveyed by the *kambalappattu*, however, the performance of the dancers with paddy saplings gets registered. Thus, what the Paniyas through a band want to project is their identity as agriculturalists.

Similarly, Vinu Kidachulan is another prominent figure among the Paniya community who tried to popularise the songs and myths of the Paniya community by popularising them. Kidachulan's improvisations of the *kambalappattu* and *penampattu* performances were not part of the 'Gaddika' festival in 2018 and 2019. Thus, I have largely analysed personal interviews and discussions with Kidachulan over a period between 2021 and 2022, for observations in this section. Kidachulan tried to project the Paniya community with dignity with the popularisation of Paniya folk songs and myths. As observed earlier, the history of the Paniyas as a community, the displacements they faced with modernity and the rigours of *valli* labour are the main themes that are presented through *kambalappattu*. The *kambalappattu* are however presented to the audience in a new format by Kidachulan by mixing it with Western instruments.[110] Kidachulan's initiatives in popularising *kambalappattu* and hymns from the Paniya community led to the formation of an independent band that promoted Paniya folk memories and culture called 'Kambalam.'

'Kambalam' band was formed in 2019. Kidachulan observed that he was able to form this band with assistance from his friends from Kozhikode and Ernakulam including Shekhar Sudheer, Prathyush, Praphul George and Shemeel Kambarath. All other band members apart from Kidachulan are non- adivasis. Kidachulan told me that help from his non- adivasi friends was unavoidable as they were adept in playing western musical instruments like violin, guitar, keyboard and cajon. The band was named after the *kambalappani* festival of the Adiyas and Paniyas in Wayanad. Kidachulan notes that while naming the band, his only aim was that his community members, including the Paniyas, should be able to relate to the band's identity. Kidachulan observed that the main aim of forming this band was to make the Paniya songs including *kambalappattu*, lullabies, play songs and ritualistic hymns reach a wider audience. He had collected and compiled a vast reservoir of Paniya songs from the Paniya elders. These songs had been at the verge of extinction as the younger generation of Paniyas increasingly became averse to using the Paniya language due to a sense of shame. The younger generation are reluctant to identify themselves as Paniyas

[110] Kidachulan started his career in music at a Jesuit institution called TUDI (Tribal Unity for Development Initiatives) which was founded in 1996. TUDI began as a tribal development unit in Eachome, Wayanad.

and they have started to develop a contempt towards their language (Kidachulan). However, the other side of the story, according to Kidachulan was that the younger generation of Paniyas started to develop an interest in the non- adivasi culture, westernised music and beats of jazz and keyboard. Kidachulan suggested: "We would slowly lose the Paniya language and culture if the younger generation would not be able to appreciate the Paniya language. In this scenario, there is only one way to familiarise the language to our younger generation. It is through popular music." Kidachulan thus composed the traditional songs of Paniyas to match the beats familiar to the younger generation. Kidachulan commented that the only way in which the people would accept the Paniya language was through popularising it. While Paniya songs are presented in the form of popular music, the language would be acceptable not only among the community members, but also by the non- adivasis. The mainstream Malayali population has begun to enjoy folk music in the recent decades. Through the initiatives of the 'Kambalam' band, Kidachulan tried to present to the audience a taste of adivasi folk songs accompanied by the western instruments including jazz, guitar, keyboard and cajon.

The initial stages of the band included performances of traditional Paniya songs in the streets. Kidachulan observed that his songs were accepted by the people. The initial performance of the 'Kambalam' band was in Kalpetta, in Wayanad in 2019 and the response, according to Kidachulan, was overwhelming. The band got more stages after the initial performance in colleges in and outside Wayanad. Kidachulan also took his band to the 'Balabhaskar Award' instituted in the name of the late violinist Balabhaskar. 'Kambalam' band won the award in 2020 after performing six songs. Kidachulan, however, made it clear that he does not intend to make his band heavily influenced by the rules and rigours of Carnatic or Hindustani music:

> I compose my songs in such a way that the beats and rhythms of violin, guitar and keyboard are played to match the Paniya lyrics and tunes. I never wanted my songs to be straightjacketed according to the traditional rules of music. There are no rules for my music. 'Kambalam' purports to present the Paniya songs in such a way that our community members could sing along with us. None of the Paniyas are trained in classical music. But our songs carry the history of a community. (Kidachulan)

Kidachulan observed that his community should not feel estranged by his songs when it is presented in the form of popular music. Kidachulan's main aim, I would say, while forming the band was to conserve the language along with discussing the main issues that the Paniyas as a community faced in Kerala. Kidachulan also wanted the themes of *kambalappattu* to reach a wider audience. When the music became popular, a larger audience began to memorise the Paniya songs and to understand the history presented through such songs. Gilroy argued that black music was instrumental in developing black struggles by communicating information, organising consciousness and forming subjectivities that are required to claim political agency (360). Similarly, the *kambalappattu*, when popularised through the band, communicated the history from a Paniya perspective. Such alternative adivasi narratives acted as a counter- histories to colonial modernity. Main themes that are presented through the songs of 'Kambalam' are the loss of forests, soil and the cultivable lands of the agricultural adivasi communities with the introduction of modernity. Thus, by popularising their folk traditions, the Paniyas asserted that they are very much a part of modernity and that they are eligible for spaces of equality. The traditional Paniya songs thus became aspirational for the Paniya community to reclaim the lost spaces of dignity in the present times.[111]

4. 3.2. *Penampattu* on the Secular Stages

Colonial administrative records have defined the Paniya religious beliefs and customs as superstitious and animistic in the nineteenth century. However, the young generation of Paniyas have strived to bring the ritualistic realms of the Paniya culture to the mainstream to argue that the Paniya traditions were worth researching for an alternative history on colonial modernity. Kidachulan's success in collecting, compiling and performing *kambalappattu* on the stage inspired him to present *penampattu*, the ritualistic post- burial hymn of the Paniyas in a renewed format to the Malayali audience. *Penampattu*, the shadow song of the Paniyas is traditionally recited by the Paniya shaman called *attali*, as part of the post- burial *pula* ritual, as observed earlier.

[111] Kidachulan, along with the Adiya poet Sukumaran Chaligadha had created a music album in the Paniya language called *Kuru Kure Broz*, that depicted Paniya boys dancing to the beats of modern music. This video song is also a statement by the Paniyas that their culture should not be exoticized. Rather, the Paniyas asserted that they were very much part of the modern developments in music and dance.

The symbolic significance of *penampattu*, as discussed earlier was the attainment of shadow's liberation from slavery. Thus, the recital of *penampattu* meant that the Paniyas understood the significance of what it meant to be free. Kidachulan observed that the hymn of *penampattu* was crucial in understanding the cultural history of the Paniyas as a community of independent agriculturalists. Kidachulan, having devoted his life to popularising the Paniya culture, found it an important task to bring *penampattu* from the traditional, ritualistic spaces of the Paniya communities to the mainstream. Kidachulan, in an interview with me, noted that he was inspired by P. Kalan's attempts at popularising *gaddika* as an art form of the Adiyas of Wayanad. According to Kidachulan, people began to observe, study and do research on *gaddika* after it was performed on the secular stages. Similarly, Kidachulan wanted to bring *penampattu* to the popular stage, to arouse curiosity among the audience. The very first public improvisation of *penampattu* was performed by Kidachulan in 2018 in Kalpetta, Wayanad.

To preserve the sacred nature of the ritual, Kidachulan improvised the *penampattu* hymn to present only that part of the hymn, which talked about the mythical history of the Paniya community. This part presented the displacement of the Paniya forefathers from their rightful lands called Ippimala. The *attalis* Channakkan and Chala observed that the primordial ancestors were caught by a landlord in wooden cages. Eventually the ancestors were forced to settle around wetland cultivation. However, Kidachulan, through his performance, wanted to highlight the transformation of Uthappan and Uthamma as settled cultivators as a conscious decision by them. Kidachulan narrated that Uthappan and Uthamma, after they were caught in the wooden cages, were chained by their arms, legs and hips: "Ippimala uthi, Ippimala uthappanu vanthu poyilava/ Arakku arachangala ittu/ Kaikk kaichangala ittu/ Kalukku kaalchangala ittu/ Enenchelumakatte…"[112] Most narrative variants of *penampattu* highlighted this episode of capture of the ancestors. The element of resistance has often been overlooked in the references to *penamppattu*, in the anthropological and historical works on the Paniyas.[113] However, Kidachulan observed that Uthappan and Uthamma

[112] As recited by Kidachulan in a personal interview with me on 20 March, 2021.

[113] See Aiyappan 6. C. Nair 100 and M. Gopi 38.

tried to get away from the wooden cage in which they were trapped, multiple times. Kidachulan mentioned that Uthappan and Uthamma were caught multiple times by the landlord. The ancestors were tired of absconding themselves as the landlord caught them each time. Then the ancestors finally decided to stay with the landlord. The ancestors then tried their abilities in paddy cultivation. I agree with this narrative variant of Kidachulan. He wanted to project the ancestors as agents in this history. Kidachulan's narrative is also a reminder that the Paniyas were expert agriculturalists. Kidachulan also made it clear that the landlords like Gounders and Chettys could never have succeeded in paddy cultivation without assistance from the Paniyas. Kidachulan thus improvised the origin story of the Paniya ancestors, highlighting the endurance of Uthappan and Uthamma and this narrative is presented to the public stages. The cultural history of the Paniyas should get a wider attention through his performances of *penampattu* according to Kidachulan:

> I have faced harsh criticisms from my community members for performing and popularising a ritual like *penampattu*. However, it would be a wasteful endeavour if the community decides to keep *penampattu* as a sacred ritual, hardly accessible to outsiders. Adivasi politics that *penampattu* reflected should see the light of the day. *Penampattu* talked about the Paniya cultural history of transformation from food gatherers into settled cultivators. But, popularising our hymns is the only way in which we get to be represented in Kerala. More and more people would come forward to understand our culture then. I am proud of my endeavours in presenting my community as a group with strong roots, cultural heritage and political aims.

Thus, Kidachulan wanted to bring out *penampattu* performance from the Paniya households, to the public. Kidachulan did not want *penampattu* to become an object of ridicule and superstition for the Malayali public domain. Kidachulan's performance of *Penampattu* is in the traditional way even on a secular stage. He would be dressed up in the attire of an *attali* in a cotton *dhoti*, and a red satin cloth tied around his waist. He covers his head with a red satin cloth (while in the ritualistic settings, this cloth that covers the head would be a white cotton towel symbolising the dead person's spirit). He also carries a *muram* (a bamboo winnow) and *mani* (bells) inside it. The bamboo stalk that would usually be erected in the courtyard in the ritualistic setting is avoided by

Kidachulan as it symbolises the dead person. Kidachulan would be accompanied by two assistants to play *thudi* and *cheenam* as a background to the hymn. Kidachulan observed that he would hire anyone from his settlement for the performances as the adeptness in playing the instrument is the only requirement. No western instruments are used for *penampattu* performance, observed Kidachulan. Kidachulan noted that he charges 25000 INR for each *penampattu* performances as monetary needs stand as a barrier to his endeavours in popularising Paniya culture. He opined that if *gaddika* presented the agency of the Adiyas in bringing prosperity in cultivation, *penampattu* depicted the Paniyas as adept agriculturalists. However, I want to make it clear that *penampattu* improvisation by Kidachulan was not simply aimed at presenting the community as adept agriculturalists. The history of land alienation and the subsequent necessity for the Paniya labourers to do wetland cultivation is also the history of colonial expansion in Wayanad. By presenting this history of modernity using the metaphor of lost Ippmala, the Paniyas claimed that they were victims of colonial modernity. Uthappan and Uthamma then became representatives of the Paniyas in the modern times. Thus, the performance of *penampattu* in the public stages offered Kidachulan with an opportunity to make the non- adivasi audience aware that the Paniyas too were rightful claimants to equality.

I would conclude this section by suggesting that bringing the mythical memories of the Paniya community to the domain of popular culture was a means to raise the adivasi politics of resistance amidst exclusions from the mainstream. Reinventing folk songs and hymns on the popular stages helped the Paniyas as a community to form a "politics of transfiguration." Art mobilised memories of the past and invented an imaginary past-ness that could fuel the *utopian* hopes of the plantation slaves (Gilroy 57). While the mythical memories of k*ambalappattu* and *penampattu* helped the Paniyas to remember their routes of subjugation, popularising these realms acted as a medium for them to reclaim agency as opposed to the written documents that stereotyped the Paniyas as already and always a 'slave.' Thus, popularising *kambalappattu* and *penampattu* allowed the Paniyas to transform a site of subjection into a site of resistance. It gave the community new aspirations. These aspirations included claiming equality with the mainstream Malayali audience. The Paniyas by the formation of bands wanted to argue that the Paniya folk songs and dance forms were also worth popularising and imitation on secular stages.

In this chapter, I have revisited the memories of the Paniya community regarding their cultural history. I have argued in this chapter that the memories of Paniyas regarding *valli* labour revealed their perceptions of the history of colonialism. Paniya memories regarding their past experience as paddy cultivators revealed the ways in which this community countered certain essentialist arguments made by the discourse of modernity. Moreover, these narratives are plural and multiple in terms of the emplotment of incidents in the past. I have attempted a reading of the Paniya narratives regarding the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani* initially in this chapter. What I found significant in the Paniya memories regarding these cultural "scenes of subjection" was that the former *valli* labourers contended mainstream narratives regarding these sites. The colonial archives visualised *kambalappani* as a celebratory occasion for the Paniyas and the practice of *valli* bondage that began at the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair was overlooked by the local historians. However, the Paniyas by through their memories claimed that the cultural sites under debate were actually sites of bondage and exploitation. But the Paniyas did not stop at memorising the slave experiences at these sites. Rather, they invented alternative memories regarding these sites. Paniya memories regarding these sites claimed that the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani* were primarily adivasi sites which were then appropriated by the upper caste landlords. Valliyoorkkavu is remembered as a site where the Paniyas gathered to worship a deity with adivasi origin. *Kambalappani* is visualised as a relic of food gathering and hunting habits of the Paniyas. Thus, the Paniya imagination were not completely exhausted by the metanarratives of colonialism. This is made possible through the *kambalappattu* that recollected the history of *valli* labour on the fields.

I have also critically read another realm where the Paniyas memorised their cultural history. This is the ritualistic hymn of *penampattu*. *Penampattu* narrated the mythical history of the Paniya community since their origin. However, I have argued that this originary timeline is the timeline of colonial modernity when the Paniyas were forced out of the forests and hills. *Penampattu* thus offered the Paniya community a means to remember a time when they inhabited a *uchronic* space of freedom and mobility. However, they were forced to do slave labour under the landlords who expanded their paddy cultivation, backed by the colonial state policy. However, the main objective of the Paniyas in performing *penampattu* was not simply to remember

the routes of slavery. But *penampattu* recitals were supposed to liberate the Paniyas from slave labour symbolically. Thus, the Paniyas improvised their cultural history of enslavement to find ways to resist and escape the very discourse of slave labour.

I have further discussed in this chapter, the transformative potentials that the folk and ritualistic memories offered to the community. I have identified contemporary instances where the Paniyas popularised their cultural memory. 'Kambalam' and 'Thudithalam' bands improvised *kambalappattu o*n the secular stages of Kerala. Kidachulan attempted to bring *penampattu* out from its ritualistic settings onto the popular stages of Kerala. I have argued that these attempts at popularising the collective memory of the Paniyas allowed them to claim that the Paniyas were also part of modernity. The politics of transfiguration that the Paniyas achieved by popularising their ritualistic/ folk discourse could be seen in the new aspirations of the community in the contemporary times. The Paniyas through their stage performances defied those histories that ecologically romanticised them. Young artists from the community wanted to claim dignified spaces amidst the public sphere of Kerala. There could be no denial of the fact that the Paniyas were *valli*/ bonded labourers since the colonial times. Yet, the Paniyas actively made use of their memories and art forms to reclaim agency and equality as citizens of the electoral state of Kerala.

Conclusion

My argument in this thesis is that the Adiyas and Paniyas effectively used their cultural realms to resist the slave identity imposed on them. The Adiyas and Paniyas were historically subjected to agrestic slavery in the wetland cultivation of Kerala. This agrestic bondage was locally called as *vallippani*. However, the colonial administrative documents stereotyped the Adiyas and Paniyas as slaves, by comparing the local system of bondage called *vallippani* to slavery. The colonial documents thus presented these communities as *apriori* slaves. Moreover, colonial anthropology and ethnography portrayed the Adiyas and Paniyas as 'less than humans,' who had no will and agency to appreciate freedom. Colonial anthropologists went to the extent of criminalising the Adiyas and Paniyas by naturalising the relationship between criminality and their lowest position in the caste hierarchy. I have argued that in this process of fixing identities of the Adiyas and Paniyas, the colonial discourses denied agency and subjectivity to the adivasis. Moreover, the plurality of the Adiya and Paniya identities were undermined in this process. This process of denuding the adivasis of their dignity and honour continued to affect them in the contemporary times. The stigma of being a slave haunted the Adiyas and Paniyas in the public domains of Kerala.

I have examined various cultural realms of the adivasis including the mythical and folk memories to suggest that the Adiyas and Paniyas have their own social imagination independent of the dominant colonial history. The Adiyas and Paniyas had historically mounted wage strikes called *valli* strikes, in which they asserted dignity as agriculturalists. I have argued that the *valli* strikes was the crucial moment when the Adiyas and Paniyas broke free from the slave identity to emerge as an independent agricultural labour class. This was possible because of the very consciousness regarding agrestic bondage. I have further foregrounded in this thesis the importance of the mythical and folk traditions of the Adiyas and Paniyas in imagining alternative pasts for them. Slavery, I have suggested, has been a leitmotif in their mythical worldviews. But the re- enactments of these mythical memories during commemorative ceremonies offered the community with symbolic possibilities to escape bondage. I have demonstrated the liberatory potential of their cultural memories by a re- reading of certain ritualistic hymns including *pulappattu*, *gaddika* and *penampattu*. In other words, I have argued that the essence of certain ceremonial rituals was to aspire for freedom

and liberation from all forms of bondage. I have also argued that the folk tradition of *kambalappattu* allowed the Adiyas and Paniyas to imagine alternative identities for them. I have also read certain cultural sites like the Valliyoorkkavu temple fair and *kambalappani* to argue that the Adiyas and Paniyas reinvented memories to reclaim such spaces which were appropriated by the native landlords. The transformative potential of such cultural memories is experimented on the secular stages by folk performers. I have argued that these acts of popularising the cultural realms of the adivasis are attempts to reclaim spaces of equality in the public domains of Kerala. The cultural memory of the Adiyas and Paniyas thus reminded that slave history is not exclusive to them. But the cultural memories of the adivasis revealed that the colonial state policies as well as the native landlords were complacent in enslaving the adivasis. Thus, I have argued that the Adiyas and Paniyas tried to negotiate and resist slavery within the domain of colonial modernity. I have also suggested that the Adiya and Paniya cultural realms brought out their multiple identities as food gatherers, hunters and shifting cultivators.

By writing a cultural history for the Adiyas and Paniyas from an adivasi perspective, I was able to critique and reconstruct the identities of these communities from the dominant discourses that dehumanised and stereotyped them. Moreover, I have demonstrated that the existing archives and other historical and literary works did not capture the plurality of adivasi existence. In other words, these resources were not sufficient to provide a complex history of the Adiyas and Paniyas. It was only through the cultural resources of the Adiyas and Paniyas that an entry into their imagination of the past was possible. Thus, I was able to show the gap between the existing epistemologies regarding the Adiyas and Paniyas and the adivasi cultural realms. I have tried to bridge this gap by adopting an ethno- historical method to write the Adiya and Paniya cultural history. My attempt was successful to an extent as I was able to highlight the multiplicity of adivasi identities at different historical conjectures. This study could thus be a model for other researchers who are interested in writing the subaltern histories of other adivasi communities in Wayanad. I am sure that I have not exhausted the cultural sources of the Adiyas and Paniyas in my journey as a researcher. Thus, this study could be used as groundwork for researchers who want to do intense cultural and anthropological enquiries into the culture and traditions of the Adiyas and Paniyas.

I have faced so many challenges while attempting a cultural history of the Adiyas and Paniyas. One was that the archival materials were scattered at various places- both inside and outside India. However, I managed to access a lot of material from the colonial archives: slavery papers, forest reports, revenue reports, legislative papers, administrative manuals, travelogues, survey reports and memoirs. But my collection of archival material is not exhaustive and there is yet a lot of material to be uncovered in this domain. I have made use of the native newspaper reports to an extent to survey the effects of the colonial state regulations on the Adiyas and Paniyas. However, I could not exhaust the vast reservoir of vernacular journals in Malayalam to survey the situation of the adivasis. However, ethnographic data on the cultural memory of the adivasis acted as a supplement to bridge the gaps in the archival data. Thus, I have foregrounded the importance of the colonial archives in shaping an image of the adivasi and used it to critique the stereotypes propounded by the colonial administrators. This ethnographic data, collected through multiple short-term field stays and brief interviews (both personal and group) with the Adiyas and Paniyas offered an alternative narrative to the mainstream history writing. There have not been many studies that read the colonial history of the adivasis alongside their cultural memory. Neither was there a comprehensive cultural history of the *valli* labourers, including the Adiyas and Paniyas from Wayanad. My thesis is thus a preliminary attempt to compile and read the cultural traditions of the *valli* labourers of Wayanad to understand the adivasi narratives on their history. In this attempt, I have shown the ways in which the Adiyas and Paniyas located themselves in various watershed moments- including the colonial rule, the post-independent CPI rule of the 1950s and the *valli* strikes of the 1960s.

In this thesis, I have also analysed contemporary attempts by the adivasis to reclaim identity through the performances of folk and ritualistic traditions. I have argued that the popularisation of the cultural memories allowed the Adiyas and Paniyas to claim equality in the public sphere of Kerala. I have accessed such performances of the Adiyas and Paniyas by various field visits to secular stages in Kerala. However, my observations of the ritualistic realms are not comprehensive due to the limitations in the field. There were limitations to make notes and observations during certain rituals as the community members saw the act of ethnography as an interruption to their spiritual realms. Observations on the cultural memory that I have made in this dissertation are built by various methods of "knowing" and "understanding" in the field. Observations

and conclusions arrived at regarding the particularity and plurality of the cultural memory and ritualistic practices of the adivasis are not universal as they are filtered through the researcher's ethnographic lens and are limited by the academic discipline of cultural studies. Thus, my conclusions are drawn from circumstantial and strategic responses by the informants at my presence. My conclusions are thus based on short term interventions in the lives of Adiyas and Paniyas. Observations made in the thesis are driven by an intention of accessing the Adiya and Paniya cultural history through their rituals, individual and collective memories. I have also written this thesis with full awareness that I have not made use of the vast reservoir of vernacular archival materials on the Adiyas and Paniyas which are kept in the landlord families. I could not access these resources due to time constraints and other limitations in the field. Thus, this ethno- historic study is not exhaustive and is not built on long- term field work and sustained participant observation.

Thus, a full- fledged ethnographic study of certain ritualistic traditions by long-term stays in the Adiya and Paniya settlements would expand the scope of my thesis. My research project could also be used as a preparatory study to analyse in detail the effects of widespread migrations of *valli* labourers to the ginger plantations in Coorg from Wayanad in the contemporary times. Young poets and folk performers from the Adiya and Paniya communities are vocal about the exploitation that the adivasi labourers face in the plantations through art. The phase of labour migration in the contemporary times to Coorg is indeed another crucial moment in the redefinition of the *valli* labourer. Another important issue is the case of adivasi women labourers in Wayanad. One of the important causes for the involvement of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI (M)) movement in the case of the *valli* labourers was the sexual exploitations that the women labourers faced from their landlords. This sexual exploitation of the adivasi women is an issue in the contemporary times as well. For instance, there are a lot of Adiya unwed mothers in the Northern Wayanad. Thus, a study on the adivasi women labourers and unwed mothers from the Adiyas is another area of research that remains unexhausted. There is a lot of cultural material yet to be analysed among the Adiyas and Paniyas. These are in the form of lullabies and fun songs. I have limited my inquiries into the cultural memories of the Adiyas and Paniyas in their ritualistic hymns and the folk traditions. An in- depth study on the fun songs and play songs, which are sung during family gatherings and celebratory occasions of births

and marriages would reveal more details regarding their personal relations, kinship and camaraderie as a community. Such a study could be used to counter the colonial archives that stereotyped the adivasi as less- than human, who never possessed the agency to appreciate private life and freedom.

The twenty-first century witnessed various land reclamation struggles by the Adiyas and Paniyas including the Muthanga struggle of 2003 led by 'Adivasi Gothra Mahasabha.' With the decline of the political popularity of the CPI (M) amongst the adivasis of Wayanad, the adivasis have now turned to an indigenist politics that shifted its focus from 'class' to 'indigenous' identity. The history of the adivasis of Wayanad in the twenty first century saw them abandoning attempts to reclaim dignity as agricultural labourers. Rather, they used 'indigeneity' as a political tool to reclaim land rights. The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act of 1975 was implemented to prevent the transfer of adivasi lands and restore the ownership of alienated adivasi lands. This act nullified all adivasi land transfers between 1960- 1976. However, when this act came as a law in 1986, the adivasis have become a minority in terms of voter turnout. Thus, the act got diluted and the subsequent governments were reluctant to implement the act. This reluctance to implement the land distributions to the adivasis led to widespread land reclamation struggles. Some of these struggles are Cheengeri land reclamation struggle in 1995, Panavally Land Reclamation strikes in 1995, *kudilkettal samaram* (strike which involved building huts) led by C.K. Janu in 2001 near the State Secretariat and the Muthanga Struggle in 2003.Though the history of land struggles in Wayanad is beyond the scope of this project, I have attempted to trace Adiya and Paniya cultural history in this dissertation with complete awareness of the impacts of such struggles on the adivasis in the present times.

Bibliography

Aerthayil, Mathew. *Agolavalkkaranavum Adivasikalum (Impact of Globalisation on Tribals: In the Context of Kerala*). Olive, 2009.

Aiyappan, A. *The Paniyas: An Ex- Slave Tribe of South India*. Institute of Social Research and Applied Anthropology, 1992.

Ajeesh, T. *Naxal Charitham: Adiyanthiravasthakku Munpu (Naxal History: Pre- Emergency)*. Green Books, 2016.

Ajitha, K. *Kerala's Naxalbari: Memoirs of a Young Revolutionary*. Translated by Sanju Ramachandran, Shrishti, 2008.

Alexander, K. C. "Emergence of Peasant Organisations in South India." *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 15, no. 26, 1980. pp. 72- 83.

Amritha. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 24 March. 2021.

Baber, T. H. 'Answers of T.H. Baber Esquire.' 15 March, 1834. *Slavery in India: Papers Relative to Slavery in India*. The Weston Library, pp 3- 28.

------. Measures Taken to Suppress a Renewed Outbreak of Disturbances in the Wynaad District of Malabar. 12 June, 1812. Disturbances in Wynaad, The British Library, London. India Office Records (IOR), IOR/ F/ 4/ 406/ 10136. Manuscript.

Baby, K.J. *Mavelimanram*. 1991. DCB, 2020.

"Bamboo Document Containing Agreement of the Sale of a Paniyan." 1902, Government Museum, Chennai. Ethnology: Writing Implements and Media of Varied Type, 21/35.

Batti. "Annathe Viplavam Shari, Ini Aavashyamilla." (Rebellion was the Need of the Hour, Not Anymore). Interview by N. S. Nissar, *Madhyamam*, 27 Feb. 2017, pp. 15- 16.

Bell, H. Letter to the Superintendent of Marine on the subject of Levying a Tax on the Cutting of Jungle Timber. 8 June, 1809. Forest Survey Papers, Calicut state Archives, Vol 2421, pp. 153- 156. Manuscript.

Bevan, Henry. 'Answers of Captain Henry Bevan, 27th Madras Native Infantry.' 15 March, 1834. *Slavery in India: Papers Relative to Slavery in India*. 1834, The Weston Library, Oxford, pp 37- 41.

Bhaskaran. *Mother Forest: The Unfinished Story of C.K. Janu*. Translated by N. Ravi Shanker, Women Unlimited, 2004.

Bijuraj, R. K. *Keralathinte Rashtreeya Charithram* (*The Political History of Kerala*). DC Books, 2022.

------. *Naxal Dinangal: Keralathile Naxalite/ Maoist Prasthanathinte Samagra Charithram* (*Naxal Days: A Consolidated History of the Naxalite/ Maoist Organisation in Kerala*). DCB, 2015.

Binu. C. K. Interview. Conducted By Parvathy P, 28 March. 2021.

Bird- David, Nurit. *Us, Relatives: Scaling and Plural Life in a Forager World*. University of California Press, 2017.

Breman, Jan. *Footloose Labour: Working in India's Informal Economy*. Cambridge UP, 1996.

------. *Patronage and Exploitation. Changing Agrarian Relations in South Gujarat, India*. University of California Press, 1974.

Buchanan, Francis. *A Journey from Madras through the Countries of Mysore, Canara and Malabar.* London, 1807. 3 vols.

Campbell, A. D. "Answers of A. D. Campbell, Esquire." 15 March, 1834. *Slavery in India: Papers Relative to Slavery in India*. 1834, The Weston Library, Oxford, pp 30- 37.

Chala. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 28 March. 2021.

Chalan. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 26 March. 2021.

Chaligadha, Sukumaran. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P. 23 March. 2021.

Channakkan. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 26 March. 2021.

Chatterjee, Indrani. "Slavery, Semantics and the Sound of Silence." *Slavery and South Asian History*. Edited by Indrani Chatterjee and Richard. M. Eaton. Indiana UP, 2006, pp. 287- 316.

Chatterjee, Partha., editor. "A Brief History of Subaltern Studies." *Empire and Nation: Selected Essays*, Columbia UP, 2010, pp. 289- 301.

------. "Anderson's Utopia." *Diacritics*, special issue of *Grounds of Comparison: Around the Work of Benedict Anderson*, vol. 29, no. 4, winter 1999, pp. 128- 134.

Chelembra, Anil. "Bolshevik Aya Nattumooppan." (The Bolshevik Chieftain). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life)*, edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 58- 62.

Cherry, J. H. *Regulation for the Management and Preservation of the Forests in the Province of Malabar and Canara and for Defining the Authority of the Conservator of the Forests in these Provinces.* 25 Aug, 1815. *Forest Regulation in Malabar*. Calicut State Archives, Vol 2260, Manuscript.

Choman. "Mooppante Manassu Niraye Varghese: Viplavam Jayikkumennurapp." (Varghese is Etched in Mooppan's Memories: Revolution Would Surely Win). Interview by P. T. Nazar, *Madhyamam*, 26 Oct. 1998, p. 9.

"Choman Mooppan." *Madhyamam Weekly*, 12 May. 2006, p. 53.

Connor, Lieutenant. *Memoir of the Codagu Survey, Part II*. Central Jail Press, 1970.

Clementson, P. *A Report on Revenue and Other Matters Connected with Malabar*. Fort. St. George, Dec 1838, Calicut State Archives.

------. Letter to the Secretary to the Board of Revenue. 24 April 1838. Correspondence transmitted respecting the *Cherumas* or Rustic Slaves of Malabar. The British Library, London, pp. 15- 19. IOR/ E/ 4/ 955. Manuscript.

Connerton, Paul. "Bodily Practices." *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge UP, 1989, pp. 72- 115.

Desai, Manali. “Indirect British Rule, the State Formation and Welfarism in Kerala, India, 1860- 1957.” *Social Science History*, vol.29, no. 3, 2005, pp. 457- 488.

Devy, G.N. Introduction. *Being Adivasi: Existence, Entitlements, Exclusion*, edited by Abhay Flavian Xaxa and G. N. Devy, Penguin Books, 2021.

Dirks, Nicholas. B. “Caste of Mind.” *Representations*, special issue of *Imperial Fantasies and Postcolonial Histories*, no. 37, winter 1992, pp. 56- 78.

Eaton, Richard. M. Introduction. *Slavery and South Asian History*. Edited by Indrani Chatterjee and Richard. M. Eaton, Indiana UP, 2006, pp. 1- 16.

Elliot, Walter. Letter to J. I. Halliday Esq, Assistant Secretary to the Govt. of India. 11 Oct 1842. Slavery in Malabar. The British Library, London, p. 3.IOR/ F/ 4/ 1843/ 87461.

Extract of Judicial General Letter from Madras. 18 July, 1839. Correspondence Transmitted Respecting the *Cherumas* or Rustic Slaves of Malabar. The British Library, London, pp. 1- 9. IOR/ E/ 4/ 955. Manuscript.

Farish. John. Extract of a Letter from the Honourable the court of Directors. 27 June, 1810. Conservator of the Forest Diary for Year 1811, Calicut State Archives, Vol 2423, pp. 49- 53. Manuscript.

Ford, Francis. *The Wynaad and the Planting Industry of Southern India*. Madras: Madras Mail Press, 1895.

Francis, Wrede Jr. Disquisitions on the Forests of Malabar. 6 Dec, 1806. Forests in Malabar, Calicut State Archives, Vol 2408, pp. 32- 94. Manuscript.

Gaddika. Performance by P. K. Kalan Smaraka Gothrakala Samithi, 22 Dec. 2018, Pilicode Municipal Ground, Kasaragod.

Gaddika. Performance by P. K. Kalan Smaraka Gothrakala Samithi, 23 Feb. 2019, Mamom Municipal Ground, Thiruvananthapuram.

Ganesh. K. N. “Agrarian Society in Kerala (1500- 1800).” *Perspectives on Kerala History*, edited by P. J. Cherian, Government of Kerala, 1999, pp. 123- 79.

George, Alex. “Social and Economic Aspects of Attached Labourers in Kuttanad Agriculture.” *Economic and Political Weekly*, vol. 22, no. 52, 1987, pp. A141- A150.

Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic:* Modernity *and Double Consciousness*. Verso, 1993.

Goni, “Kollum Kolayum Kondoru Viplavam Ivide Nadakkilla.” (Revolution of Massacres Won’t Work Anymore). Interview by N. S. Nissar. *Madhyamam*, 27 Feb. 2017, pp. 17-19.

Gopi, Eachom. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 21 March. 2021.

------. *Valliyoorkkavu: Aithihyavum Charithravum* (*Valliyoorkkavu: Myth and History*). KTC Offset Printers, 2018.

Gopi, Mundakkayam. *Kurumpurai* (*Legends of Kurumbranad*). Sahya Publications, 2014.

Gouri, K.R. *Consideration of the Amendment to the Bill as Reported by the Select Committee: Kerala Land Reforms Bill, 1963*. Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Nov 1963, p. 3547.

Graeme, H.S. *Report of the Revenue Administration of Malabar*. Fort. St. George, Jan 1822, Calicut State Archives.

Grigg, H. B. editor. *A Manual of the Nilagiri District of the Madras Presidency*, Madras, 1880.

Hardiman, David. *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India*. OUP, 1987.

Hartman, Saidiya. V. *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self Making in Nineteenth Century America*. OUP, 1997.

Herring. Ronald. J. “Dilemmas of Agrarian Communism: Peasant Differentiation, Sectoral and Village Politics.” *Third World Quarterly*, vol. 11, no.1, 1989, pp. 89- 115.

Induchudan, V. T. *The Secret Chamber: A Historical, Anthropological and Philosophical Study of the Kodungallur Temple*. The Cochin Devaswom Board, 1969.

Innes, C. A. *Malabar*. Madras Government Press, 1908. Vol. 1 of *Madras District Gazetteers*.

International Labour Organisation. Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention, 1957 (No. 107). www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::P12100_ILO_CODE:C107. Accessed 20 May, 2022.

Jayasree, C. H. "Colonial Perceptions of an Indian Reality: Official Constructions of Slavery in Malabar." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, vol. 67, 2006- 2007, pp. 582-591.

John, Baby. *Consideration of the Amendment to the Bill as Reported by the Select Committee: Kerala Land Reforms Bill, 1963*. Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Nov 1963, p. 3549.

John, T. C. *Uratti* (*The Wife*). 1977. DCB, 2006.

Johnny, O.K. "Kalante Gaddika." (Kalan's Gaddika). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life)*,edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 63- 65.

------. *Nishabda Nilavilikal: Oru Gramapuravritham* (*Silent Cries: A Village Chronicle)*. Olive, 2014.

------. *Wayanad Rekhakal* (*Wayanad Diaries*). 2001. Mathrubhumi Books, 2019.

Joseph, Sebastian. *Naxal Varghese: Take Off and Tail Spin.* Translated by Radhika. P. Menon, Dream Bookbindery, 2021.

Kadaloor, Soman. "Oru Nattuvelichathinte Orma." (A Nostalgic Memory from the Village). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life)*,edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 66- 73.

Kalan, M. P. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 27 March. 2021.

------. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 28 March. 2021.

Kalan. P. K. "Varghese Innumundu, Pakshe…." (Varghese Still Lives, But…). Interview by Damodaran, P, P. J. Joshua and Sebastian Joseph, *Malayala Manorama*, 30 Oct. 1998. p. 10.

Kambalanritham. Performance by P. K. Kalan Smaraka Gothrakala Samithi, 22 Dec. 2018, Pilicode Municipal Ground, Kasaragod.

Kambalanritham. Performance by P. K. Kalan Smaraka Gothrakala Samithi, 23 Feb. 2019, Mamom Municipal Ground, Thiruvananthapuram.

Kambalappattu. Performance by Thudithalam Gothrakala Sangham, 23 Feb. 2019, Mamom Municipal Ground, Thiruvananthapuram.

Kariyan, P.K. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 20 May. 2018.

------. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 25 May. 2018.

------. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 23- 24 Feb. 2019.

------. "Njangalkk Bourgeoise Kodathikalodu Parayanullathu." (What We have to Tell the Bourgeoise Courts). Interview by P.P. Vineesh, *Madhyamam*, 15 Feb. 2004.

Karunakaran, C. K. *Adivasikalude Lokam: Vanavasikal* (*The World of Adivasis: Forest Dwellers)*. Thiruvananthapuram: The State Institute of Languages, 2014.

Karunan. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 23- 24 March. 2021.

Kidachulan, Vinu et.al. "Kambalam." *Facebook*, 15 April, 2019, https://www.facebook.com/vinukidachulan/videos/286825482250634/. Accessed 21 June, 2021.

Kidachulan, Vinu. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 20 March. 2021.

------. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 26 June. 2022.

Kjosavik, Darley Jose, and Nadarajah Shanmugaratnam. "Property Rights Dynamics and Indigenous Communities in Highland Kerala, South India: An Institutional-Historical Perspective." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 41, no. 6, 2007, pp. 1183- 12600.

Kochu, K.K. *Dalithan* (*Dalit*). DCB, 2019.

Koran. M. *Statement by Honourable Member Shri. O. Koran Regarding Slave Trade*. Proceedings of the Kerala Legislative Assembly, Nov 1963, p. 3423.

Krishnankutty, Thettamala. “Thiruth.” *Madhyamam Weekly*, Oct. 2005, pp. 17- 23.

------. “Thiruth.” *Madhyamam Weekly*, Nov. 2005, pp. 50- 53.

------. “Thiruth.” *Madhyamam Weekly*, Nov. 2005, pp. 54- 57.

------. “Thiruth.” *MadhyamamWeekly,* Dec. 2005, pp. 54- 57.

------. “Thiruth.” *Madhyamam Weekly*, Dec. 2005, pp. 54- 57.

------. “Thiruth.” *Madhyamam Weekly*, May. 2006, pp. 42- 45.

Legislative Papers on the Status of Slavery in India. Fort. St. George Legislative Department, January, 1896. The British Library, London. L/ PJ/ 6/ 412.

Letter from Fort. St. George, 11 March, 1820. Fort St. George Judicial Letter: Proceedings relative to Certain Acts of Oppression and Cruelty Represented to be Committed by Revenue and Police Officers in Malabar, The British Library, London. IOR/ F/ 4/ 702/ 19052. Manuscript.

Letter to Captain Watson Appointing him to the Office of Conservation for the Survey of the Forests. 22 Nov, 1806. Forests in Malabar, Calicut State Archives, pp 19- 31. Vol 2408. Manuscript.

Logan, William. *Malabarinte Charithram* (*History of Malabar*). Translated by T. V. Krishnan, Mathrubhumi Books, 2008. Vol. 3 of *Malabar Manual*.

Lyon, David, and Charles Taylor. “Being Post- secular in the Social Sciences: Taylor’s Social Imaginaries.” *New Blackfriars*, vol. 91, no. 1036, 2010, pp. 648- 664.

Lyotard, Jean- Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Translated by Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Manchester University Press, 1984. Vol. 10 of *Theory and History of Literature*.

Luiz, A.A.D. *Tribes of Mysore*. G.S. Viswa and Co, 1963.

Madhu, K. P. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 27 March. 2021.

Major, Andrea. *Slavery, Abolitionism and Empire in India, 1772–1843*. Liverpool UP, 2012.

Mathew, Joshy. "Plantation Economy in Colonial Malabar with Special Reference to Wayanad." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, no. 67, 2006- 2007, pp. 730- 737.

Mathirappally, Manoj. *Keralathile Adivasikal: Kalayum Samskaravum* (*Adivasis of Kerala: Art Forms and Culture*). DC Books, 2013.

Mathur, P. R. G. *Tribal Situation in Kerala*. Kerala Historical Society, 1977.

Mayaram, Shail. *Resisting Regimes: Myth, Memory and the Shaping of a Muslim Identity*. Oxford UP, 1997.

Mayer, Adrian. C. *Land and Society in Malabar*. Greenwood Press, 1974.

Menon, Indu. V. "Gaddika: Ritual and reality in the Culture of Adiya Tribe." *International Conference on Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences*, 29- 30 July, pp. 28- 31. http://icehm.org/upload/3374ED715040.pdf. Accessed. 12 Aug, 2020.

"Minstrel Shows." Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2020, //www.britannica.com/art/minstrel-show. Accessed 2 July, 2022.

Mohan, P. Sanal. *Modernity of Slavery: Struggles against Caste Inequality in Colonial Kerala*. OUP, 2015.

------. "Narrativizing the History of Slave Suffering." *No Alphabet in Sight*, Edited by K. Satyanarayana, Susie Tharu, Penguin Books, 2011, pp 534- 555.

Munster, Daniel. "Ginger is a Gamble: Crop Booms, Rural Uncertainty and the Neoliberalization of Agriculture in South India." *Focaal: Journal of Global and Historical Anthropology*, no. 71, 2015, pp. 100- 113.

Naha, Abdul Latheef. "Fate of Madhu Lynching Case Hangs in the Balance." The Hindu, 29 July. 2022, www.thehindu.com/news/national/kerala/fate-of-madhu-lynching-case-hangs-in-balance/article65698813.ece. Accessed 30 July, 2022.

Nair, C. Gopalan. *Wynad: Its Peoples and Traditions*. Asian Educational Services, 1911.

Nair, P. Somasekharan. *Paniyar*. NBS, 1976.

Nambyar, A. K. “Gothrasamskrithiyude Hridayabhoomika.” (The Heartland of Adivasi Culture). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life)*, edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 35- 39.

Nampoothiri. D. D, T.Y. Vinod Krishnan. “Oru Adivasi Communistinte Jeevacharithrathil Ninnum.” (Glimpses from the Life of an Adivasi Communist). *P. K. Kalan: Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P. K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasis*), edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 28- 34.

Nampoothiripad. E.M. S. “Nayaprakhyapanam.” (Policy Declaration). *E.M.S nte Theranjedutha Prasangangal (1935- 1995)* (*Selected Speeches of E.M.S (1935- 1995)*). Edited by C. Bhaskaran. Chintha Publishers, 2009, pp. 63- 75.

Oliver, William. Letter to the Collector in Malabar. 23 April, 1812. *Inward Letters in the Revenue Department from January to June, 1812*. Calicut State Archives, pp 108-109.Vol 2254. Manuscript.

Oommon. T.K. “Agrarian Legislations and Movements as Sources of Change: The Case of Kerala.” *Economic and Political Weekly,* vol. 10, no. 40, 1975, pp.1571- 1584.

Pankajakshan, M.R. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 24 March. 2021.

------, compiler. *Kerala Bhashaganangal: Wayanattile Adivasikalude Pattukal* (*The Songs of Kerala: Songs of Adivasis of Wayanad*). Kerala Sahitya Akademi, 2005.

Panoor. K. *Keralathile Africa (Kerala’s Africa)*. 1963. SPCS, 2018.

Passerini, Luisa. “Memory.” *History Workshop*, no. 15, spring 1983, pp. 195- 96.

------. “Work ideology and Consensus Under Italian Fascism.” *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson. 1998. Routledge, 2003, pp. 53- 62.

Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Harvard UP, 1982.

Paul, Vinil., editor. “Kadum Kadalum Kadanna Keralathile Adimakal.” (Slaves of Kerala who Crossed the Seas and Forests). *Adima Keralathinte Adrishya Charithram* (*Hidden Histories of Slavery in Kerala*), 2021. DC Books, 2022, pp. 15- 34.

Perks, Robert, and Alistair Thomson, editors. Introduction. *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson. 1998. Routledge, 2003, pp. ix- xiii.

Philippose, V. Publisher's Note. *Eppimalayude Thazhvaram* (*The Valley of Ippi Hills*), by E. T. Raju, VOICE Documentation Centre, 2011.

"Planting of Boundary Stones in Wayanad." *Manorama*. 15 February 1879. *Native Newspaper Reports*, Tamil Nadu State Archives.

Pokker, P.K. "Kalan Mooppan: Oru Keezhala Prathinidhanam." (Kalan Mooppan: Representative of the Subaltern). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life)*, edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 40- 47.

Portelli, Alessandro. "Uchronic Dreams: Working Class Memory and Possible Dreams." *The Death of Luigi Transtulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History*. SUNY Press, 1991, pp. 46- 56.

------. "What Makes Oral History Different." *The Oral History Reader*, edited by Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks. 1998. Routledge, 2003, pp. 63- 74.

Pottekkatt, S. K. *Vishakanyaka* (*The Serpent Woman*). 1848. DCB, 2014.

Prakash, B. A. *Economic History of Kerala from 1800 to 1947 AD Part II: Travancore*. Economic Studies Society, 2018.

Prasad. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 24 Dec. 2018.

Prasad, Archana., editor. "Adivasis as Swadeshis: Unpacking the Myth of the "Original Inhabitant" in Gondwana." *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, Three Essays Collective, 2003. pp. 1- 34.

------. "The Baiga and its Eco-Logic: Reinterpreting Verrier Elwin's Cultural Ecology in Central India." *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity*, Three Essays Collective, 2003. pp. 35- 72.

Prasad. M. K. *Adivasi Samarathinte Arthantharangal* (*Implications of the Adivasi Land Struggles*), Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, 2003.

Princep, H. T, A. Amos et al. Letter to the Honourable the Court of Directors of the East India Company. 28 Nov 1842. The British Library, London, pp. 1- 2. IOR/ F/ 4/ 1843/ 87461. Manuscript.

Procter, James. *Stuart Hall*. Routledge, 2004.

Rabija, A. "P. K. Kalante Sambhavanakal." (Contributions of P. K. Kalan). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life),* edited by Aziz Tharuvana,Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 108- 1332.

Radhakrishna, Meena. *Dishonoured by History: 'Criminal Tribes' and British Colonial Policy*. 'Orient Longman, 2001.

Rajagopalan, C. R. "Gaddikayil Unarunna Shaman." (The Rise of a Shaman through Gaddika). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life),* edited byAziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 52- 57.

Raju, E. T. *Eppimalayude Thazhvaram* (*The Valley of Ippi Hills*). VOICE Documentation Centre, 2011.

------. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 19 March. 2021.

Rawat, Ramnarayan. S. "Colonial Archive Versus Colonial Sociology: Writing Dalit History." *Dalit Studies*, edited by Ramnarayan. S. Rawat and K. Satyanarayana. Durham Duke UP, 2016, pp. 53- 73.

Report from the Indian Law Commissioners: Relating to Slavery in East Indies. Fort St. George, Jan 1841, pp 126- 139, Tamil Nadu State Archives.

Report of the Special Officer for the Investigation of Land Tenures on the Recommendations of the Malabar Tenancy Committee. Madras Presidency, May 1947, Calicut State Archives.

"Reports on the Forest Administration of Madras." *Lokaprakasam*, 19 April 1915. *Native Newspaper Reports*, Tamil Nadu State Archives.

Rice, B.L. *Mysore and Coorg*. Bangalore, 1878. Vol. 3 of *Imperial Gazetteer of India*.

Richter, G. *Manual of Coorg: A Gazetteer of the Natural Features of the Country and the Social and Political Condition of Its Inhabitants*. Mangalore, 1870.

Rickards, Robert. *Papers on the Administration of the Malabar District*. Fort. St. George, Feb 1804, Calicut State Archives. pp. 3- 12.

Robinson, W. *Report on the History, Condition and Prospects of the Taluk of Wynad*. Fort. St. George, August, 1857, Calicut State Archives.

Rycroft, Daniel. J, and Sangeeta Dasgupta. "Indigenous Pasts and the Politics of Belonging." *The Politics of Belonging in India: Becoming Adivasi*, edited by Daniel. J. Rycroft and Sangeeta Dasgupta, Routledge, 2011, pp. 1- 14.

Sachidanandan. Preface. *Mavelimanram*, by K. J. Baby, 1991. DCB, 2020.

Sahadevan, K. *Indiayile Adivasi Corridoril Sambhavikkunnath* (*What Happens in India's Adivasi Corridor*), Vidyarthi Publications, 2016.

Said, Edward. W. *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*. 1978. Penguin Random House, 2016.

Saradamoni, K. *Emergence of a Slave Caste: Pulayas of Kerala*. People's Publishing House, 1980.

Sarkar, Tanika. "Bondage in the Colonial Context." *Chains of Servitude: Bondage and Slavery in India*, edited by Utsa Patnaik and Manjari Dingwaney, Sangham Books, 1985, pp. 97- 126.

Seluraj, T. B. *Innelakalile Kozhikode* (Annals of Kozhikode). Mathrubhumi, 2015.

Shah, Alpa. *In the Shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India*. Duke University Press, 2010.

------. "Religion and the Secular Left: Subaltern Studies, Birsa Munda and Maoists." *Anthropology of This Century,* no. 9, 2014, pp. 1-12.

Shah, Alpa, et al. *Ground Down by Growth: Tribe, Caste, Class and Inequality in Twenty- first-century India*. Pluto Press, 2018.

Skaria, Ajay. *Hybrid Histories: Forests, Frontiers and Wildness in the Western India*. New OUP, 1999.

Slavery Convention. United Nations, 1926. *League of Nations*, www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/slaveryconvention.aspx.

Smollett, P. B. Letter to the Acting Secretary to the Board of Revenue. 13 Oct, 1838. Correspondence Transmitted Respecting the *Cherumas* or Rustic Slaves of Malabar, The British Library, London, pp. 11- 15, IOR/ E/ 4/ 955. Manuscript.

Srinivas, M. N. "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization." *The Far Eastern Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 4, 1956, pp. 481- 496.

Srivatsan. R. *Seva, Saviour and State: Caste Politics, Tribal Welfare and Capitalist Development*. Routledge, 2015.

Steur, Luisa. "An Expanded Class Perspective: Bringing Capitalism Down to Earth in the Changing Political Lives of Adivasi Workers in Kerala." *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 48, no. 5, 2014, pp. 1334- 1357.

------. *Indigenist Mobilization: Confronting Electoral Communism and Precarious Livelihoods in Post-Reform Kerala*. Orient Blackswan, 2017.

------. "Traveling Models of Indigenism and Kerala's Emergent Adivasi Politics." *Anthropological Notebooks*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2011, pp. 91-109.

Sullivan, J. Letter to the President and Members of the Board of Revenue. 24 June, 1819. Relative to the Powers Entrusted to the heads of villages in Malabar, and to the condition of the cultivating population. Also a report of the Board of Revenue on the subject of Slavery in General, The British Library, London. pp. 61- 66, IOR/ F/4/ 919/ 25850. Manuscript.

Sundar, Nandini. *Subalterns and Sovereigns: An Anthropological History of Bastar, 1854-1996*. OUP, 1997.

Surendran, K. K., editor. "Adivasi Souhrudaya Vidyalayam ("Adivasi Friendly Schools")." *Nayam: Understanding Tribal Life*, DIET Wayanad, 2008, pp. 49- 56.

Taylor, Charles. *Modern Social Imaginaries*. E- book, Duke University Press, 2004. //libgen.is/search.php?req=modern+social+imaginaries+&open=0&res=25&view=simple&phrase=1&column=def. Accessed. 20 June, 2022.

Tharuvana, Aziz, "Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham." (The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life). *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life)*,edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 1- 16.

------. *Wayanattile Adivasikal: Charithravum Varthamanavum* (*Adivasis of Wayanad: Past and Present*). The State Institute of Languages, 2020.

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 29 of 1975. Kerala State Legislature*,* 11 Oct. 1975, //www.indianemployees.com/acts-rules/details/bonded-labour-system-abolition-act-1975. pp. 170- 177, Accessed. 21 Oct, 2022.

The Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act 19 of 1976, Government of India, 25 Oct. 1975, //labour.gov.in/sites/default/files/TheBondedLabourSystem(Abolition)Act1976.pdf, pp. 1-11, Accessed. 21 Oct, 2022.

The Kerala Land Reforms Act, 1963. Kerala State Legislature, 31. Dec, 1963, //ildm.kerala.gov.in/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/1.THE-KERALA-LAND-REFORMS-ACT-1963.pdf. pp. 1- 115. Accessed. 21 Oct, 2022.

The Kerala Scheduled Tribes (Restriction on Transfer of Lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands) Act, 1975. Kerala State Legislature. www.bareactslive.com/KER/ker182.htm#0, Accessed 13 Aug, 2022.

The Madras Forest Act No. V of 1882. *Manual Containing Legal Enactments, Rules of General Application Issued Under the Madras Forest Act, Special Rules Under the Forest Act Applicable to Special Tracts and Departmental Rules and Appendices*. vol. 1, 1906, Madras.

The Malabar Tenancy Act, 1929. Madras State Legislature, 28 March. 1930, http://www.bareactslive.com/TN/tn707.htm#7. Accessed. 25 Oct, 2022.

Thomas, E. B. Letter to the Registrar to the Court of Foujdaree Adalut. 24 August 1842. Slavery in Malabar, The British Library, London. pp. 9- 19. IOR/ F/ 4/ 1843/ 87461. Manuscript.

Thulasidharan, Santha. *Keralathile Adivasi Samskarangal: Sampoorna Padanam* (*Adivasi Traditions of Kerala: A Comprehensive Study*). The State Institute of Languages, 2016.

Thurston, Edgar, and K. Rangachari. *Castes and Tribes of Southern India.* Vol. 6. Government Press, 1909.Vaughan, J.

Valli. "Interview with Valli." Conducted by A. Rabija, *P.K.Kalan Adivasi Jeevithathinte Samaramukham (P.K. Kalan: The Rebellious Face of Adivasi Life)*, edited by Aziz Tharuvana, Chintha Publications, 2012, pp. 124- 129.

Valsala. P. *Nellu* (*Paddy*). 1972. DCB, 1997.

Varghese, V. J. "Migrant Narratives: Reading Literary Representations of Christian Migration in Kerala, 1920- 70." *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2006, pp. 27- 255.

Varkey, Joy. "Wayanattile Kudiyetta Karshakarum Adivasikalum." (Migrant Farmers and Adivasis of Wayanad). *Malabar Kudiyettam: Charithram Varthamanam* (*Migrations to Malabar: Past, Present*). edited by Varghese Thottekkad, The State Institute of Languages, 2015, pp. 199- 215.

Vaughan, J. Letter to the Board of Revenue. 20 July, 1819. Relative to the Powers Entrusted to the heads of villages in Malabar, and to the condition of the cultivating population. Also a report of the Board of Revenue on the subject of Slavery in General, The British Library, London. pp. 171- 189. IOR/ F/ 4/ 919/ 25850. Manuscript.

Vella. Interview. Conducted by Parvathy P, 28 March. 2021.

Viswanath, Rupa. *The Pariah Problem: Caste, Religion and the Social in Modern India*. Columbia University Press, 2014.

Warden, Thomas. Emancipation of the Government Slaves in Malabar. 17 August 1839. Madras Despatches, 4 July to 28 Dec, 1838, The British Library, London. pp. 297- 98. IOR/ E/ 4/ 951. Manuscript.

------. *Report on the Land Assessment in Malabar*. Fort St. George, April 1815.

Wigram, Herbert. *A Commentary on Malabar Law and Customs*. Madras, 1882.

Wood, R. B. Preface. *Wynad: Its People and Traditions*, by C. Gopalan Nair, Asian Educational Services, 1911.

Xaxa, Virginius. *State, Society and Tribes: Issues in Post-Colonial India*. Pearson Longman, 2008.

Appendix

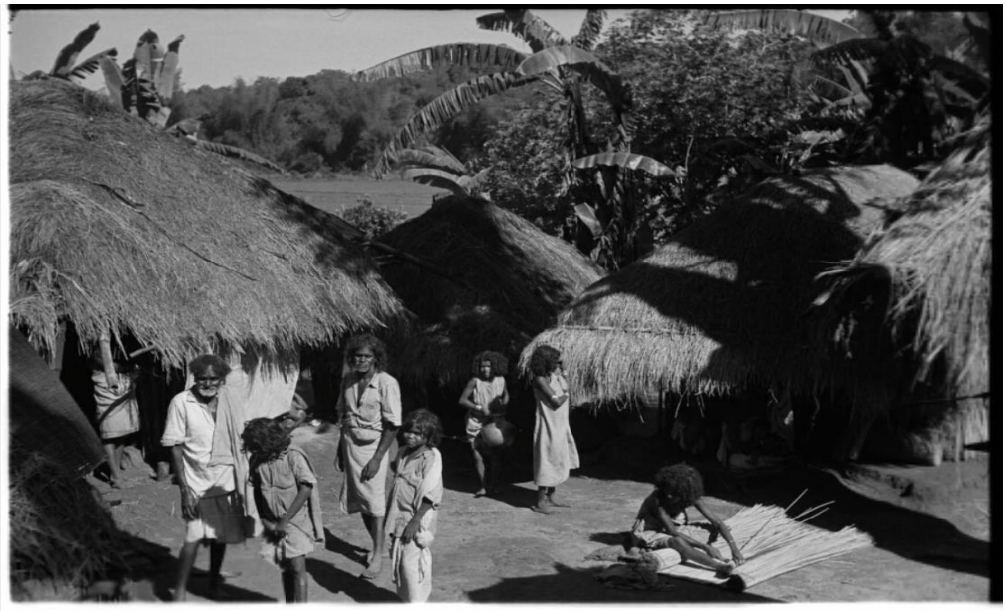

Fig.1. Furer- Haimendorf, Christoph von. *View of a Paniya Village*. 1948, Wayanad, Archives and Special Collections, SOAS, University of London.

Fig. 2. Furer- Haimendorf, Christoph von. *Paniyar Man with a Rainshield*. 1948, Wayanad, Archives and Special Collections, SOAS, University of London.

Fig. 3. Furer- Haimendorf, Christoph von. *Paniyar Woman Making Mat*. 1948, Wayanad, Archives and Special Collections, SOAS, University of London.

Fig. 4. Furer- Haimendorf, Christoph von. *Landscape of Rice Fields in Kerala*. 1948, Wayanad. Archives and Special Collections, SOAS, University of London.

Fig. 5. Furer- Haimendorf, Christoph von. *Small Forest shrine in Kerala*, 1953. Wayanad, Archives and Special Collections, SOAS, University of London.

Fig. 6. Furer- Haimendorf, Christoph von. *Urali Women Working on the Fields*. 1953, Wayanad, Archives and Special Collections, SOAS, University of London.
(The Uralis are another adivasi community who were engaged in *valli* labour in Malabar).

Fig. 7. Mooparuveedu, Shebin. *Adivasis at Mananthavady Bus Station*, 2017, Wayanad. (They are carrying mats with them to tent near the fields at Valliyoorkkavu)

Fig. 8. Mooparuveedu, Shebin. *Paniya Women Buying Goods from Valliyoorkkavu Market*, 2017, Wayanad.

Fig.9. P, Parvathy. *Entrance to Valliyoorkkavu Shrine*. 2021, Wayanad (the road leads up to *melekkavu* or the shrine uphill).

Fig. 10. P, Parvathy. *Thazhekkavu or Shrine Dowhill*, 2021, Wayanad (*Thazhekkavu* is the shrine which the adivasis claim to be appropriated by the upper- caste Hindus).

Fig. 11. P, Parvathy. *The Adiyas and Paniyas Tenting at Valliyoorkkavu*, 2021, Wayanad.

Fig 12. P, Parvathy. *Rice Fields Near Valliyoorkkavu*, 2021, Wayanad.

Fig. 13. P, Parvathy. *Adivasi Chieftains with Traditional Flag at Valliyoorkkavu Temple Fair*, 2021, Wayanad.

Fig 14, Mooparuveedu, Shebin. *Attali* performing *Penampattu*, 2018, Wayanad.

Fig. 15. Channakkan, explaining *Penampattu* to the researcher, 2021, Nachattil Paniya colony.

Fig. 16. Vinu Kidachulan performing *Penampattu* on a public stage, 2019, Kalpetta, Wayanad.

Fig. 17. P, Parvathy. *Gaddika in Progress*, Gaddika festival, 2018, Kasaragod.

Fig. 18. From left to right: P. K. Kariyan, Sarith (vocalists), Velli (*cheeni*), S. K. Kariyan, Raju (*Thudi*) performing for *Gaddika*, 2018.

Fig. 19. P, Parvathy. *Kambalanritham in Progress*, Gaddika Festival, 2018, Kasaragod.

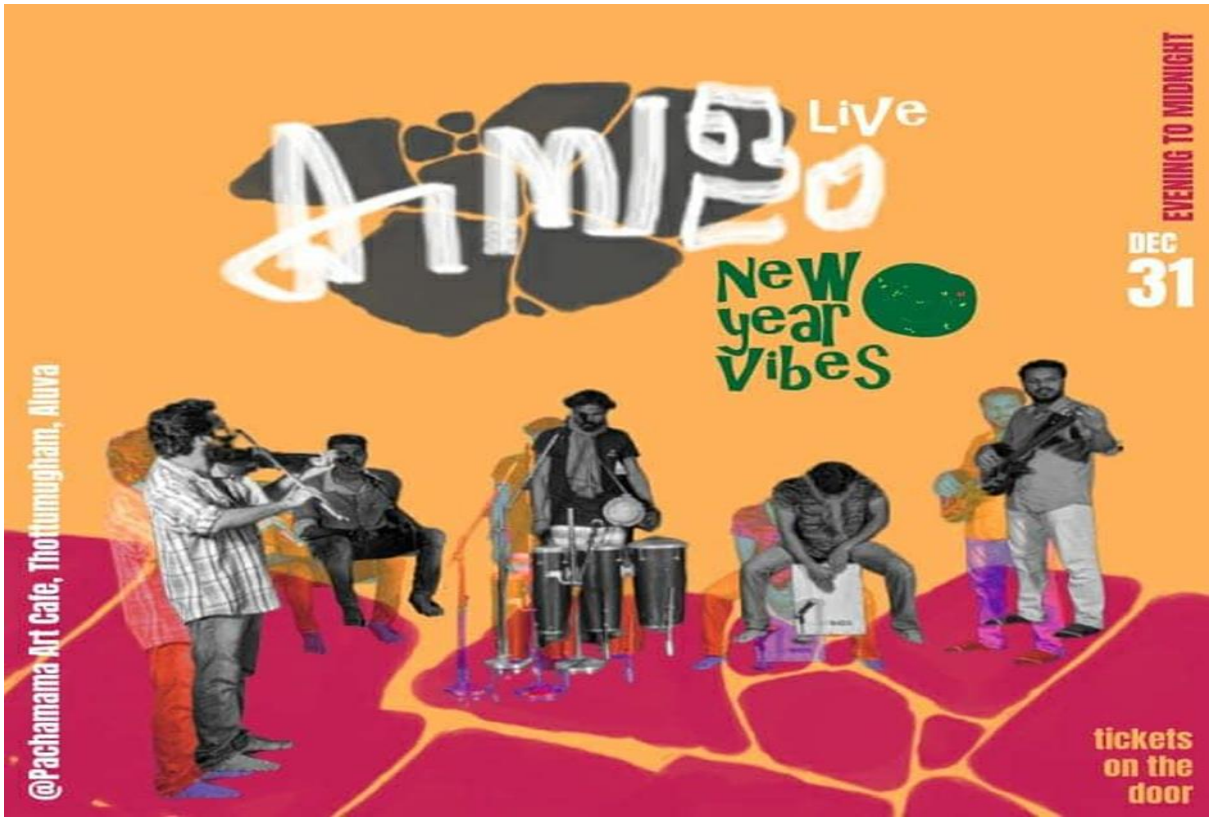

Fig. 20. A poster of the 'Kambalam' Band.