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**PANIYA TRIBE AS “THE OTHER”: EXPERIENCES FROM AN
ANGANWADI CENTRE IN WAYANAD DISTRICT, KERALA**

Soumya Prakash¹

This article attempts to understand the process of “constructing the other” among the Paniya tribe of Wayanad district, Kerala using the concept of “Orientalism” proposed by Edward Said. The process of “othering” as experienced from childhood by the Paniyas is studied with reference to an anganwadi centre in Wayanad district. As the Paniya children begin to reconcile with the state institutions, they are constantly reminded of the lower positions, they occupy in the linear scale of social evolution hierarchy. This reinforces the already existing stereotypes about them as uncivilized, unintelligent and primordial beings and makes them feel inferior in comparison to the non-tribes while simultaneously developing in them a significant amount of suspicion, and hostility towards any outsider. Analyzing the empirical data collected in a case study of an *Anganwadi* centre in a Paniya colony of Noolpuzha village, Sulthan Bathery block of Wayanad district of Kerala, this article discusses the experiences in the *anganwadi* centre where a child from a Paniya tribe is subjected to constant encounter between “the ideal” and “the other” as the child is introduced at an early age to the norms of the dominant society and subjected to constant reminder of being “the other” of that society.

Keywords : *Paniya, anganwadi, orientalism, othering process, marginalization, stereotypes.*

Introduction

The Paniya tribe is the largest community among tribes in Wayanad, a north eastern district of Kerala, a place once predominantly inhabited by tribes. Paniya tribes are also economically marginalized due to their low asset holdings and dependency on wage labour for subsistence. Landlessness among them is the highest, further aggravating their vulnerability. This renders them a weaker position to negotiate any effective structural changes within their society. The number of landless tribes is more in north Kerala in comparison to south Kerala owing to the increased incidences of land alienation due to state sponsored migration of settler farmers from south to north Kerala under Grow More Food campaign during the Second World War. The State’s apathy towards tribal issues is due to the less and scattered population of tribes which inhibits them from asserting political pressure on the state (Kunhaman, 1989). Being erstwhile bonded labourers for several generations, Paniya tribes have considerable experiences of marginalization at the hands of the various colonizers to Wayanad since early times.

¹ Ph. D student in School of Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Room no. 503, Vth floor, Hostel V, Naoroji Campus, Deonar Farms Road, Mumbai 400088. E-mail: soumya.c.k@gmail.com, Mobile: 9960632962

As the tribes in general are considered backward, the state has been implementing various policies and programmes for their development. *Anganwadi* Centre is one of the state run institutions functioning at the grass-root level on a daily basis and instrumental in implementing the state's development policies. It plays an important role towards the health and social development of woman and child. It also serves as a place to conduct gram sabha meetings where matters concerning the well-being of the people in the ward are raised and discussed. The *anganwadi* teacher assumes a significant role as she enjoys the right to approve the names of the beneficiaries along with the tribal promoter to avail housing scheme benefits¹, flood relief compensation etc. *Anganwadi* is the first state institution where Paniya children socialize for the first time with other non-Paniyas like the *anganwadi* staff, and children from caste society.

Hence this article aims to explore the socialization process of the Paniya children in the *anganwadi* centre which constructs the consciousness as "the other" among them right from their childhood. Orientalism is the framework used to understand the unfamiliar and the strange, and makes the people who appear different to us as threatening (Said, 1978). Orientalism is a discourse, which is not in direct relationship with political power but is constructed and sustained in an uneven exchange of powers in different forms. Such as political power (power of the dominant groups), intellectual power (modern knowledge systems), and cultural power (value systems). The dominant society in Kerala looks at subsistence economy as primitive while accumulation of wealth as modern and superior, which the tribal value system doesn't subscribe to.

Said had used it in the context of Middle East as to why and how do people (Occident) develop the preconceived notion about other people (Orient). He argues that there's a politically motivated propaganda to produce stereotypes about the orient in art, literature, academics, and popular media to represent them as backward, savage and coward. "Demonization of orient culture" is another characteristic that Said attributes to Orientalism. It is articulated by making generalized and racist statement about the people. Thus, this article analyses the context of Paniya tribe as to how do the non-Paniyas, especially the dominant groups perceive the Paniya tribe as "orient" who appear different from the rest of the society.

Review of Literature

The Paniya Tribe: Contemporary and Historical Social, Economic and Political context

Paniyas are numerically dominant among the tribes in Kerala, also considered as one of the most backward in terms of development. They

are placed in the lowest echelons of social hierarchy among the tribes of Wayanad. Despite being the largest tribal community in the state (88,450⁴), most of them are landless. Out of the total population in Wayanad, 18% of them are STs, and among them, 45% are Paniyas⁵. The highest population of Paniyas live in Noolpuzha Panchayat of Sulthan Bathery Block in Wayanad district. Out of the total Scheduled Tribe population of 11480 in this panchayat, the population of Paniya tribe are 4749⁶. The Paniya people live in settlements, which are referred as '*colony*' in administrative parlance in this state. Noolpuzha panchayat has 215 tribal colonies, out of which 90 colonies belong exclusively to Paniya tribe⁷. Colonies are usually a small piece of land ranging from few cents to not more than 5 acres of land without Pattayam⁸. Located on revenue lands with only 'Kaiavagasha Regha'⁹ and no Pattayam (land entitlement), there are places usually confined in between huge acres of agricultural field and houses owned by non-tribes who possess Pattayam. The Paniya tribes continue to maintain a relative isolation in their socio-cultural life by confining their interaction with the larger society mainly for the purpose of livelihood. Members of Paniya tribe still earn their living as labourer in the informal sector usually in agriculture and construction sector. Men among Paniya tribe generally work as plantation labourers in the tea, coffee estates in Wayanad, and ginger plantation in Coorg, Karnataka, whereas women usually go for MGNREGA work.

Paniyas are erstwhile bonded labourers in Wayanad. Etymologically the term '*Paniyan*' in Malayalam means the one who earn their livelihood through labour as '*pani*' in Malayalam means 'work'. It is also emphasized in the anthropological accounts of Aiyappan (1992) and Thurston (1909).

The autonomous existence of tribes in Wayanad was affected with the immigration of Chetty's and Goundar community between 8th to 14th century. They established exclusive rights on land by appropriating the exclusive access and use rights of tribes and imposed considerable area restriction. A large extent of land was brought under the control of the temples (Kjosavik & Shanmugharatnam, 2007). Thus began the enslavement of the Paniya tribe (Santhosh, 2008). Feudalism was established in Wayanad with the defeat of the Vedar Raja by the Rajas of Kottayam and Kurumbranad, and Janmi-Kudiyan¹⁰ system was established in the late 14th or early 15th century (Johnny, 2008). Thereby the entire land became the property of the kings, and Nairs who were brought as custodians, became the Janmis. It continued till Wayanad was invaded by Mysore Sultans in the mid-18th century (Kjosavik & Shanmugharatnam, 2007). The customary rights of Paniya tribe over the land and forest was appropriated. From shifting cultivators, Paniya tribes were now turned into bonded labourers

during the medieval period in which an entire hamlet was tied to a particular landlord for generations and also known by the name of the landlord whom they served. Then wages were paid in kind (Aiyappan, 1992).

Faced with scorn, disdain and hate, they have always lived a life where they were treated as inferior to the rest of the society. Due to deceit, oppression and exploitation they continue to suffer not only at the hands of non-tribes but also from those tribes like Mullakurumars in Wayanad whose socio-economic and political status is higher than Paniyas. In the contemporary context, Paniyas are highly suspicious towards any outsider i.e any non-Paniya.

Anganwadi centre: Symbol of development

The Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme launched on 2nd October, 1975, is one of the flagship programmes of the Government of India and represents one of the world's largest and unique programmes for early childhood care and development. It is the foremost symbol of country's commitment to its children and nursing mothers, as a response to the challenge of providing pre-school non-formal education on one hand and breaking the vicious cycle of malnutrition, morbidity, reduced learning capacity and mortality on the other¹¹. Each project aims to provide a package of services viz. supplementary nutrition, immunization, health checkup, referral services, education, and non-formal education in an integrated manner. Beneficiaries of the services are preschool children, expectant and lactating mothers and women in age group of 15-44 years.

In Kerala at present, more than 15,000 *anganwadi* centres are functioning in 120 ICDS blocks in the state. The environment in which ICDS programme is being implemented in Kerala is distinctively different from that of the rest of India. Despite its relatively low per capita income, the quality of life in Kerala has greater similarities with that of the developed countries (Seema, 2001). Moreover, the social sector achievements of Kerala are the result of a rather long and complex history of public action from below and state interventions in creating social infrastructure for education and health and also for generating the demand for its services (ibid). However, despite the improvement in the general quality of life of women and children in the state, the situation in tribal areas is still far from satisfactory. Since inception, ICDS scheme has been a subject of considerable research and evaluation. The National Institute of Public Co-operation and Child Development (NIPCCD) has been the nodal body to provide the knowledge, support and the training facilities for the ICDS functionaries. It has also published number of research reports (NIPCCD, 1997; Pandey, 2004; Gangur, 2007; NIPCCD, 2003; Gunajit,

Snowden & Ghosh, 2006; Sharma & Pandey, 2005) on the functioning of the ICDS, training needs for the staff, effectiveness of the programme. There are also studies on the community participation (Banerjee, 1999; Jones, Lyytikainen, Mukherjee & Reddy, 2007; Barman, 2001; Balsekar, George, Chloe & Dhingra, 2005), functioning of *Anganwadis* (Centre for North East Studies and Policy Research, 2006, TISS, 2015), on the knowledge, attitude and practices of nutrition (Joshi, 2001; Prasanna, Kamini & Menon, 2006), health and nutritional status (Agarwal, Kamra, Chaudhary, Sahoo & Pathak, 2000; Bhasin, Bhatia, Parveen & Aggarwal, 2001; George, Kumar, Lal & Sreedevi, 2000). A few studies to mention which were with reference to the tribes/tribal areas (Asha, 2014; Rekha, et al., 2015). All these studies have looked at the ICDS as means of health and development but not as the centre of socialization and consciousness building of ‘*other*’ or ‘*different*’ especially among the children which could lead to certain amount of resistance.

Objectives and Methodology

The article has contextualized the situation of the Paniyas and analyzed the empirical data collected in a case study of an *anganwadi* centre in a Paniya colony, of Noolpuzha village, Suthan Bathery Block of Wayanad district, Kerala. The author visited the *anganwadi* center ten times between October to December 2018 on different occasions² and studied the profile and functioning of the *Anganwadi* centre through the semi structured interviews with the teacher and helper about their roles and responsibilities and secondary data collected from the registers maintained by the teacher. In-depth interviews were used with the tribal chieftain for their political and socio-cultural history, and with Paniya men and women to understand their contemporary situation. The author also observed the timetable followed, the infrastructural condition and the services provided. The crucial aspects of the observations are about how the Paniya children and parents are treated by the staff on different occasions³. Four instances related to the demeaning and dehumanizing experiences of the Paniya children and the parents have been analyzed. Making it apparent on how “the othering” process gets constructed among the Paniya children right from childhood, an otherwise imperceptible violence of everyday life. Also inferences are drawn from the incidents about how the Paniya community as a whole is looked down upon. The original names of the respondents have been changed to protect their identity.

Findings and analysis

Anganwadi centre at Noolpoozha

Located within the Paniya settlement, this *anganwadi* centre was established in Noolpuzha village in 2007. It was shifted to its current

location in 2009 to increase the enrollment of the children. The Paniya tribes day-to-day interface with this state institution operates within a field of friction between the state and tribes. Both *anganwadi* teacher and the helper are neither tribes nor belong to the same village where the *anganwadi* is located.

In terms of infrastructure, the *anganwadi* building is safe and has one room attached with kitchen and store room facility, seating arrangements, lights and fan, weighing machine for infants and adult, medical kits, safe drinking water and clean toilet facility with water tap. For recreation there is one merry-go-round. The children are served food in the verandah sitting in rows. There is no discrimination in terms of seating arrangement between the tribes and non-tribes. This *anganwadi* caters to two Paniya settlements located in this village.

According to the *anganwadi* register in December 2018, there are 17 children enrolled here, 10 are tribes (9-Paniya and 1-Mullakurumar) and rest are Muslims. Similarly, out of 75 adolescent girls enrolled here, 27 of them are Paniya. The supplementary nutrition is one of the services, which is key attraction especially for the children. The lactating and the pregnant women are also provided with the supplementary nutrition as per the guidelines of the ICDS. The nutritional status of the children and the women is regularly monitored. So far there has been only one child, a Paniya girl assessed with severe malnutrition. In addition to this, sessions for awareness are conducted for women and adolescent girls about the reproductive health, mother and child health care. *Anganwadi* centre also maintains the immunization and distribution of iron and folic acid and Vitamin A supplements. All the birth and death records are maintained in cooperation with ASHA worker.

Experiences of “Othering” in *Anganwadi* Centre- An Analysis

i) Reinforcing stereotypes about Paniya as backward

Accessibility to the *anganwadi* centre was an issue few years back. As previously it was located across the national highway. The parents of found it unsafe to send their wards to *anganwadi*. It affected the attendance of the children, particularly the Paniyas. Usually during daytime, its only elderly and children at Paniya homes, as most adults are on daily wages leaving no one at home to drop the child to the *anganwadi*. In a Gram Sabha meeting in 2009, it was decided to relocate *anganwadi* in their neighborhood. The Paniya chieftain¹² recalls with great pride and amusement, ‘*how it is his people who ultimately decided to give five cents of land for the *anganwadi* from the limited land area available in the settlement.*’ He was sarcastic about the non-tribes in their neighborhood who despite owning huge acres of land were not

willing to share a small piece of land for the development of their own children. Weighing the priorities of educating the Paniya children as more significant, the chieftain then decided to give land to the state for setting up of *anganwadi*. The *anganwadi* teacher never mentions about this on any occasion. While the teacher appreciates the contribution of a farmer¹³, the father of a non-Paniya child, for always giving a stalk of bananas to the *anganwadi* when it is harvested. This inculcates a sense of pride in that child. The appreciation contributes the child's perception about self, and subsequently affects their self-confidence and self esteem. The Paniya children keep hearing about the appreciation of the others but not about the Paniyas even if their community's contribution is of much higher value than the farmer's contribution. It never gets acknowledged in public, and so their sacrifice is trivialized.

It was observed on several occasions that in order to develop the communication skills in the child, the teacher usually encourages children to talk about what they did at home and what kind of food they had at home, etc. On most occasions, the Paniya child is not encouraged to speak. However, in this exercise, the Paniya child realizes the food that he eats is different from the rest and refuses¹⁴ to eat their traditional food¹⁵ (eg. Thaal curry)¹⁶ and start demanding food similar to what the dominant society consumes like Sambaar, Aviyal¹⁷ etc. Thereby making him 'the other'.

It is also important to acknowledge the aptitude of the child in learning new skills like new words, new language, new song, physical activities like sports, new games etc. The Paniya child gets compared to a non-tribe child either consciously or unconsciously. It was observed that the non-tribe children learn to ride the bicycle faster compared to the Paniya children as some of them would have toy cycles at home and even learn by sitting on cycle rode by their elders. The ability to ride cycle gets more recognized than the skills learnt by the Paniya children like fishing in the streams¹⁸, managing to climb big trees swiftly, playing games which require physical agility. So neither the contribution made by the Paniyas nor their traditional knowledge practices gets appreciated while non-tribes gets appreciated for their gestures.

ii) The demonizing process

A two year old child 'Shazia*' had rejoined the *anganwadi* after long absence and she became the centre of attraction and curiosity among rest of the kids at the *anganwadi*. The teacher drew the attention of the children towards her dress which was full of colourful butterflies of various sizes, and asked them to identify different butterflies according to the color. A visible exclusion confronted the Paniya child

as they usually wear uniform to the *anganwadi* and wear casual clothes only on special occasions. On the occasion of Karthika Jayanthi which fell in the month of November in 2018, Paniya children came to *anganwadi* wearing casual clothes. But the teacher did not appreciate them as beautiful. Instead she commented to the Paniya children saying, “*Don’t you think you should come to anganwadi everyday like this, taking bath in the morning and wearing clean clothes*”. This remark implied disgust at their everyday appearance and reinforced the generally existing stereotypes about the Paniya as unclean, thereby making them the other in their everyday experience at the *anganwadi*. In Said’s views, this is part of the demonizing process of those who constitute “the other” with the presupposition that one can make generalized and racist statements about the Paniya without any accountability (Said, 1978).

The *anganwadi* teacher would always express disgust¹⁹ at her dark complexion while talking with the young people coming to the centre and claim that she was forced to marry a man against her wishes attributing the compromises to her skin colour. Here the teacher unconsciously contrives a situation that is partial towards a non-tribe vis-a vis a Paniya child. Without realizing that most of the Paniya children are of dark complexion and statements with racial overtones would lead to develop an inferiority complex about themselves and thereby inculcate the feeling of “being the other” in the context of the larger society. Remarks with subtle or indirect racist overtones are intended to feel bad about one’s own society and generates a feeling of exclusion from the rest of the group of children and develops a constant fear of being rejected among the Paniyas.

Similar acts of demonizing the Paniya occur when the *anganwadi* teacher, the ASHA worker, the ward member and the neighbors describe an adjacent Paniya settlement²⁰ as nuisance to the society as few incidents of domestic violence, substance abuse, sexual abuse is reported from that settlement.

One day at around 3 pm, Upma was served as snacks like everyday. The children usually carry it in a lunch box to their respective homes. It was served to the staff as well as visitors at the *anganwadi*. Anita* a Paniya child, was absent on that day. But when she saw the other Paniya children carrying the snack home, she came to ask for it. Anita was denied snacks by the helper for remaining absent from the *anganwadi*, while the author was served and the rest was thrown away. It is a way of reminding the Paniya child that non-compliance to the conditions would deny the services. The non-tribes tend to perceive the tribes in Kerala as the largest beneficiaries of the state policies for food security. The tribes in the state have struggled for food

security from the state. But the dominant society views this ‘*right*’ as ‘*favour*’ to the tribes which reinforces their comparatively lower socio-economic status in the larger society.

iii) Language as part of the cultural commodity

The teacher recalls an incident that occurred in one of the *Anganwadis* where a Paniya child had to suffer as a consequence of lack of knowledge of Paniya language by the non-tribe teacher and the helper. The Paniya child was continuously saying ‘*Uchannanettu*²¹’. Both staff understood it as afternoon meals as ‘Uccha’ term in Malayalam means afternoon. But it is only when the child urinated, they realized that the child was requesting to go to toilet. Language becomes a major barrier between the non-tribe teacher and the Paniya child.

Similarly, Nitya^{22*}, a Paniya child studying in class VIth was asked to sing a song which Paniyas used to sing in their paddy fields earlier. Nitya instantly refused to entertain the request made by the teacher. On being prompted she said, “I have never heard from anyone here or from elders about this song. You are the one who taught us. So why don’t you yourself sing?” Nitya has challenged the dominant perception of tribal language and culture to be used only for entertainment. It is evident how the Paniya culture, which is otherwise regarded as inferior, now transforms into a cultural commodity (Rockwell, 2010).

The unfamiliarity with Malayalam acts as language barrier for the Paniya children and is one of the primary reasons for increasing dropouts²³ among them. ‘Language’ is recognized as one of the important markers of ethnic identity, the other being ‘culture’ (Xaxa, 2014), yet most of the tribal languages do not enjoy official recognition as language of the specific community by the state and merely remains as dialect due to lack of script. There is also a growing demand by the indigenous people in the nations of Latin America that in order to achieve collective and individual well-being, they have to strengthen their local power and cultural identities, reclaiming ancestral values, principles, and rules of holistic co-existence, recovering the lost harmony among humans and also between humans and Mother Nature (Teran, 2010).

Discussion

Anganwadi centre is a community based institution catering to children under six, adolescent girls, pregnant and lactating women. It prepares the children for enrolling in the formal education system as it provides pre-school training, disciplining and exposure to classroom environment for the children and monitors the basic health status along with the supplementary nutrition. As discussed earlier, there

are many studies on the efficiency and effectiveness of the *anganwadi* centre, but this article tries to contemplate, how it is also a place of socialization for the children and the parents specially the women across social categories and the staff. This article has shows the experiences of “othering” as stereotypes are reinforced in caste society about Paniyas in *anganwadi* centre.

Donating a part of the asset is appreciated by the larger society. But it is conveniently ignored when the Paniya chieftain initiates such a contribution. This would have otherwise been upheld as great act of philanthropy. But omission of it from public memory reinforces the stereotype about Paniya as backward. The nutritional supplement at the *anganwadi* centre develops refusal to eat traditional food by Paniya children at home and induces them into the acculturation process. Life skills learnt by Paniya children are smirked at in comparison to the life skills learnt by a non-tribe child.

Similarly, the indirect references to the dark skin colour as undesirable in the society make the children conscious of the difference between them and the dominant society. This reinforces the perception of Paniya as inferior. The non-compliance to rules prescribed by the state is not a choice for them in order to avail benefits from the state as they need to be present in the *anganwadi* centre to avail the supplementary nutrition.

The language and traditional songs are used to promote cultural diversity in the society. But the environment at the *anganwadi* pertaining to the language, culture is demonizing and the constant comparison with the non-tribe children could compel the Paniya child either to distance themselves from the *anganwadi* or develop an inferior outlook towards one’s own language, culture and society. So, even though the ‘*physical distance*’ between the residence of the Paniya child and the *anganwadi* may be negligible, but the ‘*manufactured distance*’ between the child and his/her community and culture is remarkable.

Conclusion

The Paniyas have been recognized as people dispossessed of their lands, but what they didn’t realize is that they are transforming into people dispossessed of their culture, languages, lifestyles and cosmology in the name of development. This is turning them into people with low self-esteem, weighed down by suffering, extreme poverty, desolation and anguish. Their history of slavery continues to haunt them as they are constantly reminded of all the favours bestowed on them by the state and the society. As a consequence they tend to look at any outsider with great amount of suspicion and hostility. It’s a kind of process of

reinforcing the image of an unintelligent, non-capable, fit only for hard physical labour, adamant, unwilling to change with time, ungrateful, unreliable stereotypes.

The socialization with the larger society makes the Paniya child realize that her appearance, food and practices are different from the rest thereby perceiving Paniya as “Orient” in the context of Kerala and so are viewed as “the other” of the society (Said, 1978). The web of cultural stereotypes, and dehumanizing ideology combines to develop a low self-esteem for a Paniya. This experience gets ingrained in the Paniya tribe as s/he recognizes himself with an identity imposed on her/him by the dominant society.

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End notes

- ¹ The teacher is consulted while selecting a Paniya person under the housing scheme by the tribal department (Bhavana nirmana dhansahaya grant) or the panchayat (Daridrya laghukarnam-parpidam) and for many such schemes as the teacher knows the settlement closely.
- ² The author spent whole day at the *anganwadi* from 10.00 am to 5.30 pm. The children would start arriving at the center between 10.00- 10.30 am. The children would leave after 3.00 pm with their parents or guardians. The teacher continues to stay back at the *anganwadi* to make entries about the remaining food stock, calorie consumed and update the attendance records. The non-tribe parents discuss their concerns related to the health workshops and cleanliness of the ward, sanitation issues with the teacher. Teacher also helps in filling up application forms in Malayalam to the Paniya women. They also check the status of their application to the tribal office or panchayat with the teacher. They also discuss with her any pain, injury or any kind of health problems they face. Informal information like whose marriage has been fixed, who has returned back to the settlement or securing a new job etc is exchanged with the teacher by the men and women from the community.
- ³ The author was present on several occasions. On 25th October 2018, health committee meeting was held at the *anganwadi* in which review of ward sanitation was discussed. The ward member, health inspector, tribal promoter and general people of the ward and one Paniya woman attended it. They also discussed about the nutrition class, cleanliness awareness programmes, and food competition. The second occasion was nutrition class conducted by health inspector and food competition among mothers for preparing protein rich food using native ingredients and without preservatives. On a third occasion, health camp coordinated by the health inspector, 2 nurses and ASHA worker in which weight of children was checked, immunization for children, and distribution of iron tablets to pregnant women was held.
- ⁴ Statistical Profile of Scheduled Tribes in India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, 2013.
- ⁵ Information available from the Baseline Survey Report of Tribals, 2008
- ⁶ Information available at the Tribal Extension Office, Noolpuzha Panchayat (2018)

- ⁷ Information available at the Tribal Extension Office, Noolpuzha Panchayat (2018)
- ⁸ Land Ownership Title granted to an individual by the state of Kerala
- ⁹ Land Possession Certificate issued by the state of Kerala on individual name.
- ¹⁰ Janmi-kudiyam refers to landlord-chieftain
- ¹¹ <https://icds-wcd.nic.in/icds.aspx>
- ¹² Excerpts from an in-depth interview with the tribal chieftain on being asked about why *anganwadi* is situated within the settlement. Usually the *anganwadis* are located outside the settlement on revenue land of the village. Due to non availability of land within the settlement, it is usual to find many Paniya families living under one roof. The minimum requirement to get house sanctioned by the state is 3 cents of land.
- ¹³ The *anganwadi* teacher was overwhelmed by his gesture of giving raw bananas to the *anganwadi*. She said, "He always donates stalk of bananas upon harvesting. The prescribed meal at the *anganwadi* doesn't include vegetables. Hence the children are bored of eating the same food everyday without any variation in the taste. So it is very kind of him. See that Mani chettan* (referring to the tribal chieftain) he also produces banana on agricultural land taken on lease. He always says that he would give but has never given".
- ¹⁴ Excerpts from indepth interview with parents of the Paniya children on discussing about the impact of the *anganwadi* on their life. Shanta, a mother of a Paniya child shares with me the difficulty she faces for meeting food demands made by her children. "On one hand we do not have any regular source of income and on the other my children wants sambhar and aviyal otherwise they will not eat food. To make this, I have to purchase vegetables from the market and I need money to buy it. What do I do? How do I make my children understand?"
- ¹⁵ Traditional food refers to their unique style of cooking using ingredients consisting of only salt and pepper/ green chillies and the vegetables that grow wildy and the crabs and fishes found in streams and rivers near their settlements.
- ¹⁶ Thaal is a leaf which grows on the banks of river or stream and fringes of paddy fields which also constitute one of the primary diet of tribes in Wayanad.
- ¹⁷ Sambaar and Aviyal are curry made with variety of vegetables using lot of spices.
- ¹⁸ The Paniya children go in small groups in the evening before sunset after going back home from *anganwadi* carrying their fishing rods to the streams. While the non-Paniya children will be playing with their adolescent siblings and practicing to ride cycle. On some days, they will follow the teacher till the bus stop when she goes back home in the evening. The teacher next day recalls the incident in the *anganwadi* while sharing with other children. While the activities that a Paniya child does is never appreciated. Once Gopika showed me how quickly she can climb the drumstick tree. The teacher then recalled how the local people are troubled because these children engage in stealing drumsticks or coffee beans growing in their neighbours premises or farm.
- ¹⁹ The teacher is a graduate and regrets working as *anganwadi* teacher which requires lesser educational qualifications. She thinks she lost better opportunities because her parents compelled her to marry than find job. While taking pictures during Christmas and various meetings, she would jokingly emphasize on using flash as she might not be visible due to her dark skin colour.
- ²⁰ It was brought to the notice of the health inspector by the ASHA worker during the health committee meeting that the well in that settlement is infected with bacteria. Hence not advisable for drinking. They do not have proper toilet facilities. And people from that settlement do not come for any meetings. The people of that settlement harassed the public by throwing garbage everywhere in the settlement where the public went to the Paniya settlement as part of the

‘Clean Kerala drive’ organized by the state post flood, Two teenage girls of that settlement are victims of sexual abuse and are now shifted to Nirbhaya homes.

²¹ Uchannanettu in Paniya language refers to the process of relieving oneself by passing urine

²² Nitya is a Paniya child who comes often to drop/pick her younger siblings at the *anganwadi*

²³ Susamma (2013) states that among Paniya students there were 7694 (51.59%) drop outs according to the KILA survey, 2008.

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