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'TRIBAL' HERITAGE

An Overlooked Chapter of Indian History

Promode Kumar Misra

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Dedicated
to
Rajalakshmi

PREFACE

Completion of this research project has been long in the making. In fact, the foundation of this work may have been laid way back in 1957 when we had traveled to Jobhipat to conduct fieldwork among the Asur, a Scheduled Tribe in the Ranchi district, Jharkhand. We had gone there for our fieldwork training program as part of our coursework for a Master's degree in Anthropology at Lucknow University. This was my first exposure to people who have been referred to as 'tribes' and our fieldwork was indeed a happy experience. The Asur were living deep inside the then forest region and appeared to us cheerful and well-nourished. They had been known as iron smelters, but at the time we visited they had given up iron smelting and all of them were engaged in settled agriculture and small game hunting. On the eve of our departure they gave us a feast which mainly consisted of a generous supply of 'handia', which was their rice beer, and field rat meat. For the feast, the boys of the hamlet had gone trapping field rats in the morning in our honour. When we reached their hamlet late in the afternoon for the meals, heaps of dead rats greeted us that were later roasted for the feast. I still have vivid images of that memorable night. It was our penultimate evening in the hamlet. During our month-

long stay we had become fond of the people and the place. All throughout we were treated with cheer and warm smiles by young and old, men and women. So as our departure was imminent, we all were a bit emotional. Being a city dweller, that night was for the first time in my life, I was seeing and experiencing the beauty and glory of the full moon in the midst of a forest. Night in the forest is otherwise frightening. In spite of the fact that you are trying to keep your eyes wide open and ears straight, you are never sure what is around you. Even the slightest noise and movement disturbs you, but moonlight makes it very different. You get to see the forest and the tree clad line of distant hills in the soothing and comforting light of the moon. The feast that night was accompanied with much music, dance and 'handia'. The Asur girls and boys made us to join the celebration. The festivities went on into the wee hours of the morning. We all enjoyed the party – we danced, drank and ate but not the rat meat, that is except for one of our colleagues who was from Switzerland. She enjoyed the roasted meat but began to feel very sick when she learnt from us on our walk back to the camp that though we danced, drank and ate but not the rat meat. Anyway, that was a happy exposure to the way of life of the people living in the forest. But I cannot say the same about my subsequent experiences among the tribes in various parts of the country, particularly those in the southern region excepting among the Kuruchia and the Mullukurumba. They are significantly different from other tribes and they lead exclusive lives particularly the former. In spite of the fact that the tribes in India are the most studied people, excepting in certain parts of north-east India, they remain the most 'backward' and exploited lot and on the slightest pretext are displaced and their rights are trampled overlooking the fact that they represent the human face. This also establishes that there is no correlation between producing well researched tome on them and their development. Their

world view expressing the values of conviviality, reciprocity, sharing, caring and egalitarianism and sensitivity to nature which are so very crucial and also their lifestyles which conserve resources lie shattered. They are the heritage people. Diminishing their lives is a loss to the humanity. The only logical role available to those who had intensive involvement with them either as an anthropologist or as an honest agent of welfare and development is to become an activist, and try to free them from the suffocating chains put around them in the name of developing and 'civilizing' them. Any other role becomes frivolous and self-serving. I have been asking these questions over and over. I have not gone into activist's path but have been making frank confessions, expressing my doubts about my profession as well as raising questions about path of modern development, every strand of which is non-sustainable and fiercely competitive.

As I began writing the final draft of this research project, I began to ask myself as to what I have achieved besides writing a scholastic piece on the tribes in general and a region of south India in particular? Though this work is based on secondary sources, I could not help reflecting on my fieldwork and of others. Through my studies, maybe I have gathered some in-depth understanding of the communities. My work will be read among the academic circles and reviewed but how does it interest the people themselves. I may take cover under the argument that my data helps in understanding the social and cultural processes which may not help them directly but enhances the understanding about the human beings and their ways. It is all in pursuit of science. It sounds all very well. In the name of science some animals have to be sacrificed. This statement a few decades ago was not even discussed but as base of human consciousness is enlarging even the animal rights are being recognized. Perhaps the drift in my thought is becoming clear.

I have conducted intensive field investigations among several communities including nomadic populations. True to my anthropological training I sincerely tried to be friends with them and many a times I was successful in gaining their confidence which was extremely useful for me to get the inside 'data'. I must confess that I could never make them understand the purpose of my enquiry or the purpose of my stay with them. I am sure they developed some notions about me and the work I was doing with them which certainly were quite different. For occasionally I would learn some folklore circulating about me through some other sources. At that time those stories amused me but now I realize the gap between observers and observed is a serious matter and raise several questions of ethics as well as class relations. But here I should mention an entirely different experience of Rajalakshmi who was conducting ethnographic fieldwork among the Mullukurumba in Wynaad. I was supervising her fieldwork. She had developed extraordinary rapport with the people there. They had given her a room in one of their huts. In the morning the young boys would invite her to accompany them to the forest to show her what hunting and gathering skills they had. In the daytime the elderly ladies would invite her to visit their houses where she learnt all the gossips of the village. In the evening young girls would pull her to sleep with them in their dormitory where in the glow of hearth they would relate to her all the stories about themselves, their friends and their work in the plantation. While in the village, she attended and helped in two deliveries. She wanted the death rituals to be photographed but no one was ready to act as a dead person, she volunteered to do it. They made her into a corps, performed all rituals and tied her to a pole to take her for burials. All this was photographed and one of those photos was printed in her book 'The Mullukurumbas of Kappala' (1971). Vellutha,

one of their leaders was himself an accomplished marksman, was interested that Rajalakshmi should know all about their community, the skills they possess and the dignified and organized life they lead. Vellutha though an illiterate was an extraordinary person and at that time I felt he had a sense of history and much concern for his people. But I am still not sure if he understood the purpose of the work Rajalakshmi was doing among them. While I would like to underline that developing such a rapport with the studied people is rare the gap between observers and observed in anthropology need to be continuously debated.

Coming back to my own experience the more I gained their confidence, the richer became my field data and understanding of the processes at work. However, I knew my scholastic understanding may bring me applause and recognition in academic circles and may also bring me material benefits but what about the people who have been so generous. I knew very well that after I finish my work they would neither normally see me again nor see or read what I will write about them. It is all in pursuit of science.

It is pretty clear that they have been made into tribes, poor, backward, primitive which is not of their own making. The nexus in which these populations have been caught up is never broken by scholastic understanding or discussions that requires taking up cudgels with political issues which are always ducked by the anthropologist in the name of objectivity. It is a paradox that you know and understand why and how what is happening to them but you do not take the political path. In the words of Vidich, 'in avoiding commitments to political issues the anthropologist plays the role of political eunuch'.

Uncomfortableness which these thoughts generated have never left me. Way back in 1978 I wrote an article

'Anthropological fieldwork: some awkward questions' raising host of doubts about anthropological fieldwork. These questions are still relevant and some of them have become still sharper and critical. Till countries like India gained independence, anthropology was handmaiden of colonialism but it does not require much arguments to say academic colonialism still persists. The focus of studies, standards and references still continue to be set elsewhere. Since socio-economic environment is rapidly changing, people even at the grass root level have begun to ask questions. Their voices are gaining strength. They would like to understand the purpose of enquiry. Myth of self satisfying professional smoke screen for the sake of science and 'knowledge' is fast dissipating both on account of the pressure created by the voices from below and rising realization of ethical issues within the profession. The glass ceiling of one set of people sitting on the top of pyramid being 'civilized' and 'westernized', studying another set of 'weaker' and 'backward' people through fictitious participant observations is cracking which it should break sooner than later. The only course open forward for discipline like anthropology is participatory anthropology where both will be equal partners towards a common goal. This may sound like utopia. But the transition is palpable and visible. Comfortable zones for erstwhile anthropological researches are progressively shrinking.

The text of this book opens with a discussion on the term tribe. Though the term could be hardly defined, it persists and in India it has acquired a formal label. At one time one could say designating some people as tribe reduced the complexities of non-western societies of Africa, Asia, and America in the minds of colonists, administrators, missionaries and the western scholars. The term tribe has been used synonymously with the primitives or the people who could

not develop and hence inferior. Industrial or postindustrial west, in this formulation stands at one end of the pole and at the other end is the most backward segment of the humanity that is tribe. Although such Victorian and simplistic linear evolutionary scheme has been criticized, it remains in the background even in the informed anthropological discourses. The discourse on development exemplifies the hangover. If we reflect to consider as to how the concept of primitiveness emerged, we find that attributes of primitive are non-literate, non-civilized, arrested in development, non-industrial, non-urban, lacking in economic specialization, having simple and small scale tools and so on. At some stage all human beings must have been at the same level. How is it that some broke out of those attributes and others could not? Was there any role of those who broke through in others not able to get out? This question is at once relevant for there are excellent monographs on the social formation of the primitives, their kin-ship structure, myths, beliefs, language etc., but very little on the impact of expansionists on the people who have been called so. For that trijunction, particularly the sub-region of the Nilgiris provides appropriate illustration. It shows that throughout its long history the so called primitives, the food gatherers and hunters have been in contact with food producers. This is not only the story of the remote past, there is a continuity to it which got exceedingly intensified during the colonial rule and incidentally this is the period when such designated people were anthropologically studied intensively to bring out their social, cultural and physical attributes which qualified them to be called as primitives. It was ironic that such categorization emerged and continued to be rationalized. With some notable exception there was indeed a sort of conspiracy of silence as to how such people were brought into the framework of State or putting the other

way around what has been the contribution of such people to the development of the civilized state was not asked. Such questions have been continuously overlooked and scholars have persisted with 'parachute' notion of civilization that is as if it dropped down from the sky.

This study has tried to show that food gatherers and food producers have not been exclusive population. In the long history of India there have been many points of intersection not only for material goods and services but also in realm of culture ideas and thought. The fact that vast majority of the people called as tribes, have not only kept their identity, culture and language, indicates a vital aspect of the nature of the Indian civilization and that is, it attaches some significance to the aspect of diversity. This should not be considered as incidental or the aspect of coercion or power relationship that has been very much there to be undermined. Diversity has flourished in India despite dominance, superordinate and subordinate relationships and jati rankings.

Establishment of the colonial regime has been a turning point in the history of India, particularly with regard to the population who were dependent on forest resources. Not only their traditional rights were trampled but commercialization of forest resources hit them hard and such rules were framed that the whole communities were criminalized. In independent India welfare of the Scheduled Tribes was introduced in a significant manner but it could not reverse the forces released during the colonial rule. Transformation scene at trijunction illustrates this contradiction very well.

Amidst hope and despair, there is a movement forward towards what has been popularly called as mainstream which in the words of renowned linguist Pattanayak means 'excluding, marginalizing and demolishing smaller languages and cultures'. From mainstream point of view 'orality is an

evil which needs determined eradication'. In the process the cohesiveness of the communities is weakening and certainly their everlasting values are being hit hard. In conclusion, I can do no better but quote Dalai Lama: *The planet does not need more successful people. The planet desperately needs more peace makers, healers and restorers, story tellers and lovers of all kinds.*

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jointly edited numbers 3-4 of the volume 67 of the Eastern Anthropologist on South Indian Foragers based on a session on South Indian Foragers at the 10th Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies, held at Liver-pool University, England in June 2013. That project gave me opportunity to interact with Professor Gardner intensively and in the process, I gained a lot from his numerous writings and penetrating analytical understanding. I cannot thank him enough.

As the destiny would have it, Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose about whom I had very little information, took over the charge of the Anthropological Survey of India as its director a few months after I joined the organisation. That was way back in 1958. This event brought a significant change in my anthropological understanding. Soon after he took over, he started a project to survey the material traits of India. I was selected to undertake a pilot study for this project. Based on our report the project was undertaken at all India level. Under that project I surveyed the entire state of Rajasthan. Result of this project were published as Peasant life in India, edited by Nirmal Kumar Bose. My initial training in field anthropology thus began under him and Dr. Surajit Sinha who was made in charge of conducting this huge project. Both of them were my mentors. Later I was more intensively in contact with Dr. Sinha. I have learnt extensively from their writings. Dr. Sinha's work on the tribes in Central region was pioneering and essentially guided my research on this project. Whatever I have achieved in the academic field I owe to the guidance, inspiration, and the examples set by these two great scholars. I will forever remain grateful to them.

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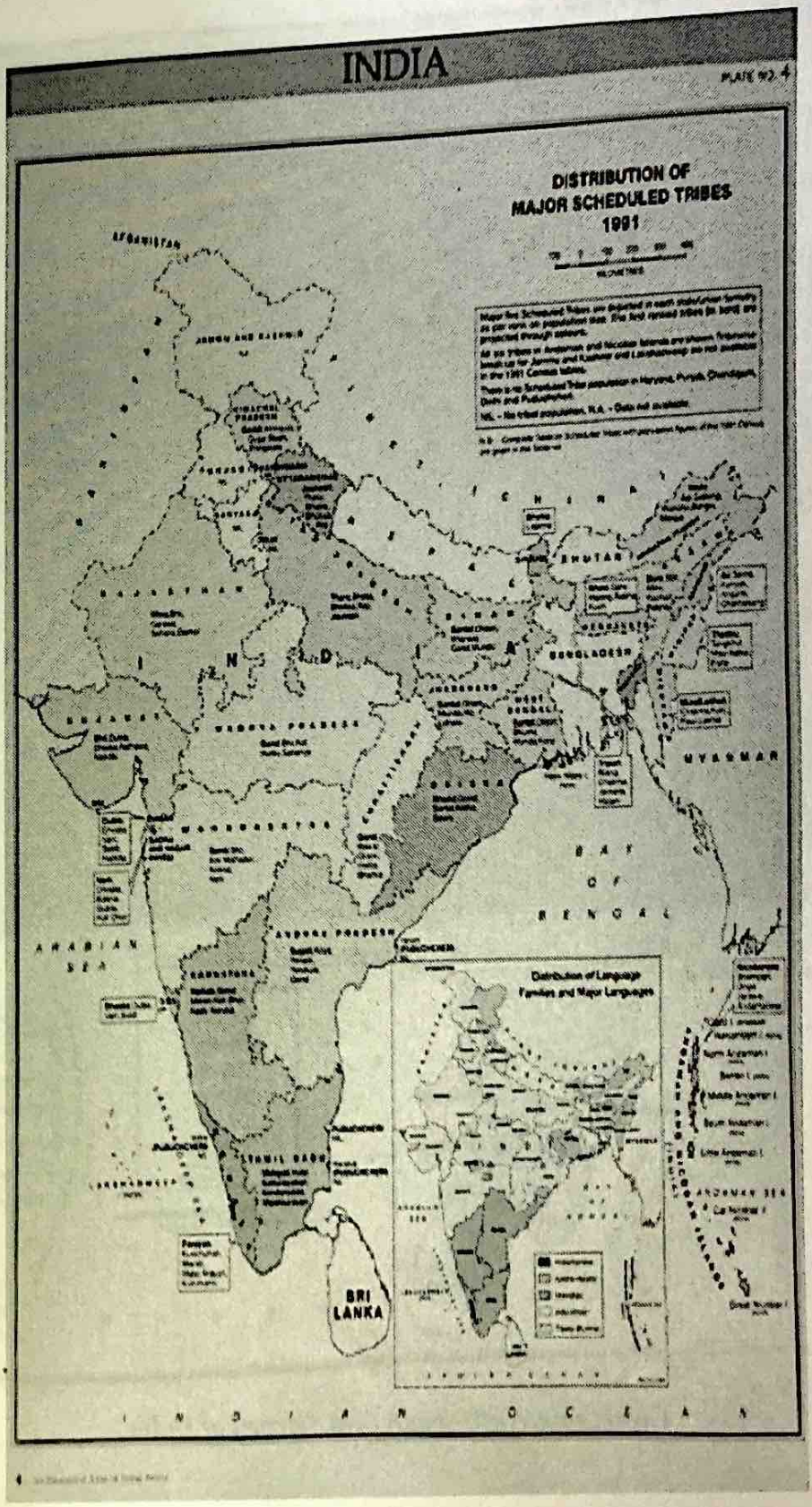
It is not possible to individually name all the persons, particularly the members of the Scheduled Tribe, who enriched my knowledge about society, culture, and its processes. I will remain forever grateful to them all.



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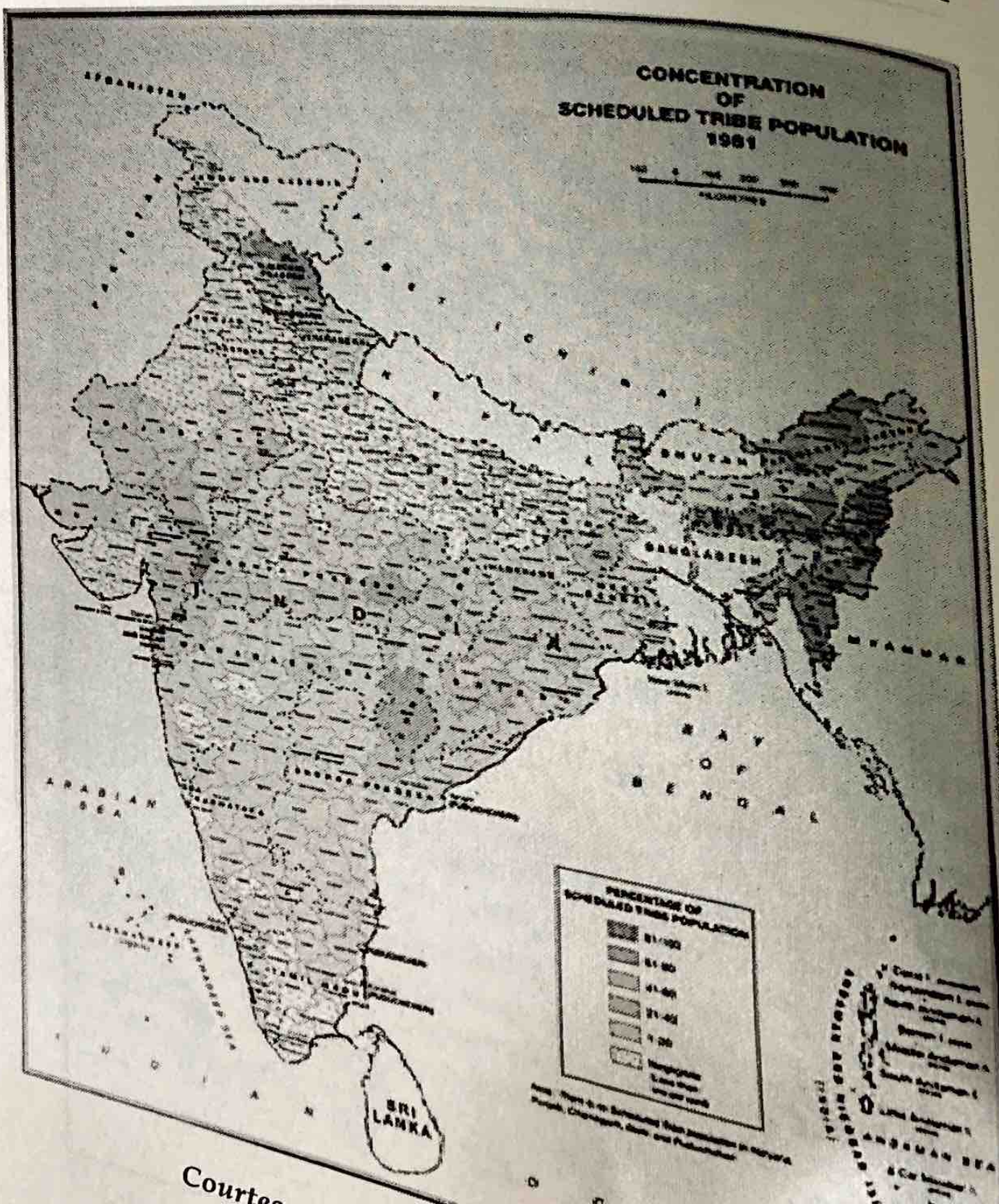
CONCENTRATION
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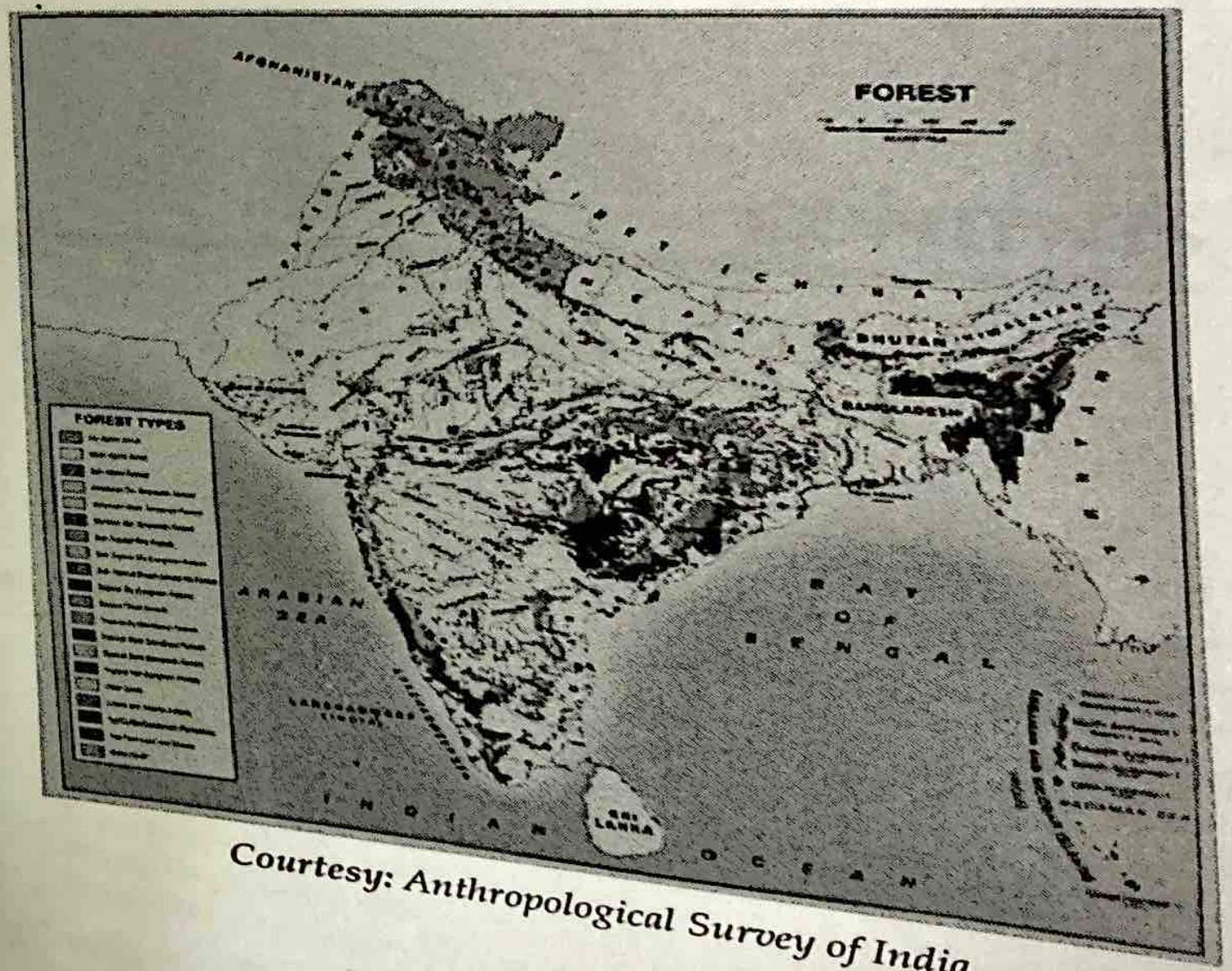

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1 TRIBE AS A CONCEPT

The term tribe is widely used despite the fact that there is hardly any clarity about it. It has been my hobby to ask new students national and international, in my classes before they are exposed to the literature on tribes or influenced by my lectures, as to what images they have when the term tribe is uttered. Usually the answers have been that they are some kind of a 'primitive' people. When asked further about their notion of primitiveness, they invariably begin to fumble and are not able to proceed beyond stating some material aspects. A few venture to state about their lack of 'proper' society or 'values' but without any prompting they themselves begin to realize a certain kind of vagueness of their statements, and show their eagerness to learn what I have to say about it. I have always found myself in a bind. For on one hand, there exists an enormous amount of literature on specific tribes and regions inhabited by them but much less on the concept of tribe or 'is hardly more rigorously defined in anthropological applications than in popular usage' (Fried 1975: 1). On the other, in the course of my lecture I would show great socio-cultural, economic, political and physical variety that exists among the people who have been called as tribe and yet I was not prepared to discuss as to why I continue to call them

as tribe. The term is deeply entrenched into our vocabulary. Fried says that any attempt to reform the linguistic mode can be "virtuous, but quixotic" (ibid: 1). However, before I proceed to discuss what the term means in the Indian context, it is essential to demonstrate how determined are the non-tribal world to call some people as tribes and also its adjectival form tribal which means tribe like. It is paradoxical that while there is no clear meaning and understanding of the term, its adjectival form is freely used. As early as in 1942, it was pointed out by Swanton 'As to tribes, even a superficial study of them, whether in America or elsewhere, will quickly dispel the idea that they are simple or permanent units, and one soon discovers that they present the most bewildering combinations and contradictions.

In short, there is no one universally valid principle identifying a body of people as a tribe, and tribes, or tribal groups varied so enormously as to dispose effectually of the idea that there was an immutability about them either in their origin or later development' (Swanton 1942: 183, quoted by Fried 1975: 108). So the question arises as to why some people have been designated as tribe. Although there are excellent studies on individual communities called as tribes, the question as to why they have been called as tribe is generally avoided except to cite some mythological stories about their origin. It has been generally assumed that since such communities do not have written records, they are the people without 'history' and in common parlance without 'culture' and even if they have culture, it is so exotic as to call them 'headhunters', 'half naked', indulging in premarital sex and so on demonstrating how irrational and primitive they are. Of course, while these characteristics are highlighted the irrationality of the non-tribals is not discussed.

Fried devoted a whole book on the notion of tribe, in

which he comprehensively demolished the concept of tribe. That was way back in 1975 but it hardly made an impact in the popular notion about tribe or in the academic discourse about it. It may be pertinent to repeatedly ask this question as to why is it so? It may not be possible to go into this question here but it will be legitimate to revisit his discussion and underline the main issues in the context of the main theme of this dissertation.

The Word Tribe

According to Oxford English Dictionary the derivation of the word 'tribe' is from the Latin word 'tribus'. According to Fried the word was used to indicate the two fold division of the people of Rome, but it lacked clarity that is even the earliest use of the word was not without being contentious and obscure. The use of the word tribe in English language could be traced back to 13th century which meant 'a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbarian condition'. (Oxford English Dictionary Vol. IX, 1933: 339). Fried quotes Marx and Engels (1959: 252) where they have used the phrase 'sheep like or tribal consciousness' for tribes. Though there are some positive references about tribes such as that of Saraswati who thinks primitive tribes represent perfect form and are 'self organizing, self generating, self experiencing, and self perpetuating forms' (1991: 19). There are others who have made neutral uses of the term such as domestic groups, kin assemblage, local groups or mobile bands. But the strong notion that persists is that tribes are people different from the so called civilized people who are clearly indicated by such ideas as that the tribes are segmentary systems or pre-state people. Such ideas may have specific and apparent relevance but their applicability as a definite stage in the process of evolution can be challenged. The underlying assumption that

those who have been called as tribes are the leftover of the earliest stage, while all others marched towards civilization leaves many questions unanswered. Fried argues that evolutionary framework is not only ambiguous but also highly generalized. Fried has shown that the persisting notion that the tribes are a breeding population is false and so also that each tribe speaks a distinct language. He has also shown that economic relations overflow the so called boundaries between tribes and non-tribes. Similarly political boundaries are much less clearer. Therefore Fried according to Beteille argues that those who have been 'generally designated by anthropologists as tribes represent neither a definite type of society nor a definite stage of evolution. They are too amorphous and too assorted to qualify for either role. The tribe according to Fried, is much better regarded as a kind of secondary phenomenon which in the typical case acquires its form and identify from some external source' (1986: 305).

The idea that the people who have been called as tribe are secondary phenomenon is potentially strong. For evolution cannot be disputed. The journey of humankind since they became toolmakers can be progressively reconstructed in a generalized way but specifics will remain clouded. The generalized image of the journey of humankind compels us to concede that changes call it by any name, progress or development is imminent. How it is triggered off can be speculated but cannot be precisely stated because too many variables are involved and different aspects of life do not respond to stimuli of change uniformly and with the same intensity. The story of change is complicated even for contemporary societies and to state about it for societies of remote past can at best remain at the level of speculation. Further, if change is imminent for all human groups how is this that some societies as it has been generally speculated

remained entangled in the earliest form of social formation. This cannot be explained unless we take into account the external environment and external forces. In this regard, India provides an excellent opportunity to probe this question. For the history of India is long and within the framework of Indian civilization societies at different levels have existed side by side. Forest living communities have lived close to the centers of civilization, such as Gaya, Madurai, Ujjain (Beteille 1986: 300) and there are scores of such places all over Southern India-Tirupati and Sabarimala are the prominent ones. Fox has called them as 'professional primitives (1969), Morris as 'forest traders' (1982) and Gardner as 'oscillators between cultural frontiers' (1985). Therefore, it is imperative to discuss how tribes have been conceived in Indian situation. Before we take up the issue of tribes in India it may be useful to give a critical view on the famous paper of Robert Redfield entitled 'The Folk Society' (1947) which became a sort of reference paper for discourse on tribe. The concept of ideal primitive society is neither empirically correct nor acceptable from evolutionary perspective (further discussed in the section on isolationist and interdependent models). Food production has evolved out of foraging and there must have been long period of transition. Besides in pre-industrial phase there has been substantial dependence of food producers on foragers which has not been duly recognized. Redfield conceives of an ideal primitive/folk society in contrast to modern urbanized Western society. Former according to him is small, isolated, non-literate and homogenous with a strong sense of group solidarity. In such a society 'behaviour is traditional, spontaneous, uncritical and personal; there is no legislation or habit of experiment and reflection for intellectual ends... these and related characterization may be related in terms of "folk mentality"' (ibid; 293). With whatever knowledge we possess of the modern so called developed world is it

possible to defend the idea that folk societies alone have the folk mentality? Much water has flowed since Redfield wrote this. Today our knowledge about the so called folk society is extensive and intensive and therefore it is easy to demolish the concept both in letter and spirit. Redfield's concept of ideal type of primitive/folk society suffers with the bias of the civilization in the new world like modern America, Australia or New Zealand where the civilization did not grow with the interaction with the indigenous communities. Redfield's concept does not take into account the situation in the older civilizations where the so called folk societies not only lived in close proximity with peasants and urban dwellers, interacted with them in variety of ways and in the process contributed to the development of civilization. Further the so called folk societies have persisted over time and have shown resilience and flexibility. They conserved the environment and respected autonomy of sorts. They developed appropriate tools and believed in social storage, egalitarianism and had lasting values.

Tribes in India

It will be most appropriate to start this discussion with what Saraswati has to say on the issue of the tribes in India. Saraswati is one of those Indian scholars though trained as an anthropologist like most of us but has tried to free himself of the colonial hangover and provide a perspective from Indian intellectual tradition. This perspective is important for Balagangadhara writes 'in the last three hundred years, the theoretical and textual study of Indian culture has been undertaken mostly by Europe. What is more, it will also be a challenge because as I will argue, the study of India has largely occurred within the cultural framework of Europe' (2012: 1). If I may add, the field of anthropology has been

totally dominated by the Western scholars and their thoughts. Saraswati writes 'There is nothing in Indian thought structure, nor in the traditional organization of Indian society, that may correspond to the Western evolutionary notion of tribe as a vestige of savagery and barbarism. Yet, tribe exists in India as a political category created by the British Raj, intellectualized by the colonial anthropologists and sanctified by the constitution of modern India. These so called pre-cultural groups properly speaking, are the people of oral culture' (1991: 63)[1]. The question arises as to when and how the term tribe began to be used in India. I have been trying hard to find a generic term for the tribe in Indian languages, in ancient Indian literature and mythologies but I have discovered none. At this stage, I am more concerned with the usage of the term tribe in India and therefore it has to start with the establishment of the colonial rule in India.

The present knowledge about the tribes in India began to appear in the notes prepared by stray European travelers, missionaries, colonial administrators, planters and later official surveys were conducted on them by the colonial administrators. A bit of digression is necessary at this stage to understand the attitude of the Europeans towards the native populations. After the new world was discovered by the Europeans, they ran through the entire Americas and various islands in Atlantic Ocean, devastating the indigenous populations of those areas. They killed, maimed and displaced the indigenous populations from those habitats. Besides many other things, they started plantation in those areas in an unprecedented scale. Plantation economy could not have been successful without cheap labor. That changed the demography of those regions because labor was brought from outside in massive scale. That anxiety to harness labour resulted in introducing slavery in a big way in the so called

modern civilized world. A large number of people from Africa were made slaves and they were sold to the planters and commercial agriculturists in the Americas and the various islands in the Atlantic Ocean. When the British entered India and were trying to consolidate their position in the country they were carrying with them the European attitude towards the native populations. In the post enlightenment era, the west took it for granted that it had 'arrived' and the early man was savage and had been 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short' (Hobbes 1973: 64-65). For Hegel, savage was lazy. Karl Marx, the great thinker had no idea about the forest dwelling populations. He was completely possessed by the linear evolutionary thoughts. Morgan provided a lot of material for 'progressive' thinkers and philosophers who had classified human progress in terms of savagery, barbarism and civilization on flimsy and speculative data. Beteille writes that successors of Morgan and Durkheim chose their examples from Australia, Pacific islands and North America to illustrate the stages of evolution where there was clear disjunction between native populations and the civilization that was appearing (1986: 298). In fact if I may add it was imposed on the natives. However, such speculative classification became the basis for discourse for generations of scholars all over the western world and those who studied under their system and guidance. Nilsson writes, 'the savage has few other than material wants, and then he endeavors to satisfy for the moment .... He thinks and acts for the day which is not the day which is coming' (1868: IXIV-IXV). Such an attitude has continued to dominate the discourse on people considered as tribes.

Echo of the Similar Attitude

James Wilkinson Breeks wrote a book, 'An account of the

Primitive Tribes and Monument of the Nilgiris'. This book was edited by his wife and posthumously published by Allen and Co. on behalf of the India Museum, London 1873. Breeks was in Madras civil service and compiled the information contained in this book while he was Commissioner of the Nilgiris (spelt as Nilagiris). In preface his wife writes that originally it was designed to print twelve or fifteen copies for the Madras Government but after his death the publication in the extended form was done on the orders of the Madras Government. In other words, originally, the book was meant only for the administrators. We do not know what the qualifications of Breeks were but the text clearly indicates his keen interest in Anthropology and Archeology, and in capturing details of people and places. His wife further writes that they have done their best in checking and in rechecking the details which however was not easy owing to incoherent statements of the half-savage people utterly unused to describing their own habits and practices and often very suspicious of interrogations (1873: iii). There is nothing surprising in this statement because W.H.R. Rivers who came much later to the Nilgiris was a trained anthropologist and wanted to test his genealogical method, wrote that the Toda had no aesthetic sense and they made their houses at beautiful spots not because of their beauty but for functional reasons. This he wrote about the people who love music, wrap their bodies with beautiful shawls embroidered by Toda women, construct their dwellings in intricate manner and systematically maintain their habitats. They compose songs for all occasions (Misra 2007: 152). The Toda are one of those people who have a complex social organization and world view which have attracted the attention of the scholars the world over and yet to call them tribe meaning primitive shows extreme bias. This is extremely surprising as it comes from people who laid foundation of anthropology and trained

generations of scholars in the discipline. Returning back to Breeks, he writes about the Irula who are one of the major tribal populations in Tamilnadu and have a long history, 'at all events, there is no reason to suppose that they were ever anything but a jungle race, and it is needless to say that they have no tradition of their own' (1873: 71). This observation is surprising as it comes after he has briefly discussed their religious beliefs and social practices. The bias and smugness of the commissioner are apparent is further illustrated when he writes 'it was with great difficulty, I could get male and female names out of the Irulas whom I brought to my tent, as the most intelligent that could be found. It was not that they had any objection to give information, but simply that their limited range of experience had not acquainted them with names enough. After at least an hour's reflection during which they were evidently taxing their memories to the utmost, they could only enumerate eight women's names' (ibid: footnote at page 71). Breeks did not realize that being taken to the commissioner's tent escorted by armed guards must have been a dreadful experience for the forest dwelling Irula and being questioned about their women folk by a set of officers who were operating through multiple interpreters must have required some wits on the part of the Irula to give so little information to the powerful strangers. There is another way to look into this issue: as to how the knowledge is formed and recalled among certain groups of people, particularly foragers. For such people, knowledge does not hang independently of all other things. It is gained through experience and relating to the objects around them. Bird-David (1999: S67-91, 2004: 406-21, Bird-David and Naveh 2008: 55-73, Naveh & Nurit Bird-David 2014: 74-92) and David Naveh (see 2007) have done some seminal work on how the knowledge is generated, developed and retained among the forest dwelling populations. They have shown

that in the case of forest dwelling Nayaka, a Scheduled Tribe in southern region, the authoritative way of knowing environment is by establishing relationship. According to Naveh, Nayaka 'perceive and relate with people, forest animals, forest trees, forefathers deities and hills, within the framework of relational epistemology' (ibid: 249). However, my purpose here was to highlight the attitude of the then scholars trained within the framework of European colonial ideology towards the indigenous populations. They took it for granted that such people were basically simple minded, their capacities of comprehension were limited; they had short range concept of time and had no capability of abstract thinking. The symbols they created, stories they wove, carvings or paintings they made appeared to be of no consequence to such scholars. It is not that the attempts to classify people in neat categories on the basis of a few traits have died out, it continues to dominate the discourse even at present times, in spite of the fact that researchers have overwhelmingly indicated otherwise. The echo of what Nilsson wrote in 1868 is reflected in such categorization as immediate and delayed return economic systems (Woodburn 1980: 95-117). What is amazing is that this categorization has been hugely and affirmatively cited in anthropological literature, giving an impression as if the modern scholars at last have found a critical difference between food gatherers and hunters (here after FGH) and non FGH, overlooking their own observations and immense data that have been collected on the so called tribal populations from different parts of this world. For instance, Woodburn himself writes, 'I do not believe that a hunting and gathering way of life can be instantly created by any set of individuals who choose to start to live by hunting and gathering. The development of the complex knowledge, skills and social relationships necessary to exploit any habitat efficiently by hunting and gathering,

while maintaining adequate nutrition and relative stability of population numbers and density can be achieved over a time-span of many generations' (1980: 96). In other words, what he is saying is that the FGH like any other human beings are thinking beings. They cannot survive in the hostile environment in which they have been pushed into and 'encapsulated' without developing appropriate knowledge of the environment, the necessary skills, appropriate technology and ability to connect different variables and above all keeping an eye on the future supply lines. The latter aspect is extremely important both for their own survival and conservation of the environment they live in. Woodburn writes 'all contemporary hunters and gatherers are highly skilled and selective users of their environment: choices are constantly being made about which animals to hunt and which vegetables to gather. These choices have an effect on the future availability of the resources.....Hunters and gatherers may control their future food supplies by culling game animal selectively, by operating restrictions on hunting which have the effect of providing a close season, by using vegetable sources with discretion and replanting portions of root so that the plants regenerate, by extracting only part of the honey from wild bees' nests so that the sites are not deserted and many other similar techniques of conservation which suggest that the distinction between hunting and gathering as a system of unplanned extraction, and cultivation as system of planned production is not valid. Some hunting and gathering techniques –the making of stockades, pit traps, weirs, dams etc., - may even involve more substantial planned capital investment that is usual in simple system of agriculture not involving irrigation' (ibid: 101). I have deliberately quoted this long passage because not only it is profound based on accurate observation but it also contradicts the categories that he has developed. He makes a distinction between two types

of economic systems namely those in which the return for labour is delayed and those in which it is, in general, immediate. This categorization raises several issues. How much immediate is immediate and delayed is delayed. Among FGH certain activities give immediate results some others not so immediately. Then the knowledge to gather and hunt is developed over a period of time and also the skills that are required for successful gathering and hunting. There are certain things they may like to consume immediately; there are others which they may store. The Jarawa, the classical food gatherer and hunter from Andaman & Nicobar Islands, store honey in very well designed wooden buckets secured with leaves. The Jarawa spend considerable time in fashioning their hunting tools which they carefully maintain (see Sarkar 1990). Categorizing people as immediate return people paints them as if they are ready to devour as soon as they smell food. Such categorization overlooks their ability to think, develop cognitive mapping of the environment they live in and beyond, ability to innovate, efforts they make to circumvent the hurdles and develop concepts based on their experiences. Also overlooked is their sense of adventure, curiosity to explore the region beyond their own habitation, their sense of romance and entertainment. Also overlooked is their sense of beauty and attempt to decorate their self and whatever little they may possess. The Jarawa make beautiful tassels out of barks and wear them with so much pride. They create symbols and attach meanings to them which may be complex as the same symbols may have multiple meanings which make it difficult for the outsiders to interpret them adequately. For instance, the idea of immediate return economic system does not pay attention to the profound investment of time and energy in resources they have collected or hunted but share them with family and others and also conserve them for future use. Sharing of resources, raw or

cooked food between the members of a band is what I call a system of **social storage,** which is much more secure than physical storage and has profound social value. Similarly, conservation of resources not only ensures their supply on sustainable basis[2] but is morally sound and bestows humanistic meaning to resources of nature[3]. The categorization also overlooks deep philosophical thinking behind their simple ways of life. Gardner who spent considerable time in doing fieldwork among the Paliyans writes,' it startled me that Paliyans treat fellow humans so considerably that my year and half with them was unforgettable. They were quieter, more peaceful, more respectful, more egalitarian, and more individualistic than any people I had ever met or read about. Being extreme in all these dimensions, Paliyans were "on the edge" in behavior as in geography. Forty-two years later I have yet to see a society approximating theirs in individualism, not even in the proudly individualistic United States. Portraying Paliyans what makes them sound like those hypothetical, ideal people social philosophers and political theorists love to write about. It also gives the impression that, it would be easy to live and work in their utopia' (2006: 30).

The idea of immediate and delayed return systems if at all is a perspective and if that perspective is extended, who can say that modern economic system has any long term vision. It is just a question of how time span is measured. The way the modern societies are extracting the natural resources of this planet, it does not require much courage to say that there is no vision for tomorrow. The modern societies even if they have some concern for tomorrow, they are helpless on account of the severe competition they have generated and also the way they have promoted consumerism which in turn generates waste which has now the capacity to sink civilizations. Considering the time human beings have been

on this earth they have become **'instant return'** people on this planet.

Isolationist and Interdependent Models

There is a continuing popular perspective which also persists among the scholars that the tribes are isolated people and the more primitive a tribe is, such as FGH, the more isolated it has been. In this respect the debate that was generated by Headland and Reid in 1989 and subsequently Headland and Bailey took up the issue again in 1991 with more data. That discussion is relevant to refer here as it is instructive for understanding the situation of tribes in India.

Headland and Reid (1989: 43-66) in a paper published in Current Anthropology with CA treatment, questioned the widely held assumption that the modern hunters gatherer societies lived until very recently in isolation from food producing societies and states and practiced neither cultivation, pastoralism, nor trade. They show that such foraging groups were heavily dependent upon both trades with food producing populations and part-time cultivators or pastoralists. Based on the studies conducted on food gathering and hunting societies they showed that symbiosis and desultory food production observed among them were neither recent nor anomalous but represent an economy practiced by most hunter gatherers for many hundreds, if not thousands of years (ibid: 43). They state, 'Westerners today commonly think of tribal people in general, and hunter-gatherers in particular as primitive and isolated---incomplete, not yet fully evolved, and outside the mainstream. This view has been supported throughout the century by the writings of explorers, adventurers, missionaries, government agents, journalists and until very recently anthropologists. Tribal peoples and especially nomadic foragers are often described

as "fossilized" remnants of isolated late Paleolithic hunter-gatherers who have just emerged, through recent contact, into 20th century' (ibid: 43). They add that Robert Redfield's classic folk societies idealize tribal systems as isolated which kept the myth of isolation alive in anthropological class rooms. They strongly state that this isolate model is incorrect and the tribal people have typically been in more or less continuous interaction with the neighbouring groups, often including state societies for thousands of years. In support of their arguments they have cited ethno historical, archaeological, linguistic and botanical evidences. They have also been victims of racial and prejudicial statements as well. Such statements coming from the Western Scholars and reviewed by a community of scholars around the world is of seminal interest to the scholars in India on the issue of isolation of tribe. The entire literature on tribes in India during the colonial and post colonial period in India is dominated by the assumptions stated by Headland and Reid and continues to persist even among the sister disciplines like linguistics (see Misra on this issue 2013: 88-89).

The journal of Human Ecology 1991, Vol. 19, No.2 devoted the entire issue of the journal with the lead article by Headland and Bailey that FGH could never have lived in tropical rain forest without direct or indirect access to cultivated food directly opposing the widely held assumption that peoples living today as foragers in tropical forest are remnants of Paleolithic populations, that they have been subsisting in their forest habitats for millennia. The main contention of Bailey and Headland (1991) was that the costs of gathering food through plant resources were high. According to them the edible plants were dispersed increasing the investment of time and energy in procuring them. Seeds, fruits and tubers entail digging, pounding, scraping, soaking, cooking or other forms

of processing which raise the investment of time and energy. Carbohydrates and energy food available through animals have been limiting factors. Thus they raised the question could pure human foragers live in rain forest without access to at least some cultivated foods? They further narrowed down their hypothesis whether rain forest eco-system had enough carbohydrates plant foods especially wild tubes to provide adequate nutritional needs of human foragers. The answer they got was in negative. They argued that either they created patches of vegetation growth which yielded much higher biomass of plant, or traded off some proportion of their resources for cultivated food. Fox called them 'professional primitives' (1969) and Hayden referred them as 'commercial hunters and gatherers' (1981). The contention of Bailey and Headland was that FGH had been able to subsist in tropical forest by virtue of their contact with shifting cultivators and/or new habitats were created. The authors point out, 'while tropical forests are highly productive environment, they do not supply the cornucopia of easily accessible food that many may have imagined' (1991: 121). In fact Headland had observed, 'symbiotic relationships found today throughout the world between tropical forest hunter gatherers and food producers are therefore not a recent phenomena' (1987: 486).

Endicott and Peter reviewing the hypothesis of Headland and Bailey with reference to Batek of Malaysia where they had done intensive field investigations reached to the conclusion that Batek could live independently of agriculture with difficulty but was not impossible. They agree that it is not easy to live by foraging alone in tropical rain forest as was generally assumed. They observed that the foragers do opportunistic foraging. They are even eager to experiment and try new ways to improve their lives. And one of the opportunities they are quick to grasp is the opportunity for

trade for agriculture produce. This is advantageous to them because it means less number of hours of work, obtains them more calories, and also saves food in the forest. Apart from food they could trade for other goods like cloth, iron tools etc., and for such foods the taste of which they begin to like, for instance rice (1991: 151-185).

Bahuchet et al (1991: 213-244) based on their study of Congo basin Pygmies, state that they were hunting and gathering in rain forest eco-system which was different from that of the farmers. They argue the forager-farmer symbiosis was of choice rather than necessity, as they claim densities of wild yams in the rain forest habitat of the forager was high but was increasingly neglected because in course of time, the emic view, gave higher prestige to the cultivated variety of yam as compared to those obtained in the wild, which led to symbiotic relationship between foragers and farmers[4]. Apart from food the foragers desired to have iron tools, pottery, salt and palm oil. Of all these items iron tools were of paramount importance.

Stearman l (1991: 245-60) based on their study of Yugui in Bolivian Amazon say that till recently they were true foragers without taking recourse to cultivated foods. However, they argue that micro-variability even within a region owing to tree-falls, river changing course, micro climatic variations, soil conditions etc., are the intervening factors that limit the success of human foragers in tropical forest. For the Yugui, the sustainability of their subsistence system depended on fine grained knowledge of their environment, freedom of movement over a large territory in order to access resources within it and the availability of keystone resources to carry them through periods of scarcity. Therefore, this debate lead Stearman et al to conclude 'many of the requirements and limitations inherent to a foraging existence in a tropical rain

forest, the fragility of the ecosystem that supports it and the implication for sustainable resource there by people largely dependent on the products of the rainforest' (1991: 257). In other words, what she is suggesting is that significant variation in tropical forests worldwide as well as at regional scale have to be taken into account in assessing their contact with outsiders.

Although the debate that whether FGH could have lived in tropical rain forest without direct or indirect access to cultivated food does not decisively support either way, a broad picture emerges and certain issues get highlighted. Every environment has its own peculiarities. However, humans tend to adapt to specific environments. But such adaptations are dynamic, micro adjustments have to be continuously made or else it may lead to shifting of habitats by the foragers. Moreover, most of the tropical forests have been altered from the pre-agricultural form by the millennia by shifting horticulture and the introduction of exotic plants. Prior to systematic domestication and cultivation of plants, human beings altered the distribution of cultivation of plants. Therefore, any distinction between pure foraging and agriculture is false. For non-crop plant manipulation practices have influenced the individual plants and plant communities by affecting species distribution and population parameters for millennia (Bailey and Headland 1991: 260). The authors came to the conclusion that humans have always been resource managers to some extent and therefore it would be more appropriate to conceptualize a continuous form from foraging to purposeful forest clearing and crop cultivation.

Since it is difficult to find foragers living independently of cultivated foods does not mean that humans never lived in rain forest area without access to domesticated plants and animals. But a considerable number of ethnographies have

been stating that until just a few years ago, the people they have studied were pure foragers, living in isolation and having no access, or interest in neighbouring cultivators and traders is not true. However, it is true[5] that in the process of evolution, domestication of animals and plants came later and therefore it is conceivable that at some stage foraging survived independently. But the concept of continuum from foraging to food production allows understanding the relationships between the two. It allows us to conceptualize that evolution of cultivation and domestication of animals from food gathering and hunting was a continuous and long drawn process and even when cultivation and domestication got stabilized, the former did not get eclipsed, and each did not become independent of the other. In India forest remained an important source of resources as well as reservoir for gaining spiritual nourishment. This discussion successfully exposes the hollowness of the concept of isolation. In order to further examine this proposition we take up the language situation in India as it is an important trait in identity formation.

Identity and Language Situation

While discussing the question of identity, it has been stated, 'language provides the single most important ethnic bond towards group identity for it is a cue of unmistakable dependency' (Mahapatra 1999: 61). It is therefore important to have some idea about the language situation among the tribes in India who have maintained their identities.

A notable feature of the Indian society has been that the communities, small, medium or large and belonging to different economic levels and ethnicity have their identities. To demarcate these identities precisely is a complicated matter, as often the boundaries are fuzzy. The Anthropological Survey of India wrestled with this issue in their People of

India project and found that there were 4635 communities in India (Singh 1992: 41). However, the number of communities arrived by them is disputable. There are other estimates based on other criterions. Let this discussion not detain us here. Let us accept that there are a large number of communities which identify itself so and are identified by others as such. Several questions arise, like, how so many communities have come about? How did they maintain their identity? and where do the Scheduled Tribes stand in this complex scenario?

The earlier discussion tried to answer these questions. Here we shall be concerned with the identity formation, its maintenance and the role language plays in this regard. The identities are maintained under certain socio-economic, political and cultural context in which there are continuous inter-community interactions of various sort of which adversarial relationship and power dynamics play a crucial role. Annamalai has made a comprehensive statement in this regard underlying the importance of language in identity formation. He writes,' Language is a vehicle of culture that codifies and transmits to the succeeding generations of the linguistic community's worldview and the way of life of its members. It defines the speakers' network of kinship and their kin roles, which provide the sense of security. The community inherits its cultural heritage through its language and this connects with its past. It gets its cultural identity from its language, whether it has a political use for it or not. The cultural value of the language is a crucial factor in its maintenance irrespective of how powerless the language is' (2008: 233). Also the identities of the communities do not remain static. They do respond to socio-economic and political forces. In India the situation becomes complex and anthropologically more interesting on account of the complex *jati* system. A large number of the communities identify

itself as *jatis* and are identified so by others or may even be contested. Since *jati* system is hierarchical there is a continuous jostling among the *jatis* to maintain their status or to get a higher status or block the path of mobility of the other *jatis*. Historically, this is also a fact that those who were outside the *jati* system at one time got into it. Singh writes, 'many of the so called backward and isolated communities moved up in the social ladder and acquired political power and founded the states like the Gonds, Bhils, Nagavansis, Kacharis, Ahoms etc. As ethnographers discovered, many castes rose from tribal matrices. However, there were also many relatively isolated communities who sank into the social morass, and were exploited. Such communities are subsumed by the constitutional categories of the Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes and other educationally and specially backward classes' (1997:38). Gardner who has done intensive research on foragers in south India suggests that tribes may be considered as 'caste of the forest' (1978: 295) which according to him may provide some relief from the dissonance which arises on account of their entry into the system as aliens. Gardner's suggestion is based on the recognition of the fact that for millennia the so called tribes have been interacting with the larger society and providing them with the forest goods, so very essential to them. However, here my intention is to draw attention to a significant feature to understand the complex social structure of India and that is communities identifying itself as a particular *jati* do not merge into it. They retain their identities may even further reinforce its boundaries. They may acquire a new name or prefix or suffix some word to their name, adopt symbols of those who are considered higher in the *jati* structure, adopt some taboos[6] and they may as well as reconstruct their origin myth interpolating in it as to how on account of some incident in the mythical past they had fallen from their higher status[7]. This is one of the ways

as to how the numbers of *jatis* have been ever increasing and also keeps the system dynamic and in vibrant mode. This also explains the immense diversity in the system, which allows these communities to retain their culture and language or modify them by adopting new practices.

Languages of the Scheduled Tribes

Census of India 2011 has identified 705 groups as Scheduled Tribes, who form 8.6 per cent of the total population. Since language is considered as single most identity marker, it can be safely assumed that these groups maintain the identity of their speech in some form. What does that mean in the complex context of India? Before I get into it let me clarify that I am deliberately using language situation among the Scheduled Tribes instead of 'tribal language'. For 'tribal language' is a misnomer. The word tribe is not precisely defined and therefore the word 'tribal' would mean tribe like which will be *reducto ad absurdum*. Abbi, a renowned linguist has done a comprehensive paper titled 'Tribal languages' (2008). The opening sentence of the article is 'it is extremely difficult task to define tribe or who is a tribal' (ibid: 153). This statement is paradoxically followed up by a whole article on tribal languages. The official term for tribe in India is the Scheduled Tribe which simply means the communities included in the Vth and VIth schedule of the Indian Constitution. The constitution does not give any definition of the term. Thus the question arises as to how they were included in the Schedule? Briefly, it may be stated that the list of the communities recognized as the Scheduled Tribe was a carry over of what was there in the Government of India Act of 1935 with some modifications. Since the adoption of the constitution, the list of the Scheduled Tribes has been amended several times. It is also a fact that a number of communities are

trying to get into this list of Scheduled Tribes. The addition of the communities in the list of the Scheduled Tribe has become highly contentious and a political matter. Mobilizing people on this issue is the agenda of some of the political parties. Currently some states in the country are contemplating that the list of the Scheduled Tribes should be revised. Besides, there are innumerable cases pending in different courts of the country to decide whether the community in question belongs to the Scheduled Tribe category or not.

There is no linguistic definition of tribal languages (Abbi 2008: 153) and 'the tribal languages in India are not special kind of languages which could be linguistically characterized as a homogenous group except as language of a special kind of people who are historically, geographically, politically, socially and culturally differentiated from other people' (Annamalai 1997: 22). Thus, the issue of tribal language is hugely problematic. The first part of Annamalai's statement establishes that the languages spoken by the tribes do not have any special characteristic features in common which can distinguish their languages with the languages spoken by the non-Scheduled Tribes. The second part of his statement that they are special kind of people when analyzed in the context of the first part means that except for the language they speak they are differentiated from other people. Theoretically this position is problematic. The history of the communities that have been listed as the Scheduled Tribe is complex and varied. Their relationship with the people in their neighborhood is also complex and varied Therefore, any discussion on this issue becomes infructuous for neither the term tribe or tribal languages are definable. In the opinion of Singh, 'the concept of tribes in India is an administrative, jural and political concept which is applied to such sections of the populations as are relatively isolated'. (1997: 37). This issue will be discussed

again when I take up the matter 'who is tribe' but I have already discussed that the idea of isolation is not supported by facts. It may be noted that Annamalai's position has been saved by Abbi's statement that the languages spoken by the scheduled communities are considered as 'tribal languages' (2008: 153). Dealing with this problem this way raises another issue because some communities have been added to the list of the Scheduled Tribes which means that thus far members of such communities were speaking 'non-tribal languages' and after their inclusion in the scheduled category they began to speak 'tribal languages'. Historically, a large number of people who were considered outside the framework of the *jati* system, in course of time became part of the jati system, and some even claimed *Kshatriya* status and so on (Singh quoted above) would mean that they were speaking 'tribal languages' at one time and later they began to speak 'non-tribal languages'. But the modern trend is just the reverse, that is, the so called non-scheduled communities want to claim a Scheduled Tribe status. Some of them have been successful in getting the scheduled tribe status, which means that they were once speaking non-tribal languages and after their successful conversion they began to speak a tribal language. This is an absurd situation and therefore let us leave it at that and appreciate the unambiguous statement by linguists that languages spoken by the tribes of India are not special kind of languages. This enormously helps in having a clear perspective about the people classified as tribe.

A discussion on the features of languages spoken by the people classified as tribe will strengthen our argument in understanding the place of the scheduled tribe in Indian society.

Features

Linguists consider that the languages spoken in India belong to one of the following language families:

- Indo-European
- Dravidian
- Austro-Asiatic
- Sino-Tibetan
- Andamanese

However, in spite of this classification they have also come to the conclusion that India be considered as linguist area (Emeneau 1956, 1974, Pandit 1972, 1979: 171, Subbarao 2012: 42). According to Emeneau linguistic area 'is an area which includes languages belonging to more than one family but showing traits in common which are found not to belong to other members of (at least) one of the families' (1956: 16) This recognition suggests that there are certain features shared across language families which may be on account of contact and mutual borrowings. Pandit writes that Sir George Abraham Grierson, who conducted first linguistic survey of India between 1898 and 1927, recorded 179 languages and 544 dialects. He also noted reciprocal influences from one language family to another which consists of borrowing of lexical items, phonological and syntactic patterns. He also found a large number of words in Sanskrit have come from Dravidian or Munda sources, 'these borrowings suggested the existence of language contact in the earlier stages of linguistic history of India: borrowing in the grammatical systems of the languages have also been noted' (1979: 171). This is a profound statement which he himself further supported by stating that static photographic view misses the fluidity of the languages. He writes,' in such a context the linguistic studies follow the surface responses rather than

taking a clue from the complexity of behavior to explore the underlying network with its correspondence in the economic, political and even technological changes in an organic and functioning society'(ibid: 173). Thus the most distinguishing feature of the Indian linguistic situation is its grass root level bilingualism and multilingualism. This observation is reinforced by Subbarao who states that multilingualism is not an exception but a norm in South Asian subcontinent (2012: 19, Annamalai 2001: 57). The multilingualism implies intense language contact for a long period of time as a result of which characteristic features of one language family may be transferred to another language. Subbarao asserts that 'though the languages of the sub continent belong to four genetically different language families their syntactic features are almost identical' (2012: 42). Thus there is strong linguistic support to the idea of contact between different populations for a long period of time and that is the feature not only in India but of the entire sub continent. Speech variation and existence of a large number of communities are clearly correlated when read along with what Pandit writes that speech variations facilitates social status and Ramunajuam's statement that dialect difference appear to be used as expression of social identity (quoted by Pandit 1979: 173). I may add that when the communities interact there is always some jostling to maximize their status and power, and both are closely interwoven.

This brief review of the language situation indicates that the Scheduled Tribes speak one of the languages of the five language families found in India but it has also been categorically stated that India albeit South Asia is a linguistic area which is well supported by the existence of large scale multilingualism in India. It is significantly higher among the members of the Scheduled Tribes which is very well correlated to the fact that the settlements of the Scheduled

Tribes except in North East India, Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep are surrounded by the members of the non- Scheduled Tribes. Linguists assert that one of the characteristic features of the multilingualism in India is that it is co existential type rather than competing which allows the speakers to assign different domains to different languages (Abbi 2008: 165, Khubchandani 1997: 71-89). Largely the members of the Scheduled Tribes have been able to retain their speech forms and also their identities. This discussion allows us to state categorically that there have been continuous and persistent interactions between those who have been designated as the Scheduled Tribes and the members of larger society.

ENDNOTES

1. Saraswati classified cultures in terms of three principal modes of transmission of knowledge; oral, textual and transcendental. From the evolutionists point of view according to him writing is the hallmark of civilization. Hence the pre-literate tribals are pre-cultural group. He categorically states that writing is another mode of transmission of knowledge and in no way superior to oral.
2. In contrast to this, in spite of the fact that tremendous knowledge has been generated by modern human being on the necessity of conservation of natural resources, their record in this respect is just the opposite both in terms of deed as well as indicated by market oriented ideology, though they have coined phrases like sustainable development.
3. The Jenu Kuruba, a honey gathering community of Karnataka, consider that they are son-in-laws of the honey queen bee and hence cannot be bitten by sister-in-laws. They take extra care not to disturb the queen bee.
4. This is an important point because it is not always that

the functionality or efficiency of 'foreign' goods lead to higher prestige given to them.

5. One of the things which have not drawn the attention of the students of tribal ethnography is the location of towns on the frontier regions of the habitats of the foragers. In my opinion these were trading towns. They bought forest resources from the foragers and in return supplied foragers the things they needed most.
6. Some of the food gathering and hunting communities in southern India have given up eating beef or pork under the influence of the Hindu neighborhood or Muslim contractors (see Gardner 2014: 233, Morris 1982: 71; 84). Gardner has devoted a whole chapter on the kind of pressure the Tamil society puts over the Paliyan, a foraging community to adopt certain practices which they think appropriate (2000: 193-206).
7. For instance one of the pervasive myths about the Soliga in Biligiri Rangan Hills, recounted by the Soliga is that Lord Ranganatha Swamy left his temple abode at the Biligiri Rangan Hills and ventured into the forest for a hunt. In the course of the hunt he grew tired and thirsty. He went to a Soliga hut and asked for water. The Soliga man had gone to the forest. His wife who was in came to the threshold with the water for the Lord. He looked at her and found her naked. Immediately he plucked some leaves from a nearby tree, made a dress out of it and clothed the Soliga woman. Then he drank the water, ate food and spent the night with her. The following morning, he returned to his abode. The women in course of time gave birth to two male children; Kariyya and Billaiyya. The children of Kariyya and Billaiyya are today's Soliga (Rajan 1984: 196). The story directly connects the present day Soliga with the Hindu divinity.



WHO ARE THE PEOPLE CALLED TRIBES IN INDIA

The question, who are the people called 'tribes' in India was intensively perused during the colonial period when people of India for a variety of reasons became a subject matter of the colonial administration, missionaries and scholars. Numerous theories were propounded based on speculation, partial evidences from history, literary sources, folklore, physical features and linguistic correlations. As the knowledge about India and its people progressed, no theory was found to be good enough to define the people called tribes. Though these speculative theories had one positive effect that it prompted detailed studies on the so called tribes of India. In modern India the tribes are the most studied people. These studies have shown that the people who have been called as tribes are found in all regions of India. They differ from one another in physical features, religion, language, social organization, occupational specialization, belief-patterns, and population sizes. There are tribes who claim to be Hindus, Christians, Buddhists, Muslims and others who identify themselves with their own religions. The problem of the problems has been that there is no common thread unifying all the groups who

have been called as tribes. This is a subject that has been discussed quite at length. But it is clear from earlier discussions on the concept of tribe that it is not possible to define tribe objectively. There is a certain kind of predisposition in calling some people as tribe and that they have to be distinguished from other populations. In India, there is an additional emphasis of making a distinction between tribe and caste. Caste has complex hierarchical social structure. There is persistent jostling among castes to gain a higher rank in the caste structure which is correlated with power equation. It has been noted that some tribes claim a status in caste structure but the distinction between the two at middle and lower levels has not always been clear cut. However, in this regard it is worth quoting in full what Bates and Shah wrote, 'It was not until the middle of nineteenth century that colonial officials began to routinely distinguish between the castes and tribes of India. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, a distinction was being recognized amongst the colonial officials between hill and forest communities and those of the plains. However, as Ajay Skaria argues, it was not until the 1840s that groups such as the Bhils began to be more consistently referred to as "aboriginal, forest or hill tribes" (Skaria 1997). Colonial accounts increasingly narrated a story of invasions and retreat – that the Hindu Aryan invaders had forced the original inhabitants of India, its aboriginal tribes, into hilly and forested parts of the country – and by the 1860s the distinction between caste and tribes had been crystallized' (2014: 2-3). Not without political and administrative reasons colonial administrators and census operators had reduced the Indian population to tribe and caste entities (see Beteille: 2000), as if there were no other groupings or individual thrusts. Most of the time, the designation of some groups in India as castes and others as tribes depended on difference in perception of 19th century British writers. On this issue

Hockings, a specialist on the Nilgiri's ethnography has something very interesting to say, 'Hill tribes and jungle tribes like the Todas and the Kurumbas were portrayed in sympathetic light by the romantic but anthropologically untrained British writers' (2012; 842). Hockings raises the question as to why this was so and himself proceeds to answer by saying 'could it be that the Todas and the Kurumbas shared with the upper-class British residents of the Nilgiri Hills the most favored "sporting" haunts of the latter namely the mountains and forests?' (ibid: 843). Further, he concludes, 'In fact, it is hardly exaggerating to say that there has been a strong tendency in South Asia to claim that social groups living over 1000m. above sea-level are tribes, while groups below that are castes' (ibid: 843). By way of illustration Hockings has shown that 'tribe' and 'caste' terms have been loosely, haphazardly used; sometimes the Badagas of the Nilgiri Hills have been referred to as a 'tribe' or 'hill tribe' and at other times as 'Hindu Race'. Citing numerous examples he concludes 'In fact, the labeling of any Indian community as a tribe or as a caste could often be traced back to the mere stylistic whim of the 19th Century administrator. The two words "tribe" and "caste" have been used so loosely in India that it would seemingly be better for anthropologists to avoid using them altogether' (ibid: 843). This disclosure is in complete contrast to the scholarly debate that was generated to distinguish tribe from caste by scholars particularly such as Bose (1941), Sinha (1962; 1965; 1981), Bailey (1961), Dumont (1962) to name only a few. In spite of so much contrasting views regarding the term tribe in relation to caste, and his own views on the two terms just quoted above, Hockings is not prepared to accept that tribe caste distinction is a non-issue in objective sense (see Misra 1977b) and expresses complete innocence about 'labor of tribes being exploited by capitalist center' (see Hockings 2012: 845). In this statement

'hidden biases of good people' is clearly visible. The enormous writings on the Nilgiris show that once the Nilgiris was discovered by the agents of the East India Company, it became a hunting ground for European missionary activities. Later the colonial power developed it as a health resort for British soldiers, introduced plantation and commercial agriculture for export. In the process they persistently kept on displacing indigenous inhabitants of the area, exploited the resources and labor of the local as well as of neighboring populations for trade and commerce, quickly developed road connectivity and laid down the famous Nilgiri rail lines at the enormous cost and destruction of fauna and flora apart from 'looting' the Indian wealth' (see Tharoor quoted later where he observes 'Indian railways were a big scam The British shareholders made absurd amount of money..'). All such activities marginalized the indigenous populations and also encouraged slavery directly and indirectly. It also became a safe haven for scholars to descend on the Nilgiris and conduct a variety of studies which of course enriched the knowledge of the region and also about the people and society, but in the process they earned their name, fame and prosperity. This statement may sound petty but I want to draw attention to two factors. All this was not being done to promote the interest of the local population or of the region. The demand for such activities were located somewhere else. Just one example will suffice. Think of laying down the railway line from Mettupalayam to Ooty (old name of the modern Udhagamandalam) was no doubt an engineering marvel at that time but the question is, was it done in the interest of the local population or for the development of the region[1]. It is also relevant to state that in the huge writings and even in the scholarly works of the Nilgiris the interests of the subaltern are not visible. It was a kind of blind spot and a bias towards the people identified as primitives. There were hardly any

studies attempting to assess social, economic, political, psychological and ecological impact of the colonial rule in the Nilgiris. However, this needs to be noted and underlined that in spite of the fact that the people who have been called as tribe and have undergone through tremendous vicissitudes and exploitation have been able to retain their identities, howsoever precarious it may have been. This is a feature which is extremely important to understand the inner dynamics of the individual groups, their abilities to negotiate, establish alliances across groups to promote their interests and also show their entrepreneurial skills (See Norstrom 2003).

Earlier Theories

The earlier theories about the tribes were dominated by the consideration of their race as understood by the scholars then. Guha classified the Indian population into seven races, of which according to him Indian tribes predominantly belonged to Proto-Australoid group, followed by Mongoloid in North East India and Negrito in Western Coast and Andaman Islands. He believed that the Negrito was the oldest of all, and Proto-Australoid came later (1935). Verrier Elwin in his well known pamphlet entitled "The Aboriginals" published by Oxford University Press (1943) classified the Indian tribes in four types based on culture contact namely primitive tribes who inhabited remote hills and forest, practiced food gathering, hunting and shifting cultivation, second type also inhabited remote areas but had begun to change. The third type was most numerous and who under the influence of external contact had began to lose their hold on their culture, religion and social organization. It was this class who according to him were 'in a sad and almost desperate plight' (ibid: 11). This according to him

was owing to rapid opening-up of communication. What he writes further, quoting Dr. Hutton to begin with is extremely important keeping in view what is going on with respect to tribes in modern India and therefore it is worth reproducing it '"attempt to develop minerals", says Dr. Hutton, "forests or land for intensive cultivation can be made at the expense of the tribe whose isolation is thus invaded; tribal customs which regulate the ownership, usufruct or transfer of land are formally superseded by a code in the application of which the tribe is deprived of its property, generally in the name of law, either by alienation to foreigner or by transferring the trusteeship of a tribal chief into absolute ownership of a kind quite foreign to the custom of a tribe.....The criminal law of a civilized community is often at variance with what is felt to be just and proper by tribal customs. The complicated system of administration of justice has tended to impair the natural truthfulness and honesty of the people and social solidarity of the tribes and has weakened the authority of the social heads of and the respect they formerly commanded"' (Elwin 1943: 11-12). In this brief statement, Elwin quoting Hutton, highlights the impact of intervention in the life of the tribal people which meant snatching their rights and downgrading their customs in the name of the economic development. After quoting Hutton, Elwin quotes observation of another writer on Naga which was equally devastating. He wrote, '"All Nagas assert that since their country was taken over illness has increased. Not only specific diseases such as venereal disease and tuberculosis, been introduced but epidemics spread more quickly. The opening of the cart road to Manipur has led to an increase in prostitution. Education of the type which is given has been on the whole evil rather than good. Foreign dress is spreading and the custom is bad in every way..... To substitute spoiled and poor quality Western Clothes or a caricature of them for the picturesque Naga dress is an

aesthetic crime. Foreign houses are a blot on the landscape and are expensive and stuffy". This is equally true of other parts of India' (ibid: 12). Writing about the Baiga who Elwin says lived in forests, according to him had retained the vigour their life but those who had come in contact with outsiders a miserable life. He writes, 'the souls of the people are soiled and grimy with the dust of passing motor-buses. The village has ceased to be a living community it is now an aggregate of isolated units. The long houses round a common square so typical of Baiga as of Hill Maria culture, have disappeared and the people separated into scattered, suspicious and often litigious families. Tribal life and tradition have begun to appear slightly ludicrous even to the tribesmen themselves' (1943: 13). I shall certainly refer to these observations later, for the present let me get along with the typology of Elwin. His fourth category consisted of the old aristocracy of the country, dating very far back indeed. They were represented by Bhil, Naga chieftains etc. These people according to him retained the old tribal name and their clan and totem rules and observe elementary tribal religion, though they generally adopt the full Hindu faith and live in modern and even in European style (1943: 10).

There are several other observations about the tribes and their antiquity, but the observations of Elwin are of different genre because he lived and worked among several tribes and produced first rate ethnographic accounts on them, and lastly he was the advisor to the Government of India on North-East Frontier Agencies, and was the main author of the comprehensive report brought out by the Scheduled Caste and the Scheduled Tribe Commission in 1961. Above all he was extremely sympathetic to them. Moreover these observations are of the period before Indian independence. I will return to Elwin later. But for the present let me focus on the issue, who are the tribes in India.

There is no doubt that the early man lived in India but since no fossils have been found, the story of their lineage has not been adequately woven. However, numerous stone tool industry sites have been discovered in different parts of the country which fully support the existence of the early man in India. Anthropological Survey of India conducted a detailed analysis of the human skeleton remains from Harappa (Gupta et al 1962). Subsequent researches have shown that the Harappan civilization was widespread in north-western India. The recent discovery of two mounds at Rakhigarhi in Haryana has staked its claim to be the biggest Harappan civilization site out of an estimated 2000 sites in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan (Subramanian and Krishnan June 28, 2013; Subramanian and Krishnan June 13, 2014). The growth and development of the Harappan civilization can be divided into three phases; early Harappan (3000-2600 BC), mature Harappan (2600-1900 BC) and late Harappan (1900-1500 BC). The cornucopia of Harappan artifacts found during the field excavations include seals in square, rectangular and circular shapes; bangles, fish hooks and arrow heads made of bronze; potter's kilns', the remains of drainage system; and terracotta figurines of a mother goddess, males, animals, including humped bulls, and goats and sheep. There is evidence for town planning in early Harappan level. Discovery of a needle suggested that some kind of stitched cloth was used. In addition, there is a rare painting of a person wearing a dhoti and a stitched upper garment. One of the trenches had the remains of a beautifully made mud brick granary. The granary's floor was made of rammed earth and plastered with mud. Traces of lime and decomposed grass were found daubed on the lower portion of the granary (ibid: 2014: 84-98). Excavation in Khirasara village in Western Kutch, reveal a major 'industrial hub'. It was located on a trade route from other parts of Gujarat to Sind in Pakistan

which is about 100 km away. One of the experts is of the opinion that 'the Harappans who lived here were basically traders, manufacturing industrial goods for export to distant lands and to other Harappan sites in the vicinity and farther away' (ibid: 2013: 18). These are important discoveries that enlarge the antiquity of Indian civilization both in time and space and naturally pose the question as to who were the authors of the urbanized civilization. Development of urban centers obviously indicate that sufficient surplus was being generated in the hinterlands and also there was mechanism of appropriating it for urban centers to function. In other words, there must have been administrative, trade, social, and cultural network between urban centers and its hinterland. Our focus however is where do we place the people who have been called as tribe in this narrative? Since there are no references to any communities, nothing substantial can be stated. But perhaps a limited point in the form of a question can be made that when the Indian history has been stretched so far back in time and space, how was it possible that certain populations, particularly those who lived in the forests, the stable store house of immense resources, could have remained isolated? This issue will recur in this discussion because isolation of 'primitive' communities has been repeatedly stated in identifying tribe by the scholars and laity in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial periods. And most significantly the notion prevails that some 'primitive' groups have remained frozen in time since their evolution as human beings. This notion needs to be proved rather than taken for granted. And if it is true it then an explanation is warranted for their lack of progress.

Harappan Physical Type

The analysis of Gupta et al (1962) of the Harappan sk[illegible]ton

remains shows that the Harappan population of Mohenjo-Daro has similarities with the present day long headed population of Sind so far as cephalic index is concerned. The Lothal skulls are on average round headed. This is remarkably close to the cephalic index of the present day inhabitants of Gujarat. 'In other words the implication is that the population in the widespread region of India has remained more or less stable since Harappan times to the present day' (ibid: 179). The population of mature Harappan culture appears to have two strains one was long headed, tall in stature, rugged and sturdily-built, having pronounced eye-brow ridges, receding forehead, broad nose with depressed root and the other was gracile, comparatively shorter, finer and weaker (ibid: 177). These findings certainly indicate continuity and antiquity of the Indian population (Sen 1967: 8). But Sen also pointed out that those who were interested in reconstructing the history of India, its racial and linguistic profile were obsessed with the idea of foreign invasion which was strongly objected by Keith who said that the scholars 'never attempted to ascertain how far India has bred her own races. But one would venture opinion that 85% blood in India is native to the soil' (1931: 1002). Sen, makes an important observation in saying that in order to have a reasonable idea of the racial history of India, it is essential to find out the extent of variability and then locate valid explanations for those variabilities. In order to move in that direction Anthropological Survey of India initiated extensive anthropometric Surveys in the country and later Bio-Anthropological Survey[2]. These Surveys show immense variability among the Indian populations owing to a variety of factors. These results certainly put to rest the earlier racial classifications and overwhelming stress on immigration based on partial observations and politically biased observations which are coming under serious scrutiny (see Rajaram and Frawley 2014). As early as 1967 Sen had stated

based on the data available then 'the ABO gene frequencies are not associated with caste hierarchy' (ibid: 6). He further stated that similar conclusions were reached on the basis of dermatoglyphic and middle-phalangeal hair studies. He reiterated that the study of, ABO gene frequencies indicate 'no distinct clustering showing that tribals as a whole cannot be separated as such from the neighbouring non-tribals' (ibid: 7). Linguists also hold the position that tribals in India do not speak any special kind of language (Annamalai 1997: 15-36).

These observations and other extensive studies conducted by the Physical Anthropologists should set aside attempts to trace a separate gene profile of the people who have been called tribe. However, there is a caveat which needs to be taken into account in this discussion. With respect to the food gatherers and hunters in the southern region of India, Gardner is of the opinion 'despite persistence in India of a folk theory that region's forager are runaways who took to forest life in historic times, South India foragers have complex, well rounded diets and they use subsistence tools and techniques well suited to their respective environments. It is not far-fetched to interpret these as a sign of relatively mature long term adaptations in situ (e.g. Gardner 1993: 131-4). In addition, DNA researches offer evidence that they deem statistically "significant" that Jenu KuRumba, KaaTTunaayakkar, KaaDar and 12 other South Indian tribal populations descend from a paternal lineage long separated from that of the surrounding peoples Cordaux et al 2004: 231-2; Cordaux 2004' (2014: 234). Thus the conclusions reached by Sen and Cordaux et al are opposite. It raises the question of which populations and what region one is talking about, for neither the tribe (we have shown how arbitrarily this term has been used) nor caste are homogenous populations and also there have been a lot of movement from one region to the other. Dealing

with the complexity of the issue and antiquity of some of the people who have been called as tribes in India Rakshit in a painstaking study of the tribal population of middle India, states that on the basis of linguistic, ethnographic and some selected biological parameters, middle India can be broadly classified into three groups namely the Munda (speakers of Austro-Asiatic family of language) speaking tribes of middle eastern region, the Gond and allied people (speakers of Dravidian family of languages) in the middle central region and the Bhil and the cognate tribes (speakers of Indo-Aryan family of languages). His research findings are significant to indicate the complexity of the composition of the populations in that region. He finds that apart from these numerically large and culturally dominant groups of tribes there are also three other distinct clusters of tribes in each region. They are Baiga-Bhuiya cluster in the eastern and central region, the Kolam cluster of tribes in Central and Nahal cluster of the people in the Western region. He is of the opinion that the Munda group appear to represent a later wave of migration. Most of the tribes of this group have retained much of their own culture and language. The Gond group, represent a separate wave of migration who changed considerably on account of their contact with Dravidian speaking people. The Bhil group was yet another wave of migration, who were, perhaps once speakers of Austro-Asiatic language (Rakshit 1980: 97-112). In other words, there have been waves of migrations of different groups of population who made social, cultural and linguistic adaptation. It is possible to identify some of these groups on the basis of a few traits but it has to be conceded that the situation has been highly complex and yet groups have been able to retained their separate identities in spite of much acculturation over years.

Peopling of India

Rakshit's attempt to explain the diversity was restricted to middle India and that too only among the tribal population. Gadgil et al (1997) attempted to explain the biological and ethnographic diversity of the entire country based on technological innovations, genetic, language and archeological evidences. Their contention is that Indian subcontinent has been populated by a series of migrations. One may ask why migrations to India? Their answer is that migration were favored because of India's geographical location at the trijunction of the African, northern Eurasian and Oriental realm. It had a varied environment and had a relative stability of biological production. According to them 'it is this biological wealth that has attracted to the subcontinent many streams of people at different times, from different directions; bringing together a great diversity of human genes and human cultures. Whereas in other lands the dominant human cultures have tended to absorb or eliminate others, in India the tendency has been to isolate and subjugate the subordinated cultures, thereby augmenting cultural diversity. This tendency to nurture diversity has been favored by the diversity of the country's ecological regimes' (ibid: 2).

Identification of two types of tendencies of dominant cultures, one in which they absorbed or eliminated the weaker cultures practiced in other places whereas in Indian subcontinent, the other tendency to isolate and subjugate the weaker cultures is important but needs explanation. Gadgil et al have given only one clue to explain the differences between the two tendencies. They say that in Indian subcontinent isolation and subjugation was favored owing to ecological diversity of the country. Though it appears to be a weak argument and even if it is accepted, the question arises is as to why the subjugated communities accepted their condition and also isolation. This issue is relevant in understandi-

situation of a large number of tribal communities inhabiting forest and hill areas all over India who have maintained their identities. How did they deal with the dominant cultures? This is an important question unless we concede that they were all uniformly submissive and accepted their condition. This is unacceptable simply because the period and regions involved are huge. It may also be stated that within a region there are significant variations. One reaches to a painful conclusion that the historians have presented the history of the dominant cultures which unfortunately continues to be so even now to a large extent. It is only in the recent past that some historians have tried to rewrite history which has been called as subaltern perspective. The anthropologist on their part could have presented an authentic version of local histories but they were more interested in 'softer' aspects of cultures, for obvious reasons. For example, Elwin had to give a formal undertaking before he was allowed to re-enter India to resume his work among the tribes in Central India that he would not take part in any political activity (Misra 2004: 59). Hence in his enormous writings on the tribes he does not touch any inner vibrations relating to the domination of other people but focuses on softer and romantic side of the life of the tribal communities in spite of the fact that quite a significant part of his life was spent living with them.

Returning to the issue of migration into India, Gadgil et al conclude that major migrations were of (i) Austric language speakers who probably entered from north-east (ii) Dravidian speakers who entered from mid-east with the knowledge of cultivation of crops like wheat and domestication of animals like cattle, sheep, goats (iii) Indo-European speakers in several waves who had the control over horses and iron technology (iv) Sino-Tibetan speakers with knowledge of rice cultivation (ibid 2).

Though this proposition reaffirms to a large extent what Rakshit found in middle India and what the historians found in peopling of India as stated earlier there are scholars who are presenting contrary evidences to suggest that people went out of india rather than other way round. In this respect we need to keep in view the conclusions reached by Gupta et al (1962) by examining human skeletal remains from Harappa where they observed that physical types in Punjab region have remained stable over millennia and also of Sen in stressing variability while discussing racial elements in India (1967).

Historian Perspective

Nihar Ranjan Ray is one of the few historians that discussed the issue of who are the tribes in India in detail. He believed that the so called 'tribals' in India were the indigenous autochthonous people of the land. According to him they had been long settled in different parts of the country in the plains and along river valleys before the Aryan speaking people penetrated India, in Kabul and in Indus valley. At a much later date 'civilized foreigners' in smaller numbers, and also pastoral nomads in much larger numbers, in wave after wave, came to India from steppes of Central Asia, for over a period of more than a millennium and half, beginning with the Sakas and closing with the Turks and Mongols. Finally, rural and semi-agricultural Tibeto-Burmans came, in several waves, from across the north and north-eastern borders of the country. In between, there were influxes from time to time of the Arabs, Iranians and Abyssinians from East Africa and Tibeto-Burman from Arkan regions. In other words, the Indian population according to him was composed of people from different ethnicity, culture, religion, language and economies (Ray 1972: 3-24). This is a widely discussed and

most probable proposition about the peopling of India and explains its diversities but it also raises significant curiosities. One, what were those factors that uninterruptedly continued to attract the populations from different regions towards India which should also include the modern period when the Europeans too made a beeline to India and in the process got themselves into fierce struggle among themselves to establish their hegemony in the region. This attraction of the people towards India could not be for nothing. Obviously, it must have been for abundant natural resources, artifacts produced in the country, skills and knowledge, possibly not too aggressive nature of the native people and the favorable climate of India as indicated by Gadgil et al. In contrast, those who inhabited this land did not show any significant urge to go out in north-western regions of the country supports the argument that either they were well provided in their own environment or technically they were not well equipped to play an aggressive role. North-eastern India and beyond had a different story. In that region it appears that for a very long time there was a two-way traffic. However, the point is that if there were autochthones inhabiting the region before the Aryans and others began to arrive then it is relevant to ask in the context of the vast region of southern India of what was their socio-economic and cultural status? How far can the current findings of the Harappan civilization be correlated with them? It may be relevant at this stage to quote Purnima Sinha's observation on the Jarawa songs. Purnima Sinha was a physicist but was also interested in music. She had done a book on Indian Music. The Jarawa are hunters and gatherers found in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. She studied the recorded Jarawa songs and observed ' I had with me tape records of contemporary way of Vedic chanting in India both from South and North. The tunes in both regions are same and it is believed that the way of chanting Vedic

hymns has continued more or less unchanged from ancient to contemporary age. I was amazed by the striking similarity between the melodic pattern of Jarwa songs and Vedic chant using the same set of notes' (2005:114). Following this observation, she has given analysis of the the Vedic chants and the Jarawa songs. This paper is significant in the context of the debate about who were the autochtones in India and opposition to the Aryan invasion theory.

Returning to the observation of Ray, he averred that the Aryans settled down in the Indus and upper Ganga-Yamuna valley as agriculturists. They began to produce, a large variety of cereals, fruits etc., and developed a variety of crafts. They developed their language, social and religious system. About the beginning of the Christian era, they were able to build into the socio-religious system, an economic structure, managed and controlled on hereditary principles of group formation which came to be known as caste system. He wrote, 'there is linguistic and archeological evidence to suggest that Pre-Aryan indigenous *janas* were settled originally on the plains and river valleys of the land' (1972: 11). All of these people were not in the same stage of development. Some of them were in food-gathering stage of economy not knowing the use of metal and practiced shifting cultivation and were on the threshold of food-producing economy. Ray speculated that as Indo-Aryan speaking people's hunger for land increased, the so called indigenous people were pushed into inaccessible regions of forest and hills and large mountains slopes which according to records were identified as *atavika rajyas, mahakantras* or great forest regions and *pratyantra desas* or frontier region, on the fringes of agriculturally settled, organized and more developed areas. Ray wrote 'the process went on for centuries and millennia, in a very slow and steady but very relentless manner until very recent times'

In other words, the present habitats of the indigenous people are not their original habitat. **If so what were their original habitats and from where did they come?** Ray provided the rationale for the dominance of the Indo-Aryan speaking people which was owing to their superior technology, socio-political and economic organization. Their demand for more land kept on escalating. He wrote 'The relentless nature and character of their land hunger can be seen clearly from an analysis of the land grants of ancient and medieval India. These documents also make it clear that there was an insistent and ever increasing demand to bring more and more land under cultivation, especially in the unsettled, hitherto relatively non-agricultural areas, pushing the pre-food producing and low level food producing communities farther and farther' (ibid: 12). This process has been continuing ever since[3]. The Indo-Aryan techno-economies and polity got spread all over the country. But the *janas* like Andhra, Cheras, Dravidas etc., inhabiting the region South of Vindhyas resisted the spread of Sanskritic culture and Sanskrit language but could not according to Ray resist 'neither the political ideas and institutions nor the Hindu-Brahmanical socio-religious systems nor the socio-economic organization of which *jati* was the pivot' (ibid: 12). Ray is of the opinion that the largest number of 'foreigners' who entered India for about 1500 years were Central Asian nomadic and pastoral nomadic population. If they continued to stay back for a couple of generations they tended to adopt the language, religion and cultures of the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples and of Brahmanical Hinduism. To support his arguments he cites the examples of the Sakas, the Kushans, the Abhiras, Jats, Gujars, the Huns and other people who were referred to as *janas* in the epics, the puranas, in Buddhist and Jain literature and in the land grants and other historical documents. Ray believed that the Islamized Turks, Afghans, Iranian and the

Mongols, did maintain their identity but could not escape the social implication of falling into the *jati* production system. Similar process was at work in North East India which was dominated by Tibeto-Burman speaking populations. This process of integration and assimilation of the people who came from outside into Hinduism continued. In the process the Hindu order incorporated many myths and legends, words, images and symbols, gods and goddesses, items of food, dress and drinks etc. Ray distinguished *janas* of foreign origins and *janas* of indigenous origin who did not belong to the Indo-Aryan speaking stock and were not part of the *jati* system.

He is of the opinion that *janas* who were defeated in war and taken prisoners, were made economically and socially subservient and were reduced as slaves, laborers and servants. Eventually they were incorporated into the Hindu social organization and were given the lowest status in the hierarchical order of the *jati* system. The *janas* who lived in the periphery of the Indo-Aryan people could maintain their socio-religion, economic and cultural identity but were dominated by them. Ray believed that non-*jati janas* were slowly and eventually merged into the *jati*-complex of the Hindu society, acquiring a low status in the hierarchical social order. Ray is of the opinion that there was yet another category of *janas* who had been for centuries living far away from the mainstream, in the relatively isolated and inaccessible and less fertile and less agriculturally productive regions of forests, hills and mountains. Since they were living in most inaccessible areas they did not feel the pressure, until recent times of the more powerful, social, economic and political forces. There were the *janas* that to-day lie all along the eastern, north-eastern frontiers and along the central and western Himalayas. Many of the *janas* inhabiting this region,

had not been referred to in history except for the people like the Nagas, the Khasas, the Kiratas, the Kinnars, the Kullutas, the Bhotas and a few others referred to in Puranic literature. Ray states that medieval Assamese, Bengali, Maithli and Hindi literature also give a few names of the *janas*.

In central India, the belt is constituted by the Vindhyas ranges stretching from the borders of Rajasthan, Chota Nagpur to Odisha hills. The slopes and valleys of these ranges were inhabited for centuries by some of the oldest *janas* known in the history and culture of India. The names of *janas* such as the Nishada, the Savaras, the Kollas, and the Bhillas occur in the epics of Ramayana, Mahabharata and Purana literature. According to Ray they belong to Proto-Australoid origin, some of whom spoke languages of Dravidian affiliation.

Besides these two geographical regions there were *janas* in the Southern belt. But they had been socially and culturally, politically and economically in contact with more powerful communities belonging to the *jati* complex. Then there were the *janas* in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands in the Bay of Bengal.

These *janas* had their own indigenous knowledge and crafts and productive system. They had been having varying degree of contacts and communicated with people of the *jati* social organization. The important point is that on the whole they were able to maintain their identity, though there had been occasional disturbances. Since these disturbances were occasional, they did not seriously or permanently affect the usual, normal tenor of their social, political and economic life. Ray is of the opinion that there are historical evidences of kings, princes, military and other adventurers including merchants who made occasional penetration in the deep non-*jati jana* areas of Chota Nagpur, Odisha, Chhatisgarh, and Madhya Pradesh. Buddhist and Hindu missionaries

and religious leaders also from time to time got into these areas, but such contacts were not sustained, continuous and extensive and therefore could not bring about any significant changes. Ray thought that Islamic rulers did not show much interest in the distant, relatively inaccessible region inhabited by the *janas*. This situation radically changed after the British appeared on the stage of Indian history.

Though this narrative sketches a broad picture of the peopling of India based on some archeological and historical records, its obsession with the foreign origin of Indian population is unmistakable which is being seriously challenged with new evidences. This narrative is particularly relevant for a discourse on tribe as Ray makes a distinction between *jati* and *jana* and tries to focus on as to who were the *janas* and how slowly for centuries they had been incorporated into larger system. I propose to discuss this issue separately. Ray also highlights the continuous incursion of the superior techno-economic system and polity into the forest areas. No wonder that forest occupy 'a smaller fraction of the world today, than they have done for some millennia and people living in them form an even smaller and even falling proportion of the global population' (Guha 1999: 1).

A recent report prepared by the University of Maryland shows that the world lost 2.3 million sq.km of forest between 2000 and 2012. The Washington Land World Research Institute reports that 30% of the global forest cover has been cleared and another 20 per cent has been degraded, fragmented and only 15 per cent is intact (Deccan Herald March 21, 2014). The situation is alarming and certainly, raises respect for those who have been called 'immediate return people' as it is they who have conserved forest for centuries. Ironically, those who have been called as 'delayed return people' are devouring forest and other natural resources at a frightening ra[illegible]is

not only the forest but the people who have been subsisting on forest for long time are certainly threatened[4].

The proposition of Ray regarding peopling of India and emergence of the identity of tribes in India, can be at best taken as working hypothesis. What is required to be done is to work out objective and critical histories of each region inhabited by the tribes. This is a subject which has been perennially overlooked. The economic, political and communication role of these communities in relation to the dominant communities of the region, have not been adequately evaluated, and discussed, and so also their role in sustainable living, conservation of resources maintaining the local ecologies and cultural diversities.

Tribes in Ancient Indian Literature

How were the people whom to-day we know as tribe referred to in ancient Indian literature? It is indeed a problematic question as the ancient Indian literature covers a vast period and is also a storehouse of information on a vast number of communities, many of which do not exist anymore. The names of many communities have changed owing to a variety of reasons and there have been numerous migrations from one region to another. Besides, it is quite tempting to correlate the people mentioned in ancient literature with the people found with similar names in medieval and modern India. This becomes even more tempting in case of the people who live in forest and hill areas because of the assumption that they have remained isolated and frozen in time. This assumption raises doubts in the long history of India as such people are found living not far away from agriculturists, artisans, traders and those who pursued learning and excellence. For example, not far away from Madurai, an ancient and holy city of Tamil Nadu which had trade links

with the Roman Empire is also where Paliyan who till recently subsisted largely on wild foods (Gardner 2014: 242). The Jenu Kuruba and the Soliga the food gathering and hunting tribes of Karnataka live not far away from Mysore city (see Misra 1969; Morab 1977). Many more examples can be cited from other parts of the country (see Pasayat 1995: 251-65). Their presence so close to the important centers of Indian civilization allow us to raise several questions such as what role did they play in the growth and functioning of the civilization. Roy Burman made a series of significant observations on tribe-civilization relationship by indicating that areas of tribal concentration in India are either on the international borders or on the borders of the major linguistic-cultural formation in the country. He and others have also observed that the tribes played bridge or buffer role between powerful neighbors (Roy Burman 1969, 1970). Pasayat states that tribal people have been in continuous contact with caste Hindus (ibid: 251). In support of his statement he has cited Sinha (1958), Behura and Mohanty (1980), Mahapatra (1974), and also has shown that a tribal deity was adopted into the Hindu society of the region. Misra in his latest paper entitled 'Place of food gathering and hunting peoples in Indian society and their transformation' (2014) writes that all over the country, often popular pilgrimage centers are located deep inside the forests or on the top of the hills. In south there is a famous hill called Sabarimala in Kerala which attracts very large number of pilgrims from all over South India. In Mysore district of Karnataka a temple located at Biligiri Rangan hills inside the forest is also very popular. In this temple the Soliga of that area have a role in the ritual performance of the temple (Morab 1977). Gardner (1982: 472-79) has observed that Palliyan play a role of guide and provider of water to the thirsty pilgrims visiting temples located in the forest. He has also stated that they are allowed entry into sanctum sanctorum of the temple.

Gardner points out that Paliyans transcend caste barriers as they are considered at the level of ascetics. For the Palliyan or Soliga being allowed to participate in the Hindu temple rituals is not an isolated incident. Such intersections have been reported from other places in Southern India and as well as from other parts of India. Bose had brought this to our attention in his study of Juangs of Orissa. He had written, ' even though Brahmin settlements had been established by royal grants at the pilgrim centers here, at Simhanath and other places the right of worship is even now vested in the hands of non Aryan forest tribes' (Bose 1975: 31). The holiest mountain for the Irula, a tribe in Tamil Nadu is Rangaswamy peak which has a Hindu deity and has an Irula pujari (Hrdickova 2012: 444; Misra 2014: 284). It is also not without reason that often trading towns are located on the edges of the forest for example Sargur in Heggadadevanakote Taluk of the district of Mysore or Sultan Battery in Wynaad district of Kerala. Many more such examples may be cited. These towns facilitated trade in forest goods. From subaltern perspective another important question can be raised and that is, was it not in the interest of the dominant cultures that these tribes remained entrapped in the forest, hill tops etc? Is that the reason that the natural development of the tribes was blocked? The growth of civilization in the Indian context is complicated in which centers, sub-centers and hinterland were not only tied with multiple network but also derived nourishment from each other. In this regard the position taken by Sinha in his paper of 1958 and later in his paper of 1973, where he partially revised his position, is instructive. In his 1958 paper he took the position that tribal cultures were a strand in formation and in understanding of the Indian civilization. In 1973 he observed that the tribals have responded to various kinds of impulses emanating from growth and development of the civilization implying a two-way communication. He recognized the

movement of tribes to peasantry, to state formation, towards caste organization and so on. The civilization maintained a stranglehold on forest based communities the tendency in the words of Gadgil et al was 'to isolate and subjugate' (1997: 2). It is not for nothing that the underbelly of Indian civilization has been maintaining food gathering and hunting, as a way of life for many groups which in some cases even now continues. After all, the rulers in history have maintained their rule with combination of 'force' and 'consent' with a heavy stress on the former.

Singh has done a series of articles on the issue of tribes in ancient Indian literature. In 'Ecology, identity and culture', he tries to show that identity of the communities was established through territory and ecology citing examples from different sources. He wrote, 'This "space" that is India is greatly enriched, as mentioned in ancient and medieval texts, by its expanse of mountains, rivers, forests, pasture lands, deserts and seacoasts. All these specificities of topography bore highly evocative names which suggest the symbiotic relation between them and the people. Lexicographic works from Mahabharata to Varna Ratnakar, a Mithila classic of the sixteenth century (K.S.Singh 1997) and also Mughal text, like Ain-i-Akbari contain descriptions of these features of ecology' (2011: 2). This is an important lead given by Singh to work out the regional histories and also the significance people attached to the ecological factors.

Locating the names of the people known as tribes in modern India in ancient Indian literature is hazardous. There have been some sporadic attempts on the basis of which no definite conclusions can be arrived at. Singh takes the position 'a careful analysis of the long list of *janas* in the epics, and the Buddhist, Puranic and secular literature of early and medieval times and the context in which they are mentioned, makes it

very clear that hardly any distinction was made, until very late in history, between what we know today as "tribes" and such communities of people who were known as Gandharas, Kambojas, Kasis and Kosalas, Angas and Magadhas, Kurus and Panchalas, for instance. At any rate, in this whole body of historical data at our disposal, there is hardly anything to suggest **that these communities of people belonged to two different social and ethnic categories'** (2011:19 emphasis mine). Singh categorically reiterates that 'there is hardly any evidence to show that in the collective consciousness of India there is any difference between the two sets of *janas'* (ibid: 19). According to Ray, quoted by Singh there were three types of *janas,* first were those of foreign origin who were absorbed into Brahmanical religion and the socio-economic production system. The second were those *janas* who were of indigenous origin who were absorbed into the Hindu-Brahmanical social organization after being defeated in war and made socially subservient as slaves, laborers and servants 'they were given the lowest position'. The third were the *janas* who were in the periphery regions of Aryans.

A careful study of the observations made by Ray would suggest that Brahmanical religion and socio-economic production system existed prior to the influx of the people from outside into India.

Singh, based on the study of People of India (POI) project conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India tries to clear the web of '*jana* and *jati*' identified as tribe and caste. He writes, 'the POI project based on an ethnographic survey of all people of India reinforced the view that India is a land of many communities. These communities called *janas* in the ancient text are the original formations, the basic units of our civilization, rooted in ecology, in the resource endowments of various regions, and in their social and cultural organization,

their languages and dialects. Even though they have evolved from the simple to the complex social organization or complex systems of production as Niharranjan Ray puts it, they share many traits of a community, such as endogamy, resource-based occupations, notions of purity and pollution, order of hierarchy in incipient or developed forms. From this point of view the tribes are at one end of the pole and the present-day scenario at the other end, but both are people, the *jana*, the inhabitants of the land. The tribes are the relatively isolated *janas* distant and backward. The distinction made by Ray between *jana* and jati is not supported by the ancient texts (the Mahabharata, as will be described later treats *janas* as neither tribe nor caste, but as people) which generally treat them interchangeably and later mentions *jatis* more than *janas* which in fact fades away' (Singh 2011: 21).

In Mahabharata, according to Singh a large number of communities have been mentioned. These communities derive their names based on their habitat, ecology etc. Some of the communities have been identified on the basis of the special abilities and also features. Singh further observes that between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, many tribal chiefs identified themselves with the heroes of Mahabharata – a process of sanskritization.

A careful reading of the passage quoted from Singh makes it clear that in the ancient texts of India there was no distinction between *jana* and *jati*, all were *jana* (people) but one section of the *jana* were isolated, and backward. He also avers that in the collective consciousness of the people of India there was no difference between the two sets of *janas*. The two conclusions appear to lead to contradictory directions, one clearly identifies a process of marginalization and the other is negation of it.

There have been other attempts too to trace tribes in

ancient Indian literature notable among them have been of Chaudhuri (1951), Shafer (1954) and Mishra (1987). These sources establish that there was a tradition of community identity based on some characteristic feature of the community or the region they inhabited. Mishra documents 363 different groups from the stories of Mahabharata whom he calls as tribes. Those names are derived from physical features of the regions, some prominent physical features of the people or if they wore a particular kind of hairstyle etc. The people who have been identified as tribes were conquered or brought gifts on the coronation of the king or became part of the geography of the region. These people participated in war efforts or resisting the march of armies or became part of some treaty. Some tribes were listed in the course of *digvijaya*. According to Mishra the process of incorporation in Aryan folds continued[5]. He writes, 'Tribal elements were still extant in the society of the transitional period, represented by the narrative of the Epic. As a measure to subdue their threats, we find in the theoretical discussions on the matters of policy (*rajadharma*) an over emphasis on the establishment of a central authority capable of effective control. Now, the king, his position being elevated from the tribal leadership, was regarded as a symbol of national unity and usherer of a new era in society which is expressed in statements like "King is the maker of his age"' (1987: 385).

According to Mishra, in Mahabharata Aryan meant whatever was noble and superior. *Mleccha* was the term used for those who were outside the fold of Aryan dominations. But caste boundaries were not rigid. Often efficiency and assistance to the king in war effort was given precedence over birth, and eventually such groups were given caste status. Kosambi notes 'the fusion of tribal element into caste is always a great basic fact of Indian history' (1956: 25). Mishra

goes further and states that tribes were assimilated into castes which were clans in older tribal organization and became qualified for similar rank in the caste system and many tribal priests acquired the status of first caste in the course of absorption.

Since our interest has been to derive some material on forest and forest dwelling communities from ancient Indian literature, Mahabharata was the obvious choice as it is considered to be most informative work. Norman Brown in his foreword of Karve's work on Mahabharata writes that it has grown over many centuries incorporating material of many variations drawn from many sources 'possible a little history, certainly much myth, legend, fairy tale, fable, anecdotes, religious and philosophical writings, legal material, even anthropological items and miscellaneous data of other kinds. It is a genuine folk epic, basic in character, which has been enlarged, to a kind of Indian – at least Hindu – cultural encyclopedia' (1974:1).

The narrative of Karve clearly indicates that there was a constant attempt on the part of the royalty of Mahabharata to expand their rule in the forest area for which sometimes they inflicted severe punishment on forest dwellers, on other occasions they sought their cooperation and services, for which they adopted a variety of strategies, for example while in exile Pandavas' mother encouraged Bhima to love and marry a Rakshasa woman. Later the son born of the union fought with Pandavas against Kauravas. The story of burning of Khandava forest related by Karve (1974) has been interpreted by Gadgil and Guha (1995: 18-50) as a strategy for expansion of agricultural-pastoral activities in the territories held by food gatherers and hunters. Hitherto forest, with its animal populations, served as a resource base for the food gatherers and hunters 'its destruction, rather than its conservation,

would now have assumed priority. Supernatural powers, would now no longer reside in specific trees, groves or ponds, but would be the more abstract forces of nature; earth, fire, wind, water and sky, whose assistance would be invoked in the task of subordinating hunter-gatherers and colonizing their resource base' (ibid: 78). According to them fire to clear the forest, and water to nourish crops in the fields would be most valuable of their forces; therefore Agni and Varuna were the major deities. The main ritual was fire worship, the Yagna, a ritual in which huge quantities of wood and animal fat were consumed[6] (ibid: 79). The story of the burning of Khandava forest is discussed later in Chapter 4. The forest was set on fire; Krishna and Arjuna patrolled its parameters, driving back all the animals including Nagas, who according to Gadgil and Guha could be a tribe of food-gatherers who venerated snakes. Kosambi tells us that the importance of this territory at the dawn of history must lie in its early transition from food-gathering to plough agriculture (1964: 34).

Karve tells us that on the ashes of the Khandava forest Mayasabha, a splendid structure came up in the new capital built by the Pandavas. But Karve asks a pertinent question, 'why were all its birds' animals and Nagas destroyed? How could Arjuna, who prided himself on his name Bibhatsu – "one who does not do anything repulsive", indulge in this cruel hunt'? (Karve 1974: 58). Karve argues that there are two possible explanations of burning of the forest, one that it was a natural catastrophe and the other that it was deliberately engineered by Krishna and Arjuna. Undermining the first possibility she affirms the second and also that burning of the forest 'was considered a brave and praiseworthy feat' and they were persistent about it because the forest would get regenerated on account of rains.

She then proceeds to explain that pastoral Aryan kept

large herds of cattle and practiced agriculture with the help of animal-drawn ploughs which required burning and cutting down of forest[7]. She recounts that the Vedas and the Mahabharata describe stretches of forests. Buddhist literature too describes several famous forests. Historical inscriptions also mention great forests. The kingdom described in Mahabharata were small, surrounded by a few score villages beyond which were the forests, used for hunting, grazing cattle and collecting various produces of the forest. Karve says that some of the big forests in Western region had names; the forests in the Eastern region were small. Now all these forests have vanished 'from Indus to Bay of Bengal is one vast ploughed land' (ibid: 59). This process has continued unabated to the present times. However, going back to Mahabharata's story, Karve states that Kshatriya life as presented in Mahabharata had a certain definite pattern and strict code of conduct. Each known house had its small territory which passed on from father and son, they were strictly patrilineal. Wars were fought, tributes were demanded, and women were abducted but no Kshatriya house was deprived of its kingdom. An enemy, if he fought and was killed his son was put on throne. A Kshatriya never killed women and children.

The need for expansion of the kingdom perhaps explains the burning of forest but Karve asks a pertinent question as to why it was burnt so mercilessly. She proceeds to expand the scope of her question by stating that the forest was not merely a forest with birds and animals in it. Takshaka, the king of the Nagas lived there. According to her Nagas represented the ruling class of the forest dwellers. The Mahabharata has given names of the various Naga rajas belonging to different regions. Her reading of the Mahabharata suggests 'from the Western Himalayas up to the middle reaches of the Ganga and to the south of the Narmada, the country was shared

by the Aryans and the Nagas[8]. The Nagas apparently lived along the rivers in the forests, a pattern of habitation which would be preferred by those who had yet not taken to food producing or domestication of animals in a large scale while the Aryans preferred a more open country' (ibid: 60), for obvious reasons. In burning Khandava forest, Krishna and Arjuna 'had a more audacious plan to possess an entire forest a part of which happened to be the kingdom of the Takshakas' (ibid: 60). Burning Khandava forest did not go counter to the Kshatriya code, as it was applicable to Aryan Kshatriya and not to others. She observes 'at least part of the forest was Takshaka's domain and obviously the Pandavas wanted to possess it to distribute to their subjects. The land was usurped after a massacre which is praised as a valorous deed. This was because the victims were not Kshatriyas or their Aryan subjects. All the high sounding morality of the Kshatriya code was limited to their own group. Here again Krishna and Arjuna played the familiar role of conquering settler' (ibid: 60). The rivalry between Pandavas and Takshakas continued for several generations but it is actually the story of the colonization of the land by the Aryans, or it would be more appropriate to say that the conflict was between those who had taken to agriculture and domestication of animals against food gatherers and hunters.

Karve states besides the four Varnas mentioned in the Mahabharata by name, there was another group called Suta. Sutas were the servants of Brahmins and Kshatriyas. They were endogamous. One of the most important people mentioned in the Mahabharata are the Nagas, though often their daughters married into Kshatriya houses but they were 'definitely not Kshatriya'. Another type of people mentioned again and again had the same names as some birds and beasts, which were sometimes described as such. 'They were

jungle people (apparently) with clan names of the birds and beasts. These forest people still remain more or less on the same terms with the peasant society around them as they used to in Mahabharata times' (ibid: 89).

This is indeed a remarkable observation by Karve which needs to be noted as well as commented as it is relevant to the main thesis of this research. It is a fact of history that technologically dominant people have been systematically eliminating the indigenous people, in greater part of the world particularly in Europe, Australia, New Zealand, in most of North America and in various islands of Atlantic and Pacific Ocean basins. In Africa, the situation has been partial. But in India the story has been complex. Although, agricultural production and domestication of animals were adopted in the early history of India it continued to coexist with food gathering, hunting and elementary cultivation. Later even when agricultural activities got more systematized, artifacts, art, literature, architecture and specialized knowledge in various fields developed, along with network of trade and commerce, and specialized centers of excellence and their network in large scale emerged. The indigenous communities, call them by any name continued to exist with simple technologies, simpler economies, and ways of life; and along with that existed an appropriate understanding of nature and life where overwhelming emphasis has been on conservation. Existence of a food gathering community in the neighborhood of the famous temple town of Madurai is no exception as stated earlier. Karve tells us that there was definite code of conduct in hunting in the forest. Mating animals, females carrying their young and their very young animals could not be killed. Karve says 'Pandu was supposed to have been cursed with impotence because while hunting he had killed a mating animal. The Ramayana opens with the

curse of Valmiki on a hunter who had killed a pair of mating birds. Nor could the animals be killed in such measure that they would be extinct'. (ibid: 60). To reaffirm such deeply embedded values she narrates a story of Mahabharata, 'During their exile the Pandavas were living in a forest. To feed their retinue they hunted and killed many animals every day. One night a stag appeared to Dharmaraja in a dream and said, "King, you are killing so many of us that we are on the way to extinction. Go into some other forest: give us some respite. When we have multiplied enough you may come back". The next day Dharmaraja went to another forest with his brothers' (ibid: 60). These are profound stories which highlight everlasting and universal values and may provide some clues in understanding the complex Indian civilization which is full of contradictions such as food gathering ways of life continue to coexist in modern India which boasts of sending Mangalyaan- a spacecraft to Mars recently.

It should be possible now to highlight some of the salient points of the above narrative. Clubbing the entire pre-colonial period together may not be correct for it is very vast in space and time as well as there had been so many significant changes in the history of India. But the clubbing may be accepted since our interest is focused on the issue of tribes on whom not much historical information is available, and colonial occupation of the country is a watershed in the history of tribes in India. It is clear from the above discussion that in the entire pre-colonial period there was no tribe and non-tribe distinction as its is understood now. However, in the process of peopling of India distinction based on power, physical features, habitats of different populations such as those who occupied hills, forests, valleys, sea coasts, river banks etc., and cultural practices began to appear and in course of time became sharper. Also the distinction began

to appear more fundamental between those who subsisted on natural produce and those who produced food. For the latter reclaiming land for cultivation and grazing cattle became a matter of material importance but at the same time their dependence on the natural resources was no less significant. Ensuring their regular supply was also a matter of concern and therefore there are instances of fierce struggle and subjugation of the people who inhabited the forest and natural habitats and on other occasions also seeking their cooperation. Apart from these, safeguarding the frontier regions, establishing communications across borders for trade and commerce were also becoming important concerns for materially developing communities for which different strategies and policies were being adopted to establish relationships with those who inhabited the interior areas. It should also be stated that there were instances where those who inhabited the interior areas themselves became the food producers and rulers too. The ancient literature is replete with such stories. The whole debate about *jana and jati* is indicative of such transition. However, the situation of the people now known as the Scheduled Tribes in India dramatically changed as the British gradually gained control over India. These communities discovered that many of their rights they had hitherto enjoyed were extinguished. The British on their part discovered that the people of this subcontinent lived mainly in numerous self-regulating villages, inhabited by *jatis* pursuing their hereditary occupations. The British noted that these *jatis* were arranged in a birth-ascribed hierarchical system. The British also noted that certain human groups remained outside the Brahman *varna jati* hierarchy. They lived in hills and forests, or in the plains skirting the forests. They mostly subsisted on food gathering, hunting and slash-and-burn form of cultivation. They assumed that they were different and primitive, and labeled them as 'tribes' in the

analogy of similar groups in aboriginal America, Africa and Oceania. Soon after acquiring power, in order to have a fair idea of the people and terrain under their control the British started conducting Census, Cadastral and Geological surveys and several such activities in order to enhance their understanding of the people and its terrain and also to assess its resources. It should not be overlooked that the British did not capture India through a single conquest. India's takeover was gradual and happened in stages. It was spread over a hundred years during which time they did use force as well as manufactured consent of at least some sections of the populations in which missionaries played a substantial but generally subdued role particularly in tribal areas. While conducting Census enumeration they were not very sure as to how to define whom they intended to call as tribes but there was a strong assumption that they were different. The Census heading for such people kept on changing from one Census to another like Forest tribes, Animists, Tribal Animist, Hill and Forest Tribes, Primitive Tribes, Tribes etc. Ghurye has given a detailed description of the dilemma and confusion of the Census officers in classification of the people identified as tribe and comes to the conclusion that 'the so called Aborigines who form the bulk of the Scheduled Tribes and have been designated in the Censuses as Animists are best described as Backward Hindus' (1959: 20). Whatever may have been the confusion regarding the terminology, the British brought all the regions of India under the administration of the provinces of British India. Wherever the princely states existed the British resident kept a watch on the tribal situation or even acted as the agent of the tribal regions. While communication network during the British rule was dramatically changing the overall scenario, some of their policies such as certain pockets inhabited by the tribes were declared as 'excluded areas' by an act which in fact increased their isolation. But such areas were

not excluded from the activities of the missionaries. By the same act they extinguished the traditional rights of the forest dwelling population on the natural resources. Singh writes, 'as elsewhere, it followed the dual policy of strengthening the feudal crust of the tribal societies, formed by the rajas, chiefs and zamindars and simultaneously created condition in which their economy and political system were undermined by the rampaging market forces' (1985: 248). They opened up the tribal areas by laying road and rail links, and also by establishing administrative centers and established numerous rest houses, dak bungalows for visiting administrative officers. They also released vast stretches of forest for plantation and for cultivation of exotic species for commercial exploitation. While they were systematically opening up the areas inhabited by the tribes - they also appeared to be concerned to protect the tribal areas. The impact of dual policy has not been critically examined in the anthropological literature. The principle that underlay the passage of the Scheduled District Act 1874 was that the normal laws should not automatically apply to the tribal areas. The Act of 1874 shaped the concept of the backward areas in the Government of India Act of 1919. The principle behind this act came in for sharp debate in 1930 when the nationalist saw in this proposition the continuation of the imperial policy of divide and rule, the other school contended that the aborigines formed a distinct element in India and should be placed in charge of the British government. However, in spite of the controversy some of the tribal areas were either partly or fully excluded in the government of India Act of 1935. This was the British policy of isolation and status quo for the tribes which of course had clear vested interests. The proclaimed objective of this policy was to protect the tribes from being exploited by contractors, middlemen, money lenders etc. But on the other the Colonist did not hesitate to displace the tribes from their traditional

habitats if it was required for some projects and also use their labour in local and distant plantations. In any case the process of crystallizing the term tribe was set in motion.

After India became independent the need to provide adequate safeguards for the tribe was extensively discussed in the Constituent Assembly. The consensus was for more radical provisions for safeguarding the interest of the tribes which came in the form of Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Indian Constitution and thus was born the category of the Scheduled Tribes in India. In the year 1950, 212 communities were identified as the Scheduled Tribes. That list has been modified from time to time and there are now 705 groups identified as the Scheduled Tribes. Many more communities are vying to be identified as the Scheduled Tribes among them 75 groups have been identified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (High level Committee on Status of Tribal in India, 2014). There was indeed a radical transformation of the policy of the government. First and foremost was to end isolationist and status-quoits' approach of the erstwhile government and bring them into the mainstream, by specific plans for their development, welfare and integration. What was achieved on the ground as a result of those measures is an entirely different matter. Here, I may add that though mainstream is an oft quoted term, a discussion on what it exactly means to the members of the Scheduled Tribes is scrupulously avoided.

In the foregoing, it has been clearly indicated that there was certainly arbitrariness in designating some people as tribe and there was some obsession to distinguish them from the castes. History of India has great antiquity and in peopling of India there has been a great deal of in-migration from outside and internal migrations too which is fully substantiated by physical, social, cultural and linguistic

diversities found all over the country. It is also a fact that those who inhabited the forest areas and also in the adjoining areas were like professional suppliers of forest goods, artisans, traders, customary strangers and in between groups maintaining the frontier zones in variety of ways- bridge and buffer, middlemen, looking after religious places, facilitating 'shikar', capturing and training elephants, etc.

The significant point is that they have been able to retain their identity. Is it as Gadgil et al (1977) have hinted owing to Indian trait of 'isolate and subjugate' as against absorb or eliminate found elsewhere? Either way the situation cannot be understood without taking recourse to the dynamics of power played by the dominant. Unfortunately, most of the history that has been written are from the perspective of the dominant which is decisively true for the colonial period. It is only recently some subaltern views are surfacing. There is a crying need to work out the regional histories with clear perspective, as to how the underdogs adapted to the pressure and yet maintained their identities.

ENDNOTES

1. In fact a detailed study of the laying down of this rail line, and also similar one in Simla and Darjeeling in northern India is very much needed to understand the political and economic dimension that were being pursued by the then Colonial regime and also its impact on the local population particularly the tribals as in laying down the rail lines forests in large scale were destroyed. Shashi Tharoor writes, Indian Railways were 'intended to help the British get around, above all in carrying Indian raw materials to the ports to be shipped to Britain. The movement of people was incidental except when it served colonial interests; no effort was made to ensure

that supply matched demand for mass transport. In fact the Indian Railways were a big scam. British shareholders made absurd amounts of money by investing in the railways, where the government guaranteed extravagant returns on capital paid for by Indian taxes' (NDTV dated 23/9/2014).

2. The results of the Surveys are now available through the publications of the Anthropological Survey of India (Basu and Sreenath 1995, 1996a, 1996b and Ghosh 1988).

3. In modern India, acquiring land for industrial development from *adivasi* and peasants has not only been intensified but has become a burning issue.

4. The population of the Birhor a food-gathering tribe of Bihar has declined in recent years.

5. Mishra says that process continued down to the modern times. He quotes Crooks (Tribes and Castes of the North Western Province) 'local traditions in Oudh and N.W. Province abound in tales of Brahmanas being manufactured from the low caste men when they could not find sufficient number of hereditary Brahmanas to attend sacrifice or feast'.

   'Only a Century and half ago, Lunia, a man of salt maker class was made a Brahman by Raja Bhagrat Roy of Asodhar and this man is the ancestor of Mishra Brahmans of Aijhi..,' (ibid footnote 385).

6. Kosambi writes that Aryan land-clearing by fire for regular agricultural settlement, as distinguished from shifting slash-and-burn cultivation was conceived as a sacrifice to Agni (1964: 34).

7. Kosambi informs that land–clearing on a large scale by fire was ended by Asoka vide fifth pillar edict. This was not merely the influence of Buddhism. In Mahabharata dying Bhishma also forbids the practice as sin except when necessary to save cattle (ibid 1964: 34).

8. About the Mahabharata Nagas, Kosambi writes that they were food gathering aborigines ready to change over. There was no question of a wide-spread Naga population; the name must indicate in a group many thinly scattered, linguistically and perhaps ethnically diverse primitive tribesmen who had a snake totem or snake worship among other totems and worship (1964: 38). Several scholars have made the same opinion regarding the name of the Nagas. Mahabharata Nagas need not be confused with the Nagas of the North-east India.



INDIAN SOCIETY AND ITS ETHOS

Having discussed the tribe as a concept, and those who have been called as the tribes in India on the basis of the limited available physical, archeological, historical, linguistic and literary sources in the previous chapters, I propose, in this chapter to discuss the place of tribes in Indian society and their articulation with the ethos of the Indian society. The term tribe is deeply entrenched into our vocabulary in spite of the fact that there is hardly any clarity about it, except that there is a sort of general agreement that they represent backward segment of the humanity. As against this there are some positive assertions too like that of Saraswati who thinks that primitive tribes represent perfect form. His views are certainly at variance with the commonly held views about tribes but compel us to deeply reflect that if his observations were not right then how do we explain the fact that in spite of all odds some primitive tribes have survived. They live close to nature which is based on the principle of self organizing systems. Is it because they have developed technologies, concepts and values which are in conformity with nature? This is a serious point involving many variables that cannot be settled in a

hurry. It requires introspection and debate about the progress human beings have made since they acquired human form and the direction modern humanity has undertaken in the name of development and progress. We leave this matter here but Saraswati has another view that there is nothing in Indian thought structure, or in the traditional organization of Indian society, which may correspond to western notion of tribe. He asserts that they are people of oral culture (see Chapter 1). There cannot be any disagreement on the issue but from the materialistic point of view, the people who have been called as the Scheduled Tribe in India 'are among the poorest and most marginalized sections of Indian society. Although, numerically only about 8.6 per cent, they disproportionately represent the people living below poverty line, are illiterate and suffer from extremely poor physical health' (Ministry of Tribal Affairs 2014: 25). This is the situation in modern India where after the colonial rule was extinguished there have been formal plans for their development and protection for which huge budgetary provisions have been progressively made. But what was the situation before the country became independent. Indeed that is a long period but there is a significant date line in Indian history defined by the establishment of the colonial rule. It is during the colonial period that the modern category of tribe emerged when they also lost their traditional rights on land, commons and forest. During this period the dominant view that emerged was that the tribe formed a separate category of people as compared to the rest of the people, and also that they have been generally isolated population. It is true that in the pre-colonial period there was no generalized category of tribes. Therefore it is imperative to repeatedly raise the question as to who were the tribes and what was their place in the Indian society and seek their answers from different vantage points. This issue has been discussed in detail in Chapter 2 from biological,

ancient Indian mythological, historical and linguistic points of view. The decisive opinion that emerges is that the people who have been called as tribes have not been consistently isolated. Therefore they have to be seen in the framework of the larger Indian society and its ethos in which they have been ever embedded and have grown together in and out of each other. Let me try to explain on why such a consideration is essential.

Food Gatherers to Food Producers

Food gathering and hunting was the first adaptation human beings made. Food production and domestication of animals evolved out of it. It is logical to assume that there must have been a long period of transition between foragers and food producers. It has been discussed earlier that the two did not live independently of each other. It is very well established that early man lived in India. It has been convincingly established by several archeological studies that it is wrong to view forager as primitive isolates (see Lukacs 1990: 185). Sinha had written, 'it is generally agreed that for several thousands of years *Atabika Janas* (forest people) have been in contact with the encroaching and engulfing plough cultivation based Brahmanical Varna-*Jati* civilization and that numerous hitherto isolated and autonomous groups have been absorbed in the body of the civilization '(1981: 2). Sinha drew our attention to Kroeber's famous Huxley Memorial Lecture 'The Ancient Oikumene, as an historic cultural aggregate' (1952). In this lecture Kroeber had clearly stated, 'Finally the primitives in the area or adjoining it, derive their culture mainly from the civilization characteristics of the Oikumene as a whole through reductive selection. They preserve old elements which their retardation makes them unable or unwilling to accept. Basically, however, these

retarded or primitive cultures in or adjacent to the Oikumene are fully intelligible only in terms of "Oecumenical" civilization. They usually add to what they share some lesser measure of their own proper peculiarities and originations, and they have often developed distinctive style of their own. But in the main these backward cultures, depend and derive from greater ones whose nexus we have been considering' (ibid: 391). This position was more stoutly stated by Moreman '....A Southeast Asian Society's membership in the set called "tribal" can be described, defined and analyzed only in terms of that society's contrast to civilized society which it may fight, serve, mimic or even become.....but which it can never ignore.... In Southeast Asia, the categories "tribal" and "civilized" each implies and defines the other...'(1968: 164). This suggests it would be foolish to discuss regional history in terms of evolution from tribe to state, since tribes exist only in the context of a state system of social relations which includes them; states exist by coming in terms with tribes (as social types). Roy Burman made a series of speculative observations on tribe-civilization relationship as dependent historic structures (see 1969, 1970). Beteille in his introduction of N.K. Bose's book The Structure of the Hindu Society had observed, 'No one who studies even the tiniest segment of the Indian society can afford to forget that India is a country of more than 500 million people with recorded history of nearly three thousand years. This is the broad context within which, anthropological fieldwork in India must be placed' (1975: 2). This he had written to emphasize, along with Bose, Dumont and Pocock, the necessity of bringing together the approaches of ethnography and Indology to understand the Indian society. Reviewing different approaches which have been adopted while discussing food gathering and hunting societies as isolated or integrated, Bird-David a specialist on

food gathering and hunting societies of south India proposed 'internal relationships (between Naikens) and external relationship (between Naikens and others) are both integral to hunter-gatherer social life' (1988: 17).

Reviewing inter-tribal relations in India, I came to the conclusion that tribes cannot be considered as isolated population. Whenever efforts to search for inter-community relations were explored, it showed a regional pattern of structured relations. These patterns show various points of articulation with larger Indian society, particularly the caste system (Misra 1977c: 116-7). This study, in other words suggested that tribes in India need to be considered as a part of the regional social, cultural, political, economic and linguistic set up.

In the long history of India, the country experienced waves after waves of religious and spiritual movements of local, regional and supra regional significance. Many of these movements such as those of Buddhism, Jainism, Bhakti as well as Gandhi's in modern times were universal in their approach trying to spread the message of peace, non-violence and coexistence with people and nature. Besides, there were movements to gain control over land and resources. Maharaja Bhupendra Chandra Sinha, in his autobiographical account has described how a group of people from Kanauj (in modern Uttar Pradesh) travelled all the way to distant north-east India in 13th Century and got a foothold in the area inhabited by the forest dwelling Garos. When they were too troubled by the indigenous Garos they took the help of the kings in Delhi by agreeing to pay tribute to them. Eventually through various acts of intrigue and maneuvering they were able to establish their kingdom there which got disintegrated only after the British entered the area in the 19th Century (1965: 137-155). This does not seem to be an isolated incident considering

the history of widespread migration of different linguistic communities from one region to the other for a variety of reasons including for establishing some territorial rights in the areas which were considered to be 'weakly' or not administered. In this regard the story of the migration of the Badaga, a community of peasants, from the plains of Mysore to the hilly and forested regions of the Nilgiris inhabited by the indigenous populations is illustrative and instructive more so because authentic studies are available particularly owing to the sustained work done by Hockings (see his latest book on the Badaga social history 2013 and for other references on the Nilgiris including his two part Encyclopedia 2012).

Badaga Settlement in Nilgiris

The story of the Badaga who migrated from Mysore region is illustrative in many ways. Between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries they migrated to the Nilgiris plateau in several waves and settled on land 'in part granted to them by a council of men from the indigenous Toda, Kota and Kurumba tribes' (Hockings 1980: 45). Hockings has described in detail their settling down in the different regions of Nilgiri plateau. He writes 'they cleared land, scattered their hamlets across the rolling hills and took to a mixed economy which was augmented by some hunting and swidden cultivation. What they needed but did not themselves produce was either obtained from the neighbouring Todas, Kotas, Kurumbas and Chettis or bought in market near the foothills of the Nilgiris, usually by bartering homegrown millets' (ibid: 239). Hockings has discussed the kind of relationship they established with the indigenous communities. In course of time they prospered. Their population which was only 2207 in 1812 grew rapidly. It was 134,514 in 2001 (Hockings 2013: Appendix 2). It was with the arrival of the British, the scenario

in the Nilgiris changed rapidly owing to the 'introduction of local market, a cash economy and a demand for labour and vegetable. But this was enough to trigger a rise in the fortunes of the community and also to prompt a remarkable increase in the size of the Badaga population (Hockings 1980: 240). Quoting Grigg Hockings writes that each year the area of cultivation and permanent occupation of the land by the Badaga increased and so also their wealth, and extension of plantation (ibid: 241). Commercial cultivation that began in Nilgiri region with the establishment of the colonial rule received a big boost owing to World War 1 which resulted in improvement in road and rail connectivity. The Badaga shifted the emphasis in their farming from millets to potato and tea. Hocking writes 'These new directions in the farm economy were fully in evidence by 1930, at which time most of the Badaga broke off their time honored exchange relationship with the Kotas, Todas and Kurumbas and began to seek the artifacts these tribesmen made in town markets instead' (ibid: 242).

Bhumij Case

I will have occasions to refer back to the development in the Nilgiris when I discuss the tribal situation at the trijunction. Here, my purpose is to indicate the linkages of the tribes with the wider socio-cultural, economic and political processes and also their integration with the ethos of the land. In this respect the detailed studies conducted by Sinha among the Bhumij in Manbhum region is also instructive. He writes, 'The acculturation of the Bhumij, a Hinduised Bengali speaking offshoot of the Munda of Ranchi....however can hardly be described as a case of conjunction between two historically discrete cultural system. It appears to be more like one of interaction between a relatively advanced (peasant)

and a relatively simple economically isolated (primitive or tribal) dimension of a single socio-cultural and historic field. The Bhumij transformation scene appears to represent essentially, a case of development of a tribal society to the level of peasantry through gradual dissolution of ecological barrier of forest-clad hilly lands between them and the so-called Hindu peasantry' (emphasis mine Sinha 1957: 23). This is an extremely important observation which is in conformity with the discussion carried out in Chapter 2, 'Who are the tribes in India'. Sinha has been consistent in this view. His other paper written in the same year but published in 1958 was 'Tribal Cultures of India as a dimension of little tradition in the study of Indian civilization: a preliminary statement' (1958: 504-518) where he takes a radically different view as opposed to the dominant prevailing view that tribal cultures represent a relatively untransformed section of the original primitive culture. He takes the view that tribal cultures provided the raw material that contributed to the development of Indian civilization. I will return to this paper shortly. But let me first trace the kind of relationship the Bhumij had with other populations as described by Sinha. He informs that in not too distant past, the Bhumij and perhaps a few families of the Kharia at the foothills were the only two ethnic groups living in the village. The settlements were ethnically homogenous and there was very little communication with the outside world. There were only footpaths and rough roads. There were few weekly markets in the region but during fair weather the Baniya traders used to visit interior villages inhabited by the Bhumij and other tribes with their pack of bullocks. They sold principally salt and took in exchange paddy, lac and oil seeds. But the situation got considerably altered at the time when Sinha began his study of the Bhumij and the region inhabited by them.

The region was covered by network of rail and road. Bhumij interacted with other ethnic groups, who resided in their villages and at least 'thirty other functional castes at the weekly market of Bamni,' (1957: 24). The Bhumij had traditionally structured stable economic relations with a number of ethnic groups such as with artisan castes who supplied them with various kinds of wares; those who provided services such as hair cutting, washing, midwifery, household and other agricultural service; participation in the traditional land revenue; share cropping and loan of paddy on traditional terms. Besides economic transactions, weekly market used to play a variety of other functions. At the market, the Bhumij came in contact with not only the artisan castes, but also met other farming communities. Quite obviously, the social interaction between those groups was not limited to economic transactions. It was 'in a way the great country club of the region where one meets one's agnates, affines and friends, and exchanges the relatively inexpensive gesture of goodwill by offering country-made cigarettes, *biri* and betel. He contents his eyes by looking at the charms of women and occasionally cuts jokes with a professionally dancing girl or some other women. The market gets gayer when seasonal festivals are nearby' (ibid: 25). The Bhumij had permanent patron-client relationship with a number of artisan and service castes. The scope of their mutual economic inter -dependence was further enlarged owing to the weekly markets. In the field of political and social relations the Bhumij participated in existing feudal order, in panchayat proceedings, in ritual services maintaining the tradition of purity-pollution and associated rank order, establishing ceremonial friendship across ethnic groups, sharing in the services of medicine men and participated in common religious festivals. While the Brahmin priests of low ranking officiated in their marriage and

funeral rites, the Boishtom Guru had to be present as many of ceremonies to conduct an essential element in funeral rites, Boishtom Guru offered religious initiation by whispering the sacred names of Krishna and his spiritual consort Radha into the ears of initiate. These Gurus regularly visited the homes of the Bhumij to sing devotional songs. The Brahmin priest also officiated in the rites of expiation after pollution. Ascetics occasionally visited the village in the course of their wanderings and become the guests of the Bhumij headman. During their stay in the village the people gathered around them and listened to their spiritual discourses which were enlivened by singing of devotional songs. Sinha refers to the occasional visits of professional painter castes to the houses of the Bhumij and some other groups. These roving painter castes displayed the scrolls of the paintings of the deities, and they also painted pictures of the fate of the soul after death and the form they took. Sinha informs us that the same professional painters visited the houses of the Santal with the same scrolls but recited verses in Santali.

The Bhumij had the institution of ceremonial friendship which could be established between the members of the same sex but could be across castes. This way, not only two individuals got tied in ceremonial friendship but their families too in agnatic kin like relationship. Such families observed some rituals together but their friendly relations extended to the sphere of economic cooperation too. It is important to note that 54 Bhumij families in the village studied by Sinha had ceremonial *Phul* friendship with the families of twenty other castes (ibid: 28).

The Bhumij like other Hindu castes were endogamous but following the regional custom they too had concubines of other castes. Sinha writes, 'the number of concubines maintained by a person formerly used to be an index of one's

prestige status: and the Bhumij, representing the landed aristocracy of the region, were a great addict to this custom' (ibid: 29). Observation of annual cycle of festivals in the region and at distant places were the occasions when Bhumij interacted with the members of other castes in socially and culturally accepted manners: Sinha writes, 'social interactions of the Bhumij, however, are decidedly more frequent with the lower Hindu castes than with the upper castes on such occasions' (ibid: 30).

Social contacts in the weekly market and visit to distant festival centers expanded the social horizon of the Bhumij and interactions with the members of many other castes. 'While the primary function of the markets is the circulation of utility goods, one of the primary functions of the festivals is the circulation of artistic products, both material, such as painted and unpainted dolls made of burnt clay and wood, decorated bamboo flutes, etc., and non material, like songs and dances etc.' (ibid: 30).

Sinha has emphasized that through social contacts the Bhumij not only became related to the regional Hindu castes but also to the acceptance of the concept of pollution which is considered to be an important factor in maintaining inter-caste hierarchical relations as well as to the core value of the concept of purity. For example, in the process of interactions they became aware with whom they can accept water and certain food and who would accept such things from them. Eventually Bhumij like members of other castes in the region habitually think in terms of the specific rank in the regional caste hierarchy which gets fully reflected in accepting ritual services on occasions of marriage, funeral rites etc. As compared to the Bhumij, the other three tribes of the region namely Pahira, Kharia and Santal were less Hinduised and had rather restricted contacts with the members of other

castes. They interacted with other castes in economic sphere and they also participated in regional festivals. Like Bhumij they established ceremonial friendship but mainly with the members of the lower castes. The notion of hierarchy and accepted way of behavior between different castes was well established and followed.

The few cases cited above though separated by thousands of miles show some remarkable similarities. These studies indicate that in the long history of India there have been frequent movements of populations from one region to the other often overcoming the long distances, geographical barriers, cultural and linguistic boundaries. Long term studies of Hockings among the Badaga in the Nilgiris and of Sinha among the Bhumij in Manbhum region trace transformation of status of groups through social and cultural interactions with different groups. Of course the situation in the Nilgiris which in the extant literature has been basically considered as a tribal region got significantly altered on account of sudden appearance of an alien European power. The activities generated by them made massive impact on economy, demography, communication and ecology of the region. However, unlike the Badaga, the Europeans remained outside the social and cultural fabric of the region. I should add that the detailed study of the Toda by Walker clearly establishes that the 'record of history, however scant, shows that the Nilgiris were involved, if only on the fringes, in the polity of wider region which included several important centres of South Indian Hindu civilization' (1986: 294). After a detailed examination of the matrix of the Toda society and inter community relationship there, he comes to the conclusion 'they were based on ritual and economic specialization, and the specialized endogamous units were ordered into a hierarchy on the basis of relative ritual purity.

These concepts-specialization, endogamy, hierarchy and relative purity- are, of course those which inform traditional Hindu society throughout the subcontinent, from Kashmir in the far north to Cape Comorin in the extreme south' (ibid: 295).

Returning to the observations of Sinha, it is not only that the Bhumij who are relatively more acculturated but other tribes of the region too contributed to the social and the cultural framework of the region. Sinha carried these thoughts further in his paper referred to earlier 'Tribal cultures of peninsular India as a dimension of little tradition in the study of Indian Civilization: a preliminary statement' (1958). This paper indicates a significant departure from the prevailing dominant view that the tribal cultures were outside the main historical current of the development of Indian civilization, which eventually led to the coinage of the term tribe. It is remarkable and indeed bold that Sinha took the position that tribal cultures were a strand in understanding Indian civilization. Although he conceded that the tribal belt of central and southern India region was huge in terms of area as well as number of people and also had a complex and a long history; the articulation of the tribes with the larger universe of Indian civilization was relatively restricted and interrupted, but 'in not a single case is the community completely shut off from the contact with what we call the great culture community of India' (ibid: 504). These tribal communities everywhere had been in touch with the traditional network of relationship based on 'reciprocity, equality, superordination – subordination, competition and accommodation' (Sinha 1957: 32), in observance of rituals and festivals, in establishing ceremonial friendship besides economic transactions. They supplied forest resources to the larger community which included supply of elephants that acquired an important position in Indian society. The tribes

protected and maintained frontier areas, playing bridge and buffer roles between powerful states. They played the role of interpreters and also looked after sacred Hindu centers located deep inside the forests and atop hills. On the basis of these discoveries, Sinha came to the conclusion that these tribal communities, fall within 'social field' of the Great Tradition of India but he cautioned that to determine whether they fall within the 'ideological field' of the Great Tradition or not needed closer examination. Having laid down the basis of his search he outlined three possible ways of conceptualizing the position of the little tradition of the tribal communities. First was that these cultures had been outside the main historical current of the development of Indian civilization. Second was that tribal cultures could be conceived of as a branch of traditional Indian civilization. Third the tribal cultures provided the raw material that contributed to the development of Indian civilization. The contemporary tribes represented a relatively untransformed section. Their growth was arrested owing to their isolation and a series of historical circumstances. Of these, he kept aside the first two possibilities and opted to examine the third which he felt was most promising and challenging. He was conscious that it was difficult to provide a long range historical documentation to support the third possibility but it can be fruitfully done at synchronic level. He found Redfield's writing favourable in selecting the third option who stated that the growth of indigenous civilization was conversion of self contained[1] tribal people into peasantry and continuous interaction between little and great traditions. Obviously this conversion indeed was a long drawn process. In order to validate the third possibility Sinha began to examine one by one the features of little communities of tribal people and Hindu peasantry in area inhabited by the Bhumij. He took into account habitat, economy, social structure and ideology.

In ideology, he considered the belief in supernatural value system, world view and man to man relationship. Finally he considered the inspirational level of the little community of tribes and of the Hindu peasantry. Based on the analysis of these features he highlighted the common denominators and also the discontinuity between the little communities of tribes and the Hindu peasantry. His overall conclusion was 'within the limitations of our present endeavour, as mentioned above, we may say that we have been able to demonstrate the possibility of orthogenetic development of Indian civilization from a primitive cultural level roughly comparable to cultures of the un-acculturated tribes of Peninsular India. We have pointed vital elements of continuity between tribal cultures and Hindu traditions. We have also been able to isolate some potential elements of transition in the direction of peasant cultures in tendencies towards feudalization, stratification, specialization of roles and so on' (1958: 517 emphases are mine). The other papers that Sinha did in his professional career on tribes in India are so to say were in the womb of this paper which he did as early as 1958. What is remarkable about him is that he kept on pursuing the main theme of this paper namely the orthogenetic development of Indian civilization from a tribal base which is indicated by the numerous examples of continuity in thought and basic ingredients of structure between tribal cultures and Hindu traditions. This he did by widening the scope of research in terms of space, time and ethnicity (Sinha 1978b: 155). This pursuit resulted in much cited papers such as State Formation and Rajput Myth in Tribal Central India (1962), Tribe-caste and Tribe-Peasant continua in Central India (1965), Vaisnava Influence on a Tribal Culture (1966), Tribal Solidarity and Messianic Movements: A Review Article (1968), Co-existence of Multiple Scales and Networks of a Civilization: India (1978a), Space, Time and Ethnicity: Fieldwork Among the

Bhumij of Barabhum (1978b), Social and Ecological Context of Rice Cultivation in India (1985), Introduction in Tribal Politics and State Systems in Pre-colonial Eastern and North-Eastern India (1987), Agriculture Crafts and Weekly Markets of South Manbhum (1961), and Ethnic Group, Villages and Towns of Pargana Barabhum (1966). In all these papers, the running theme has been to demonstrate the continuity between the little communities of tribes and the larger Indian society and how they provide the building links of Indian civilization. Finally, these efforts got culminated in his little but valuable treatise entitled Tribes and Indian Civilization (1981).

Relational Epistemology

Sinha's initial predilection that tribal cultures present raw material of the core dimension of the Indian civilization get further validated by the research work of Bird-David and her student Naveh who have been doing work among the food gathering and hunting groups in southern India (referred to earlier). In a series of papers she has discussed the authoritative way of knowing and learning among the Nayaka, a forest dwelling community which she calls as relational epistemology (1999: 77-79; 2004: 414-418). Now her student David Naveh, has been carrying out the work on the same people around the same locale in order to find out whether relational epistemology is still an authoritative way of knowing among the Nayaka when there have been significant changes in the economic circumstances and in the ecology of the region. Naveh finds that Nayaka perceive and relate with people, forest animals, forest trees, forefathers, deities and hills, within the framework of relational epistemology. They perceive, think and engage with these human and non-human forest dwellers as persons with unique personalities' (2007: 249). Naveh further elaborates this

by stating that the Nayaka 'is attuned to find out how these persons are with them (in relation context like joint living and care taking) rather than finding out these persons' essential characteristics, irrespective of actual relations' (ibid: 249). He makes an extremely important point when he observes that knowing is important but its relevance is in maintaining the relationship which comes through acquiring *budhi* which does not necessarily mean knowledgeable. It transcends the physicality of knowledge, it is wisdom and understanding in the context of the relationship Nayaka establish with their environment. According to Naveh, Nayaka regard forest animals as co-subjects. Often they approach forest animals by speech. They often try to resolve the conflicts with animals by addressing the concerned animal and emphasizing that together they are co-dweller in the forest. He further shows that this way of perceiving and knowing the universe around them undergoes changes when their relationship with these objects undergoes changes as with domesticated animals or with cultivated plants.

Budhi (Buddhi in Sanskrit) as understood by the Nayaka is gained through experience and being together with humans and non-humans which provide them with 'critical' knowledge. For that it is essential that one observes by being with someone who is performing what one wishes to know while someone is doing it and also to do what one wishes to know by oneself which may involve a process of experimentation. Let me quickly point out that such understanding does not remain static. Naveh and Bird-David in their latest paper (2014) have demonstrated 'how persons become things' as the context for the Nayaka has been changing. I may further argue that people like Nayaka have never been living in their isolated world. Norstrom in a brilliant paper has shown through a case study of an

erstwhile food gatherer and hunter, his entrepren
endeavors striking to compete with peasantry the
Norstrrom questions putting such population in stra
jacket predetermined models. He writes 'many Paliyans
very willing to be active in the process of "political learni
whereby they re-evaluate old values and habits in new wa
to achieve new goals in line with their new aspiratio
We can conclude that these kinds of negotiations seem
dominate their interaction with the wider society of to-day
the same way as I feel it does for similar groups all over Sou
India, and therefore "political representation" becomes a ke
issue' (2014: 468). My purpose is to indicate that *buddhi* i
widely used word in Indian languages and has many shade
of meaning but essentially it makes a distinction betwee
information and understanding[2]. Therefore considering the
objects of nature as persons and acquiring buddhi are widely
shared beliefs among the Hindu peasantry which compels
us to consider a certain degree of continuity of thought
pattern between the little traditions of the tribes and peasant
communities. Before I proceed to give some illustration, let
me reiterate that the tribes have been part of the economic,
social, political and ideological processes of the region they
inhabit. But there is a caveat. Underlying the larger processes
is the power dynamics: those who rule and those who are
ruled. The fundamentals of the relationship between the two,
are appropriation of the natural resources required by the
ruling class and drawing on the labour and skills of the ruled.
Though the ruling class may heavily draw on the intellectual
resources of the subjugated population it never acknowledges
them and such knowledge does not remain in that raw form,
it is perpetually systematized and refined, and may feed
them back to the subjugated classes in the new form who may
adopt them in their own medium, dialect and framework in

general. In other words, the interaction between the great traditions of a civilization and little traditions of the general masses never takes place in power vacuum. Need for labour and resources is ever enlarging and therefore the net for appropriation for tangible and intangible resources also keeps on ever widening. Those who are brought into the net have their natural growth arrested which tend to be rationalized in social, political, economic and ideological terms.

Continuity in Thought Pattern

The cases, I present here illustrate a certain degree of continuity in thought pattern between forest dwellers, peasants and middle class Hindu.

1. A few years ago, I had been to Rampura, a village near Mysore along with a group of students of Anthropology. The village is well known for it was studied by Professor M.N. Srinivas, the doyen among social scientists. Before I had gone to the village I had heard a talk given by a famous food scientist as to how much food grain was lost in India on account of outmoded technology and farm practices. That lecture was still fresh in my mind. While making a round of the village we stopped at one of the traditional threshing grounds where grains had been recently threshed and collected. Though threshing operation was completed a few days ago there was still some grain on the ground. Seeing that we began to discuss how wasteful was the traditional technology. An elderly village lady was overhearing us and understood the tenor of our conversation. Though normally rural women folk are reticent and shy, she could not resist but asked us with a deep sense of empathy and simple innocence, 'don't other

creatures like ants, birds, and squirrels also need some food'? This was indeed a profound statement in which environment was seen inclusive and not in a fragmented way. All beings were considered as co-beings besides what she said had its strong inclusive conservationist's perspective.

2. I have heard the following story from my mother several times. My grandfather was a farmer. One day while working in the field he noticed a big cobra with its hood raised to charge him. My grandfather was stunned seeing the enraged cobra. He stood there with folded hands and addressed the cobra in the following words 'Maharaj, you are a Kshatriya, I am a Brahmin. I have not done any harm to you. I was working on my field. I am standing here you can do whatever you like'. Hearing these words cobra stood there for a moment bowed to my grandfather and majestically slithered away. Here cobra was being addressed as a person and sharer of a common space.
3. My next door neighbor in Mysore has a guava tree and has also a kitchen garden which he tends with a lot of care and effort. Often, troops of monkeys invade his kitchen garden and Guava tree in particular for its fruits. He, instead of chasing them begins to recite a Sanskrit sloka which is in praise of monkeys being the soldiers of Lord Ram. According to him when he loudly recites the sloka, the monkeys realize that they are in the compound of another devotee of Ram and therefore he believes that they withdraw without any further damage to his Guava tree or to his kitchen garden.

These stories when read along with numerous village studies conducted all over India establish that some objects

of nature like rocks, trees, animals are treated as persons with unique personalities which demonstrate an undercurrent between tribes and the Hindu peasantry (see Misra 2014: 275-302, also refer to Naveh 2014 cited earlier).

Tribes Embedded in Large Society

Thus there is enough evidence to indicate that the tribes are embedded in the social, cultural, philosophical and linguistic environment of the region in which they exist, besides being a part of the regional economic and political organization. They cannot be considered as exclusive population. They cannot be adequately understood, without referring to the environment in which they exist particularly, the political equation.

Let me elaborate this point. India has a long history and there have been many centers of excellence, specialization and seats of power at all-India, regional and local levels. These centers and their hinterlands were tied together in complex networks. Irrespective of the fact that whether the networks were strong and clearly identified or weak and vague, they made possible a flow of ideas and values back and forth. Numerous deities that are found in the Hindu religion have either links or origin among the tribes and some have been adopted in the Hindu mythology[3]. Both folk and literary knowledge indicate that people have some broad, though perhaps vague, ideas about geography, mountains, hills, rivers, oceans, forests and deserts and they have localized version of the Hindu mythology and histories (see Thapar 2013: 701). As indicated earlier, Mahabharata and other Indian texts make many references to forests and to the people inhabiting them. In Mahabharata, there are references to the exiled Pandavas seeking cooperation from forest dwellers, for their subsistence. And sometimes they had confrontation with them (see Karve 1974). In

Hindu mythology the abodes of Gods and Goddesses are often located on the top of the hills, forests or in rivers and oceans, and are considered sacred. Some animals have been depicted as incarnation of gods and also as their *Vahanas* (vehicles). Such animals are considered sacred and addressed as persons. Hanuman, one of the most powerful gods in the Hindu pantheon is represented as monkey. He along with an army of monkeys helped Lord Ram to locate his wife and win a big battle against Ravana, the king of Lanka. It was not only the monkeys but there were other animals too involved with Rama in search of his wife and also in his battle with Ravana. Vocabularies of ancient tradition of classical dance in India are full of *mudras* (poses) and movements depicting animals, suggesting the choreographers had a close association with the life in the forest.

Complex Political History

The long political history of India entailed drawing and redrawing of political boundaries, which of course necessitated movements of troops through forests, deserts, hills and rivers. Such movements must have led to interactions with local population for direction, guidance, support, food, water and other supplies, including establishing political domination in frontier zones (see Rajan 1984 for specific illustration of power dynamics in border regions inhabited by the forest dwelling population of the Soliga). Such political domination, irrespective of the period it lasted or its strength, did not greatly disturb the structure of the traditional Indian society and its inter-relationships. Before I discuss the structure of the traditional Indian society, I will like to refer to Trautmann who quoted at length the observations of the famous Chinese traveler Megasthenes comparing the structural arrangement at war and peace between ancient

auryans and Greeks, which are extremely important in derstanding the traditional social organization of India. He ites that among the Mauryans', peasantry was completely armed and exempted from 'military service of any kind; mers could often be seen ploughing in perfect security from e clash of armies close at hand. From, the imperial point view the only function of the peasantry was to sow and ap and to render tribute in abundance' (Trautmann 1982: 7). As against demilitarized agrarian population, there was fully professionalized fighting force. The warriors had no ties other than military ones. The Mauryan warrior clan as entirely maintained at king's expense, 'and hence they are ways ready when occasion calls, to take the field, for they rry nothing of their own with them but their own bodies' id: 257). It was others who made their arms, supplied them ith horses, attended on them in camp, groomed their horses, eaned their arms, drove their elephants, prepared and drove eir chariots. There was royal monopoly in maintaining war achine. The artisans worked exclusively for the king on ages. The peasantry though was freed from military service f any kind but kept the treasury topped up (ibid: 257). In rief there was a clear division of labour, a hallmark of the ndian society in general.

utonomy Within

The traditional Indian society is highly structured in erms of *Varna* and *Jati*. *Varna* is a broad hierarchical model; ach of the four Varna has numerous *jatis* in any given region. A *jati* of one region may not be known outside its region but people do try to place them in the *Varna* order. The *jati* system s a highly decentralized organization, which in fact is greatly responsible for its longevity. Writing about *jati*, Ramanujam says, 'Each *jati* or class defines a context, a structure of relevance,

a rule of permissible combinations, a frame of reference, a meta-communication of what is and can be done' (1989: 59). In traditional India, mode of production was mostly localized and catered to a region. A village community in India, the backbone of India's social structure was composed of a number of *jatis*. Each *jati* had its own hereditary occupation, culture and dialect. Each *jati* was autonomous of a sort and regulated its internal affairs, yet there was a great deal of social and economic interdependence between *jati* while maintaining their hierarchical relationship which has been variously described as jajmani system. The goods and services were distributed through jajmani relationships, weekly markets, periodical fairs, pilgrimage and forest dwelling populations whom Fox had described like any professional *jati* in the Hindu caste structure (Fox 1969: 139-160). What was not available through these established sources was supplied by peripatetics who were always looking for gaps in the supply of goods and services. Gardner writes, 'Hindus are notable for having a society in which both revered texts and actual practices emphasize mutually dependent relations among occupational specialists.....Although horticultural tribes do understandably face agricultural competitors for their land, foragers have a unique and highly valued occupation with the region. Apart from occasional forays into the forest by individuals such as Ayurvedic doctors, they have been the prime collectors of medicinal plants, wild honey and a variety of other precious forest products. No one seeks to compete with them. Just as Hindu landowners and occupational specialists can supply each one another with goods and services century after century, without there being significant cultural convergence among them to take part in long term exchanges with specialists from ancient civilization without great erosion over time of their earlier way of life.....Until private and government development work began near mid-

twentieth century, there were no serious incentives for others to drive them out of the forest or convert them into some other kind of specialists. For centuries, perhaps millennia, they have been valuable to the larger system for precisely what they traditionally did in the forest hills' (2013: 510-11). What Gardner has written is extremely important in understanding the foraging society in relation to the larger Hindu society. His observations raise one very important question is as how to explain that in spite of economic, social and cultural relations for centuries appreciable convergence did not take place. The other aspect which is equally important which has not been raised is the power equation, the relationship between dominant and dominated.

Coercive Cooperation

While a great deal has been written about the cooperation within the Indian jajmani system, and the autonomy enjoyed by individual *jati*s, what has not been adequately discussed is the aspect of coercion in it, politics of domination, and how the ideology of hierarchy strongly supported by the concept of purity and pollution, had a strangle hold in making the system which was extremely unjust, cruel and suffocating for the *jati*s lower in the order (see Rajalakshmi Misra's paper on maintenance of hierarchy based on the notion of purity and pollution among the tribes in a region in southern India 1972: 135-48, indicating *jati*-like structure among the tribes in a primarily forest region). However, looked from this angle the *jati*s even when most suppressed, had no choice except to endure, and in the process internalized their inferior position, and suffered the system. For example, years of subjugation of the Paniya almost as slaves by the local landlords made them feel that they were 'no good', 'lazy', etc., and were incapable of managing their own farms, though the truth was that the

landowners thrived on their hard labour (Misra and Misra 1988: 52-70). Hockings has documented systematic massacre and suppression of the Kurumbas in the Nilgiris (Hockings 2013: 232-34). The suppressed classes had no escape route other than to migrate to a new location[4] and for the foragers, they often withdrew themselves deep inside the forest for at least a limited period of time to refresh themselves and get over the stress caused by the power dynamics.

In pre-industrialized India, forests were a huge storehouse of resources, some of which like fire-wood, timber, bamboo, medicinal plants, herbs, spices, root vegetables, fruits and a variety of other minor forest produce were in great demand by the larger society some of which were used in cottage industry as well and also in trade within the country and also outside. A great part of traditional Indian medical practice was dependent on medicinal plants extracted from the forest. Animals were in great demand for their flesh, skin, fur and bones etc. Of these animals, elephants as discussed later were of special importance. All those who sought to display their exalted sense of courage, vigor and power always considered hunting of wild animals a sport. A diverse group of people were engaged in pursuit of the game: they laid the plan and were strategically posted to shout, drum and chase the harassed animal. Of course their role and the risk to which they were exposed in the operation was least recognized. And who else could these people be?

It is a truism in the world over that the most labour intensive, risky, dirty work is done by those who are considered weak and low in hierarchy. For the work they do is neither rewarded adequately or the importance of the work they do is recognized. Further, they are not easily allowed to get out of it.

Thus it was in the interest of the larger society that

orest dwelling population remains in the forest[5]. Their vledge about the forest and its resources, skill in climbing extracting forest goods, and ability to hunt, guide in the st and capture and train elephants were fully utilized. ests were also used as natural frontier and the forest ellers as allies. For the larger Hindu society, the forest and st dwellers were held in awe, their austerity, simplicity d romance were admired. But they themselves would not e to inhabit the forest which was associated with all kinds hazards and dangers. That was, however recommended r truth seekers and students who went for Gurukulas for arning. It was also a place for those who were banished by ne society. On their own forest dwelling population subsisted n collection of tubers, fruits and honey, trapping small nimals and birds, fishing and hunting. They consumed a part of which they foraged, hunted and the rest was bartered for other goods they needed such as grains, clothes, spices, vessels and iron tools. Some also cultivated on small, cleared plots inside the forest.

This is a general picture, but what is needed in order to understand the dynamics of the situation is to systematically trace the specific relationship between the forest dwellers and the surrounding peasants and the penetration of the state power and its economic interest through history. The roles of the towns located at the edges of the forest have to be worked out and so also of the weekly markets spread all over the country. For instance, Rajan in a brilliant paper (1984: 194-204) has shown how the heavily forested and hill area lying between Mysore and Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu, the home of the Soliga and other forest dwelling communities since 1799 after the British colonial forces defeated Tipu Sultan, changed its character and impacted the Soliga. In the past, the hills in the area had strategic importance to warlords; whosoever

controlled the hills had control of the surrounding plains. The forest was left to itself except that resources extracted from these were bartered. For forest dwellers, forest was a common property. The resources were in plenty and the tools for their extraction were elementary. Therefore there was low probability of somebody among them monopolizing the economy. The strategic importance of the hills was lost once the British firmly established themselves in the then Madras presidency. Whatever threats that existed from the local warlords were removed. The British restored erstwhile Mysore kingdom and thereby removed the burden of administering a big state which has been referred to as indirect colonial rule by the historians. The Mysore state soon afterwards renovated the temple located on top of the B.R. Hills and revived the performance of the rituals there. A large chunk of forest and land were assigned to the temple for its maintenance. A few Brahmin priest families moved in to perform temple rituals and managed land and forest assigned to the temple. The Soliga *Yajman* (headman) was given pride of place in temple rituals. But at the same time, the temple authorities directly intervened in the affairs of the Soliga. The *Yajman* was authorized to resolve the disputes among the Soliga and each time a dispute was resolved they had to pay a fee to the temple. Thereby the temple authorities abrogated a certain right over the affairs of the Soliga in the name of divine sanction. This was how the Soliga *Yajman* became a strong collaborator of temple organization and believer in the divine presence of the deity in the forest. In fact the Soliga have a myth which tries to establish that the Soliga are the descendents of the Lord Ranganatha, the presiding deity of the temple. The myth as recounted by the Soliga has been referred to in Chapter 1(Ibid 1984: 196).

Rajan further informs us that after 1800 AD the economic

value of the forest resources began to be explored aggressively as a result of colonial penetration. Large areas of the forest were released for coffee plantations in which the Soliga were employed as labourers. Since their labour was not sufficient, labourers from the surrounding areas were brought-in which changed the demography of the region. Just before World War I, the Forest Department brought out a study that highlighted the potential of the forest resources for industry as well as private parties. It encouraged private capital to make use of the forest resources. As regards labour required for launching economic enterprises in the forest, the above mentioned study pointed out, 'In Mysore jungle tribes known as Jenu Kuruba and Betta Kuruba furnish efficient labour for extraction purposes, while contractors can be had in plenty for conveying logs to sale depots' (commercial guide to the Forest Economic Products of Mysore, Government Press Bangalore, 1917: 24-25, quoted by Rajan).

It is important to underline that before a forest department came into existence in the erstwhile state of Mysore there were no restrictions for entry into forest as far extraction of forest resources. They were held as commons. Until 1869 no rules were framed for management of the forest. After the rules were framed the farmers were allowed to cut firewood on payment of a fee of one rupee per cartload of wood with the restriction that no teak or sandalwood tree would be cut (Teak was required for ship building which was urgently required in Europe see Guha 1983: 1883). The traders were allowed to cut tree by paying a stamp fee of eight *annas* (half a rupee) per tree. For all these jobs, forest dwelling populations were engaged (Working Plan, Forest Department Karnataka Government document).

For the Forest Department, forest dwellers provided a variety of services like trekking, cutting timber and clearing

forest on daily wages or no wages. After commercial forestry began the Forest Department allowed the forest dwelling populations to clear a patch of forest and cultivate it. By the time they sowed the seeds, the Forest Department planted the sapling of commercial trees. In other words, they allowed the forest dwellers to loosen the soil, weed it and insure that the saplings were protected from wild animals. In about three year's time when the saplings had grown, the Soliga were forced to move to another patch. This was how the Forest Department appropriated the labour of the Soliga and also restrained their natural development (Rajan 1984: 202). This story from the forest of Mysore district clearly establishes the penetration of the state into the forest claiming authority over forest resources, imposing fees for extraction and thereby in a nutshell changing the character of state relationship with the forest dwellers. Hitherto there was a lot of freedom to extract resources from forest. Writing on Forest Conservancy in India in Indian Forester in 1893 the author writes 'Under oriental governments anyone was accustomed without let or hindrance to get what he wanted from the forest to graze his cattle where he liked and to clear under growth for cultivation wherever he liked' (quoted by Guha 1983;1883).

Until the contract system for collection of minor forest produce was not abolished (it was abolished in 1970 and in place of it Large Scale Multi Purpose Societies were formed, popularly called as LAMP), the contractors employed the forest dwelling population for collecting those items. The contractors paid them very little and irregularly but they always collected much more minor forest produce than was allowed under the license given to them by the forest department. This was a sort of an open secret. The contractors treated the forest dwellers very harshly. They abused them and never hesitated to beat them. They were often ridiculed for their 'uncivilized' and 'promiscuous' ways of life.

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Forest and Hills Held in Reverence

Forest and hills in India are treated with awe admiration and reverence. Report of the Scheduled Areas and the Scheduled Tribes Commission 1960-61 observed 'it is striking to see how in many of the myths and legends the deep sense of identity with forest is emphasised' (p.125). There are many forest pockets all over the country that are considered to be sacred (Misra and Rangad 2008: 19-53; Gadgil and Vartak 1976). This is a common feature found both among the tribals and peasantry. Popular pilgrimage centers are often located deep inside the forest or atop hills. There is a famous temple at the top of the hill called Sabarimala in Kerala that attracts very large number of pilgrims from all over South India (Mathur: 2012). Mathur has shown that the temple is of ancient origin. It is located deep inside the dense jungle of Saha mountain range of the Western Ghats. Although the temple is managed by Brahmins, the popular perception is that the deity there is a hunting deity. I have already referred to the temple located at Biligiri Rangana hills deep inside the forest of the Mysore district. It is also very popular. Though the temple is managed by the Brahmins, the Soliga of that area have a role in the ritual performance of the temple (see Morab 1977). Gardner (1982) has succinctly observed that, a food gathering tribe of Tamilnadu Paliyar's, simple and austere way of life elevates them to the level of ascetic and hence are recognized to have purity status and are invited to participate in the Hindu rituals. He writes, 'their participation in the ritual life of their Hindu neighbor cannot be readily explained unless one assumes that the Hindu regard them as being ritually pure' (ibid; 462) that is like ascetics. Their 'humility, simplicity and flight from power' is recognized. In order to understand their 'ascribed austerity' Gardner draws our attention to their core values. The Paliyar are peaceful and strive to respect all. They

value individual autonomy. 'They are known as harmless and gentle people. Though unpredictable in contact situations, they give impression, at times, of being innocently forthright, overtly trusting and lacking in guile. Some plantation owners, and former rajas voice deep appreciation of these personal characteristics' (ibid: 465) and one may add that experienced forest officers say 'Their behavior is the epitome of self restraint' writes Gardner. In order to provide evidence of his observations Gardner has cited several cases involving the Paliyar in Hindu ritual performances (ibid: 465-66). These descriptions and observations of Gardner are in conformity with what Sinha observed in a preliminary statement in 1958 that the tribal culture in peninsular India represent core dimension of Indian civilization. A Paliyar and a Soliga being allowed to participate in the Hindu temple rituals are not isolated incidents. It has been reported from different places in Southern India, for example Chenchus in Andhra Pradesh guide pilgrims to forest temples and are granted purity status (Furer-Haimendorf 1943: 308-15). Bose had made similar observation with regard to the Juangs of Odisha (Bose 1975: 31). The holiest mountain for the Irula, a tribe in Tamil Nadu is Rangaswamy peak; it has a Hindu deity and an Irula pujari (Hrdickova 2012: 444).

How Larger Society Reaches to Forest Dwellers

Let me try to identify different patterns of relationship that emerge between forest dwellers, peasants and larger society in general from the random illustrations given above. First, that of a peasant community of the Badaga moving into relatively 'exclusive' forest and hilly area inhabited by indigenous communities. But it has been established that the area was not isolated even in prehistoric and historic periods. The movement of the Badaga from the plain regions

of Mysore to hill areas may have been triggered by the fall of Vijayanagara Empire in the late sixteenth century (see Hockings 1980) and also to seek land in erstwhile 'virgin' region. They quickly moved into different regions of the Nilgiris and not only augmented the economy of the region by settled agriculture but also established reciprocal relationship with indigenous communities though in course of time they acquired a dominant position in the hills. However their relationship with the Kurumba, the forest dwelling population was ambiguous and coercive. The Badagas soon realized that they are the denizens of the forest. They are knowledgeable about the forest and have skills in extraction of forest resources which they needed them most and also that there are certain needs of the Kurumba which they can easily acquire and supply to them. These realizations must have prompted them to enter into certain exchange relationship with them but they also needed to expand their agricultural activities which certainly meant conflict with the Kurumba. The extensive literature on the Nilgiri inform us that the Kurumba provided various forest goods and services to the Badaga including sorcery and kept a watch on their fields and animals, but were often punished for their alleged sorcery causing harm to the Badaga, their cattle, their crops and for that matter any event which appeared to the Badaga as harmful to them. The alleged reasons for undertaking punitive action were merely excuse for a deeper conflict and that was expansion of agriculture into forest areas which was the domain of foragers. Besides that the Badaga wanted to establish themselves, being uprooted from certain territories of Karnataka. Further there was increasing demand for forest produce as well as agricultural products owing to expanding international trade of spices. Morrison has identified two periods in the move towards specialized foraging. For the early historic period though the data is sketchy but whatever

evidence is available, points to 'significant changes in the occupation history of the uplands including the beginnings of large-scale modification of the vegetation, changes associated with good evidence for active networks of long distance exchange'[6](2002: 109 emphasis added). For the second period she writes 'is the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, a period in which the options open to hill peoples became greatly reduced. In this latter period, the transition toward specialized foraging may have been responsive to two factors. The first relates to the demands of the spice trade and other, politically based demand for forest produce. The second factor is more indirect but no less important, and this relates to the pressure on the forests from below created by expanding agriculture. Both the land use "push" and the political "pull" or demand for produce from below forced foragers and forager agriculturists into an increasingly marginalized position as participants in a world market' (ibid : 109). Zagarwell has shown that at least from eighth to ninth century through seventeenth to eighteenth century the communities living in hill and forest areas operated in a world of episodic state authorities, taxation in form of forest goods and organized military activities to demonstrate the power dynamics (2002: 78). These studies are convincing enough to state that the populations living in upland and forest were linked with peasants, states and empires economically and politically, and in some ways culturally too. It is to be noted that the notion of purity and pollution was present among the indigenous populations despite Nilgiri was a forest and hilly area and considered to be somewhat exclusive The Toda remained nearly exclusive and did not allow any of the community members to enter their habitats particularly Kota who were considered as 'untouchables'. The Kurumba the typical food gathering and hunting population in spite of their services to the dominant Badaga population had

withdrawn themselves or were pushed deep inside the forest. This indeed must be related to the entry of the Badaga in the Nilgiris, their expansion of agricultural activities into the territories hitherto occupied by the Kurumba. We do not have a clear picture of what was the socio-political situation in the Nilgiris before the Badaga entered there. But it is certain that there have been movements into this region. We know so much about the indigenous communities of the Nilgiris and the entry of the Badaga there simply because the region has been so very well studied by the administrators, travelers, missionaries and scholars of different disciplines. But it appears that moving in of the peasants into regions inhabited by indigenous communities has been a sort of general pattern. Obviously these movements must not have been smooth to begin with. But if one takes a long historical perspective, it appears such peasants eventually settled down establishing a kind of patterned relationship of hostility, economic transactions and cultural co-existence marked by inequality. The latter aspect is of great significance because most of such regions show that in spite of a relationship of dominance, subjugation and economic transactions of goods and services, there were some social and ritual interactions. But each community maintained its cultural and linguistic identity. Normally one should expect that long years of interactions between different communities should have resulted in socio-cultural and linguistic convergence. But this did not happen and continues to be a significant feature of Indian society. This issue needs to be seriously discussed. However, one can say without hesitation that there was much 'give' and 'take' between different communities which of course were being redefined, systematized and suitably incorporated by each of the interacting communities under overarching power relationship.

Then there is the pattern provided by a group of Brahmins from Kanauj in northern India venturing into remote north-eastern India and establishing their foothold there. When they perceived threat from the local indigenous population they sought help from the Delhi Durbar by accepting their suzerainty and agreeing to pay tribute to them. This was mutually beneficial and brought some kind of over watch on the independent forest population inhabiting frontier areas. However, this kind of movement from one region to entirely a new and remote region have not been adequately studied and its implications on the indigenous populations.

The Soliga case is more representative and replicated in various parts of the country. The Soliga were food gathering and hunting population. They also collected resources for larger society. They were given a certain role in the temple rituals, thereby according them a 'pure' status (see Gardner 1982). If we indulge in some speculation, establishment of a Hindu temple, the king of Mysore assigning some land to the temple for its management and some Brahmin settling there are clearly attempts to reclaim forested and hilly frontier tract for fulfilling a variety of economic, political and strategic interests. The Brahmins settling there certainly needed to establish a working relationship with the indigenous population. The skills and knowledge of forest possessed by the Soliga must have been assets which the Brahmins settling there could not afford to overlook in addition to easy access to their labour. We do not have evidence of any kind of serious resistance from the indigenous population of this region. But one can concede that in those days the forests and hills there had plenty for everyone and there was not much of an expansion of agriculture in that area till commercial agriculture penetrated there. This is understandable from materialistic angle but there is something very different

h touches the core values of the larger Hindu society. participation of the Soliga and others as stated earlier e ritual life of their Hindu neighbours cannot be readily ained unless one assumes that Hindus regard them eing ritually pure' (Gardner 1982: 462). It has deeper ificance and at least indicates conceding respect to some cts of their life particularly their austerity, humility, plicity and above all living close to nature.

But things changed very rapidly after the British colonist eared on the scene with the defeat of Tipu Sultan. The st in the region began to be seriously looked from a mmercial angle in which the skills, knowledge and labour he forest dwelling population was increasingly exploited the forest department, planters, contractors, poachers and ugglers. The combined effect of the exploitation on the ligenous population has been severe and obviously that ocked the natural development of the Soliga.

The Cholanaickan of the Nilambur region present a ghtly different pattern. The forests they inhabit continue remain relatively undisturbed. The Cholanaickan are a assical food gathering and hunting community. Some of em still live in caves. We do not know exactly, what was eir situation in the past but now the Cholanaickan do ot gather much for self-consumption it is mostly to earn wages" so that they can buy food and other products they equire from the government sponsored cooperative stores trategically located in the region. In the past, they must have done collection for contractors though even the greediest of contractors would not enter the terrain inhabited by them owing to the fear of wild animals, reptiles, insects and leeches in particular. So there must have been a chain of middlemen who maintained contact with the Cholanaickan to get forest resources and spices from them and in return supply them

with some food grains, clothes, some containers, salt and some iron tools. In a way like many other forest dwelling populations they have been entrapped. Though they supply so many essential resources they have also been marginalized and would not be allowed to come out which is so very true even now under the welfare regime of modern India (see Bhanu 1982; 1989). Morrison writes, 'This marginality is not, however, eternal. It has been created by a complex set of historical and ecological circumstances, only a few of which I have been able to sketch here. The marginality of southwestern Indian foragers-trader is historically constructed, not given and a great deal of more research –particularly archeological research – remains to be carried out that will more fully and accurately explicate the nature of that construction' (2002: 127). In the past, if the people like the Cholanaickan perceived too much harassment and marginalization they would go deeper into the forest which had various fallouts one of course was that they could reinvigorate and refresh themselves and also in the process make others to realize their importance. But now there is no more room for withdrawal, and other people also cannot encroach in the forest territory on account of restrictions imposed by the modern Indian state. Still there is a huge demand of the forest resources[7] they have been traditionally extracting. The larger society is dependent on the skills, knowledge and labour of the Cholanaickan for extraction of those resources which enables others to earn huge profits. Therefore, the Cholanaickan are in a way stay-put.

An extreme pattern is depicted by the Paniyan, a tribal community found in certain parts of Tamilnadu and Kerala. They are numerous and found widely scattered. The Paniyan were traditionally foraging and hunting community who gradually learned agricultural skills and 'became slaves and wage labourers under the feudal landlords' (Mathew 2014:

. The subjugation of the Paniyan is closely related to the gration of plough cultivating communities from south north Kerala and establishing their hegemony over the ural resources as well as on people. They established their ht in extracting natural resources and labour in the task cultivation. The system of recruiting Paniyan as labourers s systematized and bound by mythology and traditions. thew further writes, 'Till nearly six decades ago Paniyan ed to assemble in forest of Valliyoorkavu temple during nual festival of Vishu. Paniyan had great reverence Valliyoorkavu Bhagavathy[8], a goddess. During these therings landlords especially the Chetty used to visit the mple in search of the Paniyan to take with them as workers. e system of bonded labour amongst the Paniyan of Kerala er the years became a sort of sacred agreement. The bond tween the Paniyan and his master was consecrated before e presiding deity of the temple well known in the area. ne landlords made an agreement with the Paniyan families nd gave a small amount of money called Nippupanam, the dvance payment which bonded the workers with the master. fter putting their thumb impressions on the agreement, the aniyan had to pledge before the deity that they would serve particular employer till the temple festival in March next ear. The regime of the Rajas and *janmi* had much impact on ne Paniyan and other communities like them' (ibid:69). They were denied all opportunities for their development and were nade to feel inferior. They were also prohibited entry into he temple and property of the deity; the *devaswom* further trengthened their subjugation. Quoting Gopalan 1959 and anikkar 1908, Mathew adds 'even after the abolition of the lavery system the practice of recruiting *adivasis* by a landlord or a fixed term continued. The tribals were attached to their landlords as agricultural labourers particularly the Nairs' (ibid: 69).

More intensive historical research of several other tribal regions are required to discover other patterns of relationship between forest dwellers, peasantry and other social formations. But even the limited illustrations discussed above show some common factors. First and foremost is the moving in of the technologically more advanced populations into forest areas in search of land, to extend their agricultural operations and to get supply of forest goods or just to establish a kind of authority over the frontier with the forest as a buffer. This has been a persistent feature throughout the Indian history. For the forest dwellers forest is not merely a storehouse of resources. It is a living thing. It is a provider. It is also an abode of their spirits with whom they have been periodically communicating in myriad different ways particularly, to find answers to the mundane existential problems and also to remain connected with their ancestors. Besides, it has been established that the forest dwellers too had certain needs which could not be met within the forest resources alone such as need for some additional carbohydrate diet, iron tools, clothes, cooking vessels, salt, some types of containers for food storage and protection from hostile forces in their neighbourhood. The other populations who entered into this environment they simply did not enter into wilderness. Forest was a vibrant living environment which needed to be understood in their own cultural terms, systematized, refined and validated while establishing their hold on people and resources. In the process, the larger communities were continuously, selectively incorporating and validating several practices and beliefs of forest dwelling communities but keeping a strong economic and political hold. This is an important point to understand the relationship between those who lived in the forest and the food producing communities living around them. While forest became an important place in Hindu mythological literature and philosophy at the same

time different strategies were being worked out to deal with the forest dwellers. Thus depending upon local, socio-political and economic situations, different patterns emerged such as complete subjugation (like in the case of the Paniyan), ascribing to some of them 'pure' status, giving them some role in temple organization (as in the case of Soliga and Paliyar), extracting goods and services from forest dwellers and also establishing their authority by inflicting severe punitive action (like in the case of the Kurumba), keeping the forest dwellers at bay with the help of some external force (as in the case of Susanga State in Bengal in relation to Garo). This variety of relations over a period of time got stabilized and resulted in social and cultural exchanges besides economic transactions (see Misra 1977c: 85-117). The interesting aspect is the integration of the immense diversity and heterogeneity between the forest dwellers and food producers despite conflicting economic and political dimensions between the groups.. For example, the relationship between the Badaga and the Kurumba is highly strained but formalized. Of these relationships, maintaining hierarchy between these autonomous groups in a region is unique and from an anthropological point of view most fascinating. The Hindus maintain a hierarchical relationship between different castes based on some notion of purity and pollution which is commonly found among the tribes, say, inhabiting the trijunction where Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu meet in South India. Further, each sub-region there shows the presence of at least one community which plays the role of master craftsman such as the Kota in the Nilgiris, the Urali Kurumba in Wynaad or the Betta Kuruba in Mysore region. The presence of a community in the role of master craftsman must have played a stabilizing force as they were fulfilling an important role of meeting each other's needs and in making the region relatively self sufficient. It has been discussed that some of the forest dwellers and also

cultivators would climb up the hills in the Nilgiris to get their tools repaired by the Kota.

How Forest Dwellers Deal with Larger Society

Traditionally forests have always been an open resource for livelihood for the forest dwellers and others who ventured into it. The scale of commercial exploitation of forest resources was low even though the trade on forest goods has been going on for centuries. But the character of this situation got radically changed after the colonial rule was established. The colonial ruler soon realized the vast resources of the forests and its strategic importance; vast areas were notified as forest. The forest became state property and vast stretches of forest were declared as reserved. As a result, the traditional rights of the forest dwellers as well as those who had entered into some kind of exchange relationship with them became illegal. In some areas those relationships continued simply because the administration had not effectively penetrated or were politically sensitive owing to uprisings of the local communities. Anyways, the significant point that emerges is that response of the forest dwelling communities to the developing situation has not always been static. The strategies adopted by food gathering and hunting societies in dealing with the larger society have been very well discussed by Norstrom with respect to a forest region (2003: 109-208). He identified three ways of adaptation namely withdrawal, alliance and negotiation. Paliyans, in Gardner's view, adopted bi-cultural oscillation; interacting with Tamils on one frontier and on the other with the forest that provided them with subsistence (see Gardner 2000). Adhikari observed that the Birhor in spite of their persistent economic linkage with the settled peasantry to whom they supplied jungle products in exchange of paddy and ca[illegible]asionally preferred to

withdraw deep inside the forest where they felt they had full control over their meaningful culture without being ridiculed by outsiders and in the process refreshed themselves (see Adhikari 1984). But in most of the areas in modern India such options have dried out. There is no place to withdraw. Forest dwelling populations have been caught up in a vice-like grip owing to the process of modern development.

Revenue maximization from forest has been the stated goal of the government since the establishment of the colonial rule. Once the forest, which were considered open were now so to say locked up in the tight grip of forest officials whose stated job was to protect the forest. But in practice their job was to fell commercially valuable timber and transport it out. However, since it was only the tribal people who knew the forest and had the skills to extract its resources, their labour, knowledge and forestry skills were used to the hilt. Since the value of the forest resources have escalated, forest mafia have entered into the forest arena in a big way. Forest dwellers have become vulnerable to these gangs who are powerful and armed, and whose eyes are fixed on protected timber and wildlife. However, Norstrom observes that forest dwellers are learning fast and adapting new strategies. They are 'very willing to be active in a process of "political learning", whereby they re-evaluate old values and habits in new ways, to achieve new goals in line with their new aspirations' (2014: 468).

The broad contour of this long narrative establishes that the tribes in India have not been isolated populations. They provided both soft and hard raw material for the development of Indian civilization. In order to understand their place in the Indian society and its ethos it is necessary that they are viewed in totality. Long term histories have clearly indicated that there were stable, interlocking, interdependent relationships between different communities in different regions of the

country which on one hand facilitated political domination and trade, and on the other contributed to the development of concepts, ideas and values of the Indian civilization. From the materialistic angle the importance of the labour, skills and knowledge of tribes in extracting the resources from remote and difficult areas was important for larger society in pre-industrial India for which both force and socio-cultural strategies were used but their humility, simplicity, coexistence with nature and people were also recognized and absorbed in the ethos of the country. The importance of the detailed ethnographic studies will always remain. But in order to understand the tribes it is absolutely necessary that they be studied in the history and context of the larger society. The task is difficult owing to the absence of written records which should not mean that the people and the regions are without histories. There is enough scope for reconstruction based on oral information, folklore and archeological findings. Wherever the historical studies have been conducted it shows the dynamic aspect of the relationship between different communities. The tribes like any other people do indulge in political learning.

ENDNOTES

1. As indicated earlier I have my reservations in accepting widely referred concept of Redfield that folk societies are self contained and whole societies. This is neither empirically correct nor acceptable from evolutionary perspective.
2. In the Hindu sacred text The Bhagavad Gita there are numerous references to the word *buddhi*. Different shades of its meaning have been elaborated in the text. Essentially it means wisdom which is different from detailed information and knowledge.

3. Deep inside Karapur forest (Mysore district) which was basically a territory of the Jenu Kuruba and Betta Kuruba, people from the neighbouring village used to celebrate Benki Maramma ritual, which apart from other things, involved walking on a bed of fire. Though the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba did not walk on fire they did all the preparations for it. That required making a bed of fire, bringing fire wood, igniting and also fanning it so that ash did not get formed on the burning wood. Those who had taken vow (*harikay*) to perform the ritual would first take a dip in a pond nearby to purify themselves which was called Ganga *snana* (bathing in the sacred river Ganga) and then walked on the fire. Regarding the concept of India, as a region an ancient Indian text states: 'the country that lies north of the ocean, and south of the snowy mountains, is called Bharata; for there dwell the descendants of Bharata. It is nine thousand leagues in extent, and is land of works, in consequences of which men go to heaven, or obtain emancipation' Vishnu Purana, Chapter 3 quoted by K.S. Singh in People of India: An Introduction. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India, 1992: 17.
4. See K.S. Singh 1992, In India, 'there are few communities which do not consider themselves migrants' (p. 103) in People of India. Calcutta: Anthropological Survey of India.
5. Now the situation is highly contradictory. The larger society has come to realize the critical ecological importance of the forest and therefore urgent need has been felt that the forest be protected. Any human activity within the forest has been stopped or restricted. In view of this policy forest dwelling populations are being evicted out of the forest or their movement inside the forest is being restricted. But the paradox is that the market value of the forest resources has been escalating To extract such resources again the services of the skillful forest dwellers are required both by the government agencies and poachers.

6. The evidence for long distance exchange is very important to understand the place of the foragers in the long history of India. This point needs to be repeatedly emphasized to dispel the widespread subjective view that the forest dwellers have been isolated populations. This view has been masking objective understanding of the relationship between foragers, agriculturist, traders and state agencies.
7. Recent massacre of 20 people in Seshachlam forest (Andhra Pradesh) by the Red Sanders Anti-smuggling squad is a telling story of rising conflict between different interest groups to establish hegemonic control over natural resources. This conflict revolves around Red Sanders tree (Pterocarpus Santalinus) in this particular case. This tree is endemic (at present not found anywhere else in the world) to the forest of certain parts of Andhra Pradesh. It is highly valued for its heartwood and has a huge demand in international market. International legislation banned trade of this species as a result of which black market rates for it have escalated. A ton of Red Sanders fetches Rs.15 lakh to Rs.30 lakh in the Indian black market and two to three times of this amount internationally. The trade in this tree, obviously, is possible only because of the collusion between contractors, high order smugglers, politicians and officials, but the price for the illegal trade in this particular case was paid by the labourers who in all probability were the poor forest dwellers. The tragic story highlights the plight in which the forest dwellers have been caught. (The incidence was widely reported in the Indian Newspapers. See the Hindu April 8, 2015).
8. This particular temple is located 8 kms. away from Mananthavady town in North Wynaad. In order to develop historiography of the region as well as of the people like Paniya it will be worthwhile to discover how the Paniya became devotees of Valliyoorkavu Bhagwati and the history of the deity itself.

4 FOREST AND TRIBES IN INDIA

rest and tribes in India is a huge and important subject. t somewhat neglected particularly if one is looking for the erspective from the point of view of tribes. In modern India ill there are tribes mainly subsisting on food gathering and unting though their numbers has considerably dwindled. here are also artisans and nomadic pastoralists among them. heir number too has shrunk. There are tribes who have been ubsisting on shifting cultivation but like others they too are in a precarious situation. There are tribes who practice settled cultivation but progressively they have become marginal farmers owing to a variety of factors including urban expansion and industrial development. As a result of these developments wage earning and living in urban fringes are emerging as a pattern for the tribes in India excepting in major parts of north-eastern India. But I am getting ahead of my story. The path of evolution is the story of struggle for survival, adaptation, expansion and dispersal at the cost of primary resource utilizers. In this respect the story of mankind is certainly complicated because they developed ability to fashion tools which progressively went on becoming more

efficient and sophisticated. Besides they have culture. These two factors alone allow and at the same time restrict many possibilities. However, the major thrust of my argument is that none of the modes of subsistence can be considered independent of others. Even when the other modes have not evolved, the process of development indicates that the emerging mode of subsistence is in the process of being conceived, maturing and delivered. Further though the focus of the chapter is on forest, my contention is that it cannot be considered in isolation of what goes on outside the forest which is basically a story of intense conflict, negotiation and alliances between different stakeholders.

To elaborate this a little more, at one stage forest was the only resource base when human beings were in food gathering and hunting stage. There must have been a long period of transition from food gathering and hunting stage to domestication of animals and cultivation. Even when food production became a stable means of subsistence, forest remained an important source to provide resources and also remained in the thought, values and culture of the people who went out of the forest. Those who were outside the forest devised ways and policies to acquire the resources they wanted from the forest on a continued basis and also assure their supplies. Since forest have always been considered as virtual or real frontier there have been attempts to secure them; obviously policies emerging out of such attempts made impact on the forest resources as well as those who dwelled there. It is not possible to cover all that as history of India is too long. Therefore, first what I have done is, to consider this long history in three phases namely pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial. Pre-colonial phase is not only very long and extremely varied but also the information is scarce. Therefore, I will discuss it briefly a[illegible] generalized manner

as to how forest was perceived in ancient India and highlight the inherent conflict and relationship between forest dwellers and encroaching larger society. While I was looking for some evidences to build my story on pre-colonial phase, I stumbled upon elephant and its widespread exalted position in the Indian society. I began to ask myself if the elephant was such an important animal there must be a mechanism for its continued supply. This question opened the window owards the relationship between forest dweller, forest and he larger Indian society. A lot more research is required to be one in this direction but exploring elephant saga has been mmensely fruitful in demonstrating the linkages between ifferent stakeholders.

The colonial takeover was a watershed in the history of ndia. Gadgil and Guha write 'The British did not merely hange Indian history, they also changed the writing of by providing historians with an unprecedented level f documentation' (1999: 5). While one may agree with adgil and Guha, there is a problem and that is one should ot overlook the agenda of those who were providing that ocumentation. Therefore one has to be cautious in taking ch documentation for granted. However it can be easily nceded that hitherto what was available was not only tchy but also was not always authenticated. Therefore, the second section I will mainly focus on such policies hich had direct bearing on the forest dwellers. In the third ction which is post-colonial period, I propose to highlight evelopment agenda and efforts in empowering forest dwellers. wards the end I will briefly underline that the conflict with e forest dwellers which began with food production and bsequently has become so enlarged and intense that there is o scope for the survival of the ways of life of forest dwellers, owsoever sustainable it may have been.

Forest and Human Beings

Let me begin by indulging in a bit of inform speculation about the situation before human beings be domestication of animals and producing food. That is phase when human beings, survived by food gathering a hunting, which was the first adaptation human beings e made and it was the longest. 'To date, the hunting way of li has been the most successful and persistent adaptation ma has ever made' (Lee and Devore 1968: 3). In due course time, in order to achieve efficiency in food gathering, hunting and in obtaining some kind of shelter they began to fashion various kinds of devices and tools. Since the various devices and tools made out of vegetative sources are not preserved in nature for long, we do not know much about them. But all the existing food gatherers and hunters make extensive use of variety of things made out of vegetative sources such as traps, bows and arrows, ropes, ladders, baskets and various other things including instruments for their entertainment which allows us to presume that the early human beings must have also made extensive use of them. However, what has been preserved by nature are basically tools made out of bones and stones, and rock shelters. Through these artifacts and paintings in rock shelters it has been possible to reconstruct the story of progressive sophistication in tool making and also to learn about the development of artistic expression of human beings. The latter aspect is of great significance which strongly suggests that human beings were not only chasing food but they were also giving expressions to their abstract thinking. However, the point I need to stress at this stage is that evolution is a gradual and a learning process which also gives rise to intangible aspects of culture such as concepts, values raising questions and doubts. However, coming back to our story, eventually human beings learned

to domesticate animals which have been called as meat on hoofs, and also produce food. What needs to be emphasized is that there must have been a long period of transition from food gathering and hunting to food production. During this phase of transition there must have been a variety of adaptation of which the foremost must have been the development of human settlements which consequently must have changed the demographic pattern of the groups. Before the stable settlements appeared on the scene there may have been mobile settlements, migrating cattle keepers etc. On the basis of what we now know there were at least three patterns emerging namely mobile food gatherers and hunters, cattle keepers and food producers. As these patterns began to stabilize, it is possible to visualize that there must have been phases of congeniality as well as hostility between the people in different phases. On the basis of known history it can be safely stated that food producers continued to grow which eventually gave rise to urban settlements. But the question of crucial importance for the students of foragers is why did some people continue to remain food gatherers and hunters, discounting those who were run-a-ways? This question needs to be asked repeatedly and its answer should be looked from different angles. This issue was briefly discussed in the earlier chapter where it was noted that some scholars asked the question whether the food gatherers and hunters could have existed without the support of cultivators particularly in the rain forest regions. Their hypothesis was that cost of extracting energy giving food in rain forest region was very high as the animals they hunted had thin fat. But the other part of the story from the point of view of settled population has not been adequately discussed in the literature though it has strong evidence that the settled population of food producers had critical interest in the forest. They needed continuous and assured supply of a large variety of resources from the

forest. There could not have been a better arrangement if some populations continued to remain in forest and if they are made to supply the goods needed from the forest. This arrangement would have been favorable from many angles. Foremost, you get what you want on a regular basis without your living in the forest and extracting them which not only must have been labor intensive tasks besides being risky. Extraction of goods from forest requires some understanding of the ways of forest as well as developing appropriate skills. Last but not the least forest needed to be protected not only for its resources but also from the unknown populations living across. This could be achieved through developing friendly ties with the forest dwellers or through establishing some kind of suzerainty over the region. This understanding certainly and surely invalidates the theory that food gatherers and hunters grew in isolation and they were a whole society at some point of time (Redfield 1947). This theory is against the logic of evolution. It is the food producers who grew out of foraging and hence there must have been long period of interaction between them. The concept of the folk society is a construct of an ideal type as contrasted with modern urbanized society. This should be considered as a device for enhancing understanding of different social formations but as Redfield himself admits that it is not possible to arrange real societies in a single order of resemblance to the type (Ibid: 294). One of the features that has been repeatedly stated is their isolation which historically does not seem to be valid but it is certainly true that their role in supplying forest goods, protecting the forests and developing some basic techniques and concepts have not been adequately acknowledged.

Forest in Early India

Romila Thapar has done an essay 'Perceiving the forest:

early India' (2011) which provides a good background for the discussion that I intend to take forward and therefore let me provide a quick summary of that paper. Her essay explores relationship of forest to the settlement – *Vana* to *Ksetra*. In early India, the duality of *Vana* and *Ksetra* as well as their complementarity has been commented upon but their relationships were neither static nor uniform. Historical changes impacted these perceptions. Forest was romanticized as well as considered as a fearful habitat of demons. Just to digress a bit, Bird-David, an ethnographer of tribes in South India discusses how the forest dwellers perceive forest. She writes that the Nayaka think forest as parent (1990), a view that visualizes that the environment is 'giving' its resources which is a reflection of a 'cosmic economy of sharing' (see Bird-David 1992). Thapar thinks that ideologies focusing on retreat into the forest may have developed in agro-pastoral society referred to in Vedic literature which came to fruition in the discussion that took place in urban centers. Ironically, the urban centers were established through the clearing of the forest. Later when the monastic system came into existence, the monks were dependent on alms which linked them with *grama* but the ideal image was that the monks lived in forest monasteries. Further, she points out that the dichotomy between householder and renouncer has an important association with the forest. The householder has to observe the social obligations and has a schedule of daily routine, but the renouncer living in the forest is free from these. These ideas appeared to have crystallized in the theory of four stages of life, which meant that a major part of one's life was to be spent in the forest. In other words, forest has been integrated into the development of civilization in India. Buddhism and Jainism urged the renouncer from the young age. Thapar makes an important observation that in the Vedic literature, many forests are mentioned by names suggesting

that the forest was not an undifferentiated expanse of
but was categorized based on its special features. In Sri
Valmiki Ramayana, there is a description of the journey
Vishwamitra along with Ram and Lakshman, the two yo
princes whom he was bringing from Ayodhya to his ashr
located in a forest. On the way he introduces the qualities
each forest they came across to the young princes (Gita Pre
Gorakhpur: 77-106). In early India, the forest was the conte
of several important activities namely extraction of resource
hunting, abode for hermitage and place of exile. It should
be noted that forests were huge and main store-houses o
resources of which items like fire-wood, timber, bamboo,
medicinal plants, herbs, spices, root vegetables, fruits, and
a variety of other minor forest produce were in perennial
demand by the larger society and some of which were used
in cottage industry as well. A great part of traditional Indian
medical practice was dependent on medicinal plants extracted
from the forest. Animals were in great demand for their flesh,
skin, fur, bones etc. Of these animals, elephants were of special
importance which I intend to discuss separately. Of the hunt,
Thapar informs that there are numerous descriptions of
hunts of the *rajas* which were also a display of their exalted
sense of courage, vigor and power. Hunting of wild animals
was always an important sport. A diverse group of people
were engaged in pursuit of the game! They laid the plan and
were strategically posted to shout, drum and chase harassed
animal which in India continued till modern times (See for
example the description of hunt in Bhupendra Chandra Sinha
of Susanga's book Changing Times 1965).

Thapar points out that in a society of chiefship, where the state had not come into existence, the relationship of dominance within and between clans was often expressed through a raid on hunt, to get the rights recognized rather

than by control of further territories. The hunt was also a mechanism of asserting control over grazing grounds. Access to grazing grounds became a basic necessity when the herds became large. Domesticated animals grazed outside the village and in the periphery of the forest which had to be protected. Subordination was achieved through establishment of the *ashram* inside the forest which was often attacked by the 'demons' (to be understood as forest dwellers). In each of the epics (Ramayana and Mahabharata) the heroes were asked to repel them. The establishment of the hermitage in the forest was an attempt to create a distance from civilization, seek knowledge by living amidst nature and meditate on meaning of life. But hermitage in forests could also be a way to acquire some kind of control or foothold over the forest, its resources and people living there. Often the heroes in the Indian epics are sent to hermitage to bring some kind of order there. This is a persistent imaginary given in folklore and other ancient literature.

Thapar makes a very important observation that forest was never far away from habitation. She has cited several archeological evidences, Buddhist sources etc., in support of it. The Chinese Buddhist monk Hsuan Tsang writes about forests close to villages. Traveling from one habitat to another, meant going through forest. In both the epics, heroes are sent in exile into forests which may not have been physically distant place but distant in concept. The gathering and hunting life which exiled persons were forced to adopt, was a reversal of their usual life, allowing them to gain experience in exploring the unknown.

In order to extend agriculture, both to generate more revenue as well as to support the growing population Kautilya's advice as stated in *Arthashastra* was to settle *sudra* peasants on 'wasteland' or land which had been deserted. The

granting of tax free,[2] cultivable lands to special categories of persons such as Brahmans and professional working for the state was also mentioned. This certainly would have meant some deforestation. The incidence of such grants increased in the Christian era as indicated by numerous inscriptions. These sources also indicate that forests were also assessed as a source of revenue for the natural products that was extracted from them, such as timber, elephants, semi-precious stones and mines but also for their transformation into cultivable land. Clearing of forest was kept under control but Kautilya also advised rulers to take initiative in developing forests especially for a particular kind of forest produce and to settle such people who would enhance production of such items for trade.

Elephants in forests was especially prized not only for ivory but also because the strength of the army depended on its elephant wing.

Furthermore, Kautilya's remark that such forests which had been laid waste by the forest dwellers should not be taxed suggests that the activities of the state in the forest may have met with some opposition by forest dwellers. According to Kautilya forest made excellent natural frontiers. He also cautioned against forest Chieftains who were numerous, visible, brave and could ruin a country. They could be used as allies or could be used politically to create trouble for neighbouring kingdom. In Kautilya's text, forest people are a distinct category – *aranya cavac atavika*. She further reiterates that there are many references to forest Chiefs in the later section of the book. In these sections too the Chiefs are seen as potential allies or enemies or as instruments to create trouble in the neighbouring kingdom. There were pillaged cities and traders feared attacks on their caravans which led to the formation of some associations and raising their own militia

...ense against such attacks. Thapar says that freq...
...rences to the forest Chiefs and forest people indicate...
...being of greater importance than has been assumed
...dern historiography' (ibid: 153). There is another very
...sting reference cited by Thapar and that is in Major Rock
...XIII in which Asoka issues a stern warning to forest
...le. The reason for the warning is not clear but elsewhere
...rbids the wanton burning of the forest. In other words
...state was continuously concerned about its forests.

In the fourth century Samudragupta is said to have
...uced forest Chiefs to servitude. This policy may have
...uced the use of the forest by forest communities, facilitated
...ening of the trade routes through the forest and may have
...so ensured uninterrupted supplies of the forest produce.
...pening up of centers for the collection of timber and the
...roduce of the mines meant further inroads into the forest.

From the Gupta period onwards there has been increasing
...grants of land into the forest areas which may have forced
...forest dwellers to further retreat into the forest or may have
...increased interaction with peasants which eventually may
...have induced them into caste structure. This transition from
jana to *jati* has been discussed in detail earlier.

In the later period, grants of land increased with a parallel increase in small states which were dependent on agriculture for revenue and resources from the forest. She has cited inscriptions from Bundelkhand where a village was granted to a group of Brahmans. In literature several scholars have recorded some Brahmans who received grants, got married into the families of forest Chiefs which eventually led to claims to the territories traditionally associated with the clans of the Chief. Establishment of small kingdoms in remote forest has a long history. Maharaja Bhupendra Chandra Sinha in his book Changing Times (1965) narrates how a young Brahman from

Kanauj (Kanauj is situated on the banks of the river Ga
in modern Uttar Pradesh) started on a pilgrimage with s
ascetics to the distant holy shrines of Kamakhya (Assam).
group finally camped at a place, near a river, on the footh
of the Garo Hills. The tradition has it that peasants belongi
to different castes complained to the group that the Garos
the hills harassed and killed them and prayed to the group
protect them. The ascetics decided that Someshwar, one of th
members of the group should go back to Kanauj and bring a
adequate number of trained fighters which he did. Eventually
Someshwar was able to establish his kingdom on the foothill
of the Garo Hills with the support of the local people with
Susanga as it's headquarter in about the last quarter of the 13th
century. This story is instructive in many ways. Kanauj was
a thousand miles from Susanga. But it has been mentioned
that exchange of diplomatic courtesies used to be maintained
between the kings of Kanauj and Kamrup (Assam). Since
the journey was done on foot which meant physically going
through several forest regions and interacting with the local
populations on the way for food and directions. This also
explains the diversities in culture, religion and language and
incorporation of local practices in the Hindu religion and the
practices of the Hindu religion among local people.

Thapar cites another copper plate inscription from the
Vindhyan region which indicated grant of land to a Brahman.
Later the king claimed 18 *attavi rajyas* or forest kingdoms
conquered by him. This is how Vindhyas region was
converted from forest to kingdom. Quoting from different
literary sources Thapar shows that perception of the forest
and its people change over time. Banahhatha's Harsacarita
pertaining to the first millennium A.D., describes villages in
forest as large and well stocked. In addition to cow pens there
were rice and sugarcane fields. The village had a number of
artisan groups besides hunters, trapp[illegible]nd fowlers. Yet

this was the same Vindhyan forest through which
heroes were said to have wandered in exile. And ta
about the forest people, the King Harsha, traveling in the
Vindhyan region was introduced to the nephew of the Sabra
Chief. He is described as 'dark with blood-shot eyes, a flat
nose, a thick lower lip and projecting cheekbones…', But it is
said that he knew every leave of the forest. The description
carries echoes of the earlier description of the Nisada, Bhilla,
Pullinda and other forest people' (ibid: 157). According to her
these were perhaps the generic name of the people who lived
in the forest. In the long history of India there are numerous
evidences when some forests were devastated. But there are
plenty of evidence that forests were conserved too. Though
there was dichotomy between the *vana* and *ksetra*, their
complementarity also surfaces. This complementarity cannot
be better described than the story of the elephant in Indian
tradition which I call as elephant saga. Before I get into the
subject of elephants let it be stated that Thapar has succinctly
established that the forests were very much in the thoughts
of the kings, sages, thinkers and common people in ancient
India. There were periods of hostility and complementarity
between forest dwellers and kingdoms. There are clear
evidences to subdue forest Chiefs and also to use them as
allies or enemies and instruments to create problems in
neighbouring kingdoms. There are also indications when
kings were concerned with wanton destructions of forests.

As regards conflict of food producers with those people who continued to be forest dwellers is very well illustrated by the famous Mahabharata story of the burning of Khandava forest.

The Story

The Kauravas had thrown out the Pandavas from

Hastinapur. However, as an act of kindness they gave them a piece of forest land by the side of river Yamuna where the city of Delhi stands to-day and asked them to settle down there. While Arjuna and Krishna were surveying the area and were in deep thought as to how to develop that place, a hungry Brahmin appeared on the scene, asking for some alms. Arjuna and Krishna explained their helplessness as they were themselves refugees in that area. The Brahmin persisted with his request and revealed his identity that he was Agni, the fire god. He then said that his hunger would be satisfied by burning the Khandava forest along with every creature in it. Krishna and Arjuna agreed to this. Where upon Agni gave them a fine chariot, bows and arrows to help in performing the task. Agni devoured the entire forest. While he was burning the forest Arjuna and Krishna were patrolling the perimeter of the forest and did not allow the animals to escape. They all perished including the Nagas (probably the people who had snake as their totem) the food gathering and hunting people.

Gadgil and Guha make a deeper interpretation of this story. They say that the burning of the forest and the killing of wild animals and food gatherers is couched in the terminology of great ritual sacrifice to please Agni. They say that Agni's appearance as a Brahman begging alms is significant. It was the Brahmans who presided over fire sacrifices and they played an important role in the process of colonization. What they write further is speculative but very interesting. Let me quote, the Brahmans 'played an important role in the process of colonization. They served as pioneers, establishing their outposts in the forest and initiating rituals which consumed large quantities of wood and animal fat. Thus provoked, the native food gatherers, termed demons or Rakshasas, would attempt to disrupt the holocaust and save their resource base

in order to retain control over their territories. Specialist warriors Kshatriyas would then rush to the rescue of the Brahmans' (1999: 79).

This story needs to be read in the context of what the food producers and later the industrialists have been doing to the forest dwellers all over the world in search of natural resources and to extend their economic enterprises. In the new world, the treatment, forest dwellers got from colonizers was total annihilation or near to it. In a country like India, the treatment they received had been varied and complex. Walker, who carried out an intensive study of the Toda in the Nilgiris for a long period of time, concludes 'Hindu India absorbs and changes her constituent castes; she seldom eliminates these endogamous units which constitute the basic brick of society' (1986: 297). Before he reaches this conclusion he makes an important observation about Indian way of dealing with such populations 'it rather absorbs groups, over a long period of time, first tolerating and reinterpreting past ideological and liturgical traditions' (ibid: 297).

In pre-industrial India, forest was a major source of a variety of resources. While it is never easy for non-forest dwellers to live in the forest, the forest dwelling people were habituated to live in the forest, had developed appropriate skills and tools in gathering resources and hunting. They also helped in hunting and capturing wild animals particularly elephants which in ancient and medieval India was not only a source of status but also part of the war machinery. In other words the forest dwellers were very much needed for fulfilling the material needs of the food producers. They were also required to safeguard the frontier zones and often they were used as bridge and buffer between the neighbouring states.

Observing Yagna in which fire, animal sacrifice and burning of animal fat are essential features certainly point

out a basic contradiction between food collecting forest dwellers and food producers. But both needed each other critically. Thus the dominant strategy of dealing with the forest dwelling population in India has been to entrap them in the forest, restrict them and thereby restrain their natural growth. This was achieved by occasional punishment but also cajoling them and often giving them status of ascetics which freed them from the Hindu caste hierarchical structure. For example some of these people were given responsibility to look after the pilgrims, act as guide to them or giving them a certain status to maintain the sacred centers often located deep in the forest or on the top of the hills on frontier regions. In the process they were trapped in their habitat but they were made to flee whenever more land was required. They have been called forest traders by Morris (1982) and professional primitive hunters by Fox (1969).

There is another aspect which cannot be overlooked. In the tradition of the Indian civilization, the forest was also a place of retreat, introspection and learning. Apparently there is a contradiction. On the one hand from sheer materialistic interest there was a persistent attempt to destroy the forest and expand agriculture. On the other hand, there was an effort to make forest as a place of retreat. One way to argue is that forest teaches you the ways of nature which could be learnt only by experiencing it. Second such exposure also gives opportunity to have a close look into the ways of life and at the values of the communities who live in the forest. This is a point worth paying attention to for the simple reason that the forest dwelling communities have a long history. They have managed to survive with elementary technology for thousands of years and that too against many odds. Some of their core values are ever lasting such as sharing which leads to social security, a simple life which leads to conservation

of natural resources. Redfield and Singer (1954) have pointed out that a civilization grows through continuous interaction between various segments. It is possible to argue that in India slow rate of technological development allowed the classical dimension of the Great tradition to maintain a nourishing contact with the forest dwelling communities. This way it is possible to explain the continued existence of the forest dwelling communities in pre-colonial India in spite of the development of highly systematized traditions and thought patterns at various centers and appearances of urban centers all over the country. Although in pre-colonial India, forest dwelling communities did not have an all India identity, at the regional level they were known by their specific names and interacted with other regional jatis and communities (Misra 1977c).

Elephant Saga

It is indeed one of the paradoxes both in popular perception and in academic discourse that forest dwelling people have been considered as isolated population. This is in spite of the fact, based on strong evidences Fox had observed 'rather than being independent, primitive fossils, Indian hunters -and -gatherers represent occupationally, specialized productive units similar to caste groups such as Carpenters, Shepherds or Leather-workers. Their economic regimen is geared to trade and exchange with the more complex agricultural and caste communities within whose orbit they live. Hunting and gathering in the Indian context is not an economic response to a total, undifferentiated environment. Rather, it is a highly specialized and selective orientation to the natural situation: where forest goods are collected and valued primarily for external barter or trade and where necessary subsistence or ceremonial items...

such as iron tools, rice, arrow-heads, etc., are only obtainable in this way. Far from depending wholly on forest for their own direct subsistence the Indian hunters-and-gatherers are highly specialized exploiters of marginal terrain from which they supply the larger society with desirable but otherwise unobtainable forest items such as honey, wax, rope and twine, baskets, and monkey and deer meat.... The economic activity of Indian hunting-and- gathering groups is more akin to the specialization of caste hereditary occupation' (1969: 141-2). He had called them 'professional primitives'. This observation is so very apt when it comes to elephants. Elephant has been given significant importance in Indian society since ancient times. Its relevance and connection with the tribes gets directly established because of the fact that the habitat of the elephants is forest. Further, it was considered that catching elephant from wild was more economical than raising them in captivity. It takes about 15 years before an elephant is sufficiently domesticated and made useful. It will become clear in the following description that the demand for elephants in India has been widespread, stable, and continuous despite the fact of that catching and training them is dangerous.

The Indian elephant (Elephas Maximus Indicus) is one of the three recognized subspecies of the Asian elephant and native to mainland Asia. They are found in the forest areas of North-west, North-east, Central and South India. It is indeed difficult to say when the elephant was domesticated in India but the first historical evidence of the domestication of Asian elephant was noted in Harappan times (see McIntosh 2008). Ultimately elephant acquired a prominent space in Indian life and continued for centuries. It became a siege animal, a mount in war, a status symbol and an elevated platform for hunting (see Rangarajan 2001). And also a revered and a

sacred animal. A large number of temples provide permanent home for elephants. The blessings of temple elephants are highly valued. In 7th Century, the Ganga rulers in Karnataka evinced great interest in elephants. One of its popular rulers Sripurusha (725-788 A.D.) wrote a book *Gajasastra*, the science that deals with capture and use of elephant. His son Sivaram II wrote *Gajashataka*, which is considered a technical work on use of elephant in warfare besides being a literary work passages from which were recited. Certain forests in Mysore and Kongudera were recognized as *Gajaranya*. The commander elephant was called *Gajasahanj* (Sheik Ali 1976: 191, 300). According to the understanding of the present author such detailed knowledge about elephant and interest on elephant could not have come without continuous and long interaction with the forest dwellers, which were primary link in elephant saga. Since elephant acquired significance as well as economic value, the forests rich in elephant populations were identified which incidentally also had forest dwellers.

Elephants have been used in Hindu ceremonies and festivals. On such occasions the animals are adorned with festive outfits and jewelry. In forests, elephants have been used for patrolling and logging and to catch wild elephants. It is reported that Mughal Emperor Jahangir had 113000 captive elephants throughout his empire (see Sukumar 2006). During later Mughal and colonial period elephants were used for hauling guns in hilly and marshy tracts.

Elephants have been used in temple architecture for a long time (Sheik Ali 1976: 347). Elephants figure prominently in Jataka and Panchatantra tales. Ganesh is one of the best known and most worshipped deities in the Hindu pantheon whose images are found all over India. Ganesh is revered as remover of all hurdles, is patron of art and sciences and is deva of intellect and wisdom. He has the head of an elephant.

One of the names of Ganesha is Buddhipriya meaning '
of intelligence' or Buddhi's husband. In Sanskrit buddh
a feminine noun that is variously translated as intellige
wisdom or intellect. Ganesh is associated with Bud
(intellect), Siddhi (spiritual power), and Riddhi (prosperi

Trautmann has done an exceedingly informative es
on "Elephants and the Mauryan" (1982). This essay is abo
the use of elephant in warfare in ancient India till Mugh
period. Elephant was also used for the purpose of hunting an
as a symbol of royalty. He has discussed the regions whic
supplied elephants and has identified *Gajvanas* (elephan
forests) and shown their distribution in India. The most
important aspect from the point of view of our interest on
forest dwellers is that elephants were not raised in captivity,
as was the case with horses, because it was not economical.
In other words, the supply of elephants has to be fresh from
the forest and then follows long years of their training at the
hands of well trained people. It was expensive to maintain
them; it required a number of people such as a mahout,
trainers and the persons who feed them. Trautmann is silent
about their capture, training and maintenance. But he has
stated that forest inhabited by the elephants were widespread
and so also the demand for elephants from which it can be
safely speculated that the supply chain of elephants must
have been long and varied; from forest to the state capital and
sacred centers, from those who caught them to middlemen
and finally to the trainer, commander and royalty. In this
long chain both forest and forest dwellers are crucial as they
are at the starting point of the long journey.

Trautmann suggests that Mauryan success over other
Indian states in 4th Century B.C. was on account of use of
elephants in war. Trautmann quoting Megasthenes and Arian
says that it was the elephants that carried royalty[4] (ibid: 256).

Trautmann says that these observations of foreign visitors are in conformity with what is found in Indian sources such as Mahabharata which emphasizes high dignity of elephants and of (horse driven) chariots, and their use not only in warfare but also as signs of rank in the society (ibid: 256). He further quotes Megasthenes in stating that each elephant bears three archers and a *mahout* but the soldiers must return their arms to the royal armory and horses and elephants to the royal stables. 'It was this military machine which subdued most of India, driving the last representatives of Alexander from north-west; and to it Seleucus ceded the entire west bank of the Indus, at least as far as Kandahar, in exchange for 500 elephants' (ibid: 258). Though the historical sources dispute the number of elephants that were exchanged, the passage establishes the importance and value that was given to the elephants by the combating armies to establish their supremacy. It may be noted that in these references the number of elephants is significantly large which raise the issue of demand and supply from forests.

Tracing changing importance of different mounts, Trautmann writes 'For Indian warfare had largely been based upon the horse from Vedic times to the 19th and into 20th Centuries, across which period the earlier reliance on the Chariot slowly yielded to an emphasis upon cavalry techniques which in the last analysis derived from Central Asia. But it has also been based on the elephants; if not from the time of the Indus civilization, which knew and may have domesticated the elephant but probably did not use it in warfare, then at least from before the Buddha by whose time the army was stereotypically quadrupedal (*caturanga*), the elephant being one of its "limbs". The elephant remained in the battle line perhaps until gunpowder reduced its effectiveness, and even after that it continued to function as a perch from which the

commander gained a prospect of the battle, as
as a hauler of the material of war, especially h
which latter purpose the commissariat of the ar
India continued to capture and train elepha
nineteenth century. The supply of horses and
short has been a preoccupation of the rulers of
nearly one end of the recorded history to the other

Trautmann makes a very important observati
says that while there was a clear organization of
in horse trading in ancient times, it was lacking
elephant. He writes, 'trade does not seem to have be
means by which the king of pre-Muslim India bui
stocks. In the medieval period, trade in elephants
have 'increased, until, in the nineteenth century' (ibi
ancient India, the two principal means of acquiring
were by capture of wild animals and taking of elep
tribute or plunder. This was mainly on account of the
there was high cost in maintaining elephants. On th
elephants spend up to 18 hours a day eating and in
it may consume 150 kg of plant material every da
reckoned that an elephant absorbs the full time servi
mahout, and two to three leaf cutters. Kautilya's Artha
(2.32.160) lists a series of personnel for maintainin
elephants such as a veterinarian, a trainer, a rider, a
a guard, a decorator, a cook, foragers, a foot-chainer, a
guard, a night attendant and so forth.

It further makes an important observation from the
of view of ensuring continued supply of elephants
ultimately the continued acquisition of elephants depe
upon the continued existence of wild population in elep
forests. The Arthashastra (2.2) makes possession of
elephant forest one of the attributes of the typical kingd
recommending that its superintendent keep a census of

wild population, and imposing death penalty on anyone who kills an elephant. The distribution of such forests then is a structure of Indian history' (ibid: 262). Kautilya's Arthasastra indicates (150 A.D.) that there were at least eight elephant forests, in which the densities of the elephant population too has been indicated and also they have been ranked according to the quality of elephants.

It appears that the Mauryans became regular supplier of elephants to Seleucus. Indians became the very word for mahout in Greek language and remained so till African became elephant driver (ibid: 266). It may be safe to speculate that the demand of elephant being so high India became a supplier of elephants which must have encouraged its catching and trading. It may not be too much to state that some kings may have taken capturing of elephants to boost their income as well as to enhance their status. *Khedah* operation was one of the ways of capturing the wild elephants in Mysore State till 1970s. Capturing elephants was not only a popular form of entertainment for the Maharaja of Mysore in which kings of friendly states and often foreign dignitaries were invited but also a means to generate state income or ability to make a deal with other states. Narendra Prasad writes, 'In July 1889, 51 elephants were caught in the operation. Twelve captive trained elephants were brought from Dacca (present day 'Dhaka') in Bangladesh, at a cost of Rs. 30, 000 to catch them. Twenty seven elephants were later sold at Palakkad for Rs. 35,000 (Deccan Herald, Feb., 2015). Sinha has given a detailed description of *Khedah* operation in the state of Susanga, now in Bangladesh (1965: 157-174). In both Mysore and Susanga, the local forest dwelling populations were involved in the operation of catching and trapping elephants. After the elephants were trapped the arduous task of turning them into gentle giants began under the charge of skilled trainers.

I should state that wherever elephants are found in India, the tribes living in those forests are engaged in catching wild elephants and their training. For instance in the forests of Mysore district, it is the Jenu Kuruba who are considered to be good in capturing elephants and presently a number of them are engaged as *mahouts* by different agencies particularly by the forest department. In Mysore district, forest department has a number of elephant camps where domesticated elephants are maintained. These elephants are used for patrolling the forest areas, in catching rogue elephants and also as tourist safari.

During the period when Mysore was a princely state, Maharaja of Mysore used to organize hunting parties in honor of visiting dignitaries, in which domesticated elephants were used as mounts. During those times periodically *Khedah* too was organized. I had seen two Khedah operations conducted in Kakanakote forest area of Mysore district in between 1965-1972. In these *Khedah* operations, the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba were used as chasers and drum beaters. Later when herd of elephants were trapped, the job of these people was to get down from the back of domesticated elephant and rope the wild animals. This was indeed the most risky and daring task. After each wild animal was roped and tied to big trees, long period of their 'breaking' would start meaning their wild behavior and training followed for which again the services of the forest dwelling population was taken.

While doing fieldwork among the Jenu Kuruba, I found the Jenu Kuruba who were normally reticent and shy in talking, were always excited and willing to talk about elephant and honey bees. They seem to have a lot of indigenous knowledge about the elephant, its behavior and the danger it poses. They taught me how to behave when confronted with wild elephants in the forest. They often told me that they would

even play with the elephant so much so that they could even pluck hairs from the tail of a wild elephant. When I challenged them that they being so small relative to an elephant, 'how they could do that'? Almost in chorus they shouted and said that in dealing with elephants, one does not need strength but buddhi meaning intelligence. They told me that swift action as well as presence of mind was necessary in dealing with wild elephants. Often I experienced that when their settlements were attacked by elephants, they would resort to talking to them and their belief was that elephants would slowly retreat into forest[5].

It is not known when elephant was domesticated in India but it is well established that it happened in ancient times. It is also not known how elephant acquired a sacred status in India. Elephants have been widely used as part of the war machine since ancient times. This practice continued in the Mughal period. In the British period the elephants were used for hauling guns besides logging timber and clearing of the forests. Their use as mounts, particularly in hunting parties has been widely practiced all over India. One single factor that brought the forest dwellers into focus was that it was not economical to raise elephant in captivity; they have to be caught fresh from the forest. Each time it was felt necessary to replenish stock of elephants, both forest dwelling human beings and domesticated elephants were pressed into service. Once wild elephants were caught, forest dwellers were used for the training of wild animals. The chain of capture of wild elephants and their supply has been a long and varied one. Even now the trade in elephants is lucrative. The historical sources, from the ancient, medieval and modern times do not talk much of the role of tribals in the whole business of elephants, though there are ancient treatises on elephants. The forest dwelling population became a crucial link in the whole

operation of capturing and domesticating elephants because of their knowledge of the forests and its elephants. It should also be mentioned that the initial step of capturing wild elephant and its roping are extremely dangerous. Therefore, such jobs are given to those who are most subdued. In spite of the fact that the people who play the primary role in capturing elephants which has a high status and also considered to be sacred, get least recognition. This is like an axiom that those who are weak are least recognized and rewarded despite the critical role they play in the operation.

The story of elephant in India as a single evidence destroys the myth that the forest dwelling populations have been isolated population. Considering the other factors, it can be safely stated that they have been one of the strands in the development of Indian civilization.

Colonial Phase

With the establishment of the colonial rule the situation in the country with regard to forest dwelling communities got drastically changed. Foremost was that whatever rights they enjoyed on the forest were extinguished with the enactment of the Indian Forest Act. The areas they inhabited were opened up by rail and road links creating huge ecological disturbance which also resulted in the influx of other people in their areas which led to change in the demography of the interior areas. The natural resources of the area began to be mercilessly exploited for the welfare of the distant lands within the country and outside. Huge chunks of forest and mountain lands were released for plantation. In addition, their labour was extensively used in plantations and in such places they were virtually enslaved (Daniel: 1975).

Ramchandra Guha has done a comprehensive paper on Forestry in British and Post British India (1983). The main

thrust of his paper is that traditionally held rights of th
forest communities were progressively curtailed through
the development of forest policy, forest management and
legislation. Providing sufficient evidence, he writes that
during the colonial period it was the strategic interest of the
British imperialism which dictated the policy. For example,
during early period of the British rule there was a fierce
onslaught on India's forest. Desiccation was primarily owing
to the demands made by military and industrial concerns in
Europe particularly in England such as ship building, iron
smelting and tanning. Later it was considered that forest was
obstruction to expansion and consolidation of the British
rule in India and hence to be cleared. The British also wanted
extension of cultivation in order to augment revenue. Large
areas of mountain forests were given away for tea and coffee
plantations. Guha writes,' the first show of interest in forestry-
the reservation of teak in Malabar in 1806- was predictably,
dictated by imperialist consideration' (1883). Railways was
required for quick movement of troops and goods for export
of primary commodities and import of finished goods. Road
and rail linked port towns with hinterlands. Laying down rail
lines required railway sleepers. Railway expansion saw huge
destruction of forest and ecology in general (see Misra 2007:
163 for a brief discussion on laying down of Blue Mountain
Rail in the Nilgiris). Felling of trees was not supervised.
Large numbers of trees were felled whose logs could not be
utilized. Stebbing who had written "The Forest of India" in
three volumes in 1922-27, had observed 'thousands of trees
were felled which were never removed or their removal
possible' (quoted by Guha 1983: 1884). In early phase of
railway establishment in India, the railway companies were
using local timber as fuel for the locomotion which must have
created a serious problem for the people in general as wood
was the sole source of fuel. Highlighting many such points,

Guha writes that finally colonial authorities became aware of the long term interest of the colonial Empire on forest. In 1862 there was a call from Governor General of India for the creation of Department of Forest to regulate the supply of forest products to the colonial establishment and restrict its use to others. Thus begins the story of systematic curtailment of the customary rights of the local communities. It came in the shape of Forest Act of 1865. Thirteen years later it was replaced by legislation in 1878. One of the provisions of this legislation was that State could demarcate valuable tracts of forest for the use of railways and keep other areas as back-up and make use of it whenever necessary. The community had no rights. They were given certain privileges. These privileges were to be enjoyed at the mercy of local ruler and that local ruler ultimately was the British government. The legislation also provided the right to the government to withdraw the privileges at will and this has been going on ever since in modern India too.

It is not true that the forest dwellers were mute spectators. They did revolt at different places but they were sternly repressed or deported elsewhere to work as laborers. For example, the tribals from Chhota Nagpur where tribal unrest had become vibrant were sent as indentured laborers to various places in the Caribbean and as laborers to plantations in Assam.

In earlier phase of the British rule the policy was to extend cultivation in order to increase revenue. At that time revenue generating capacity of forests was not realized. That capacity began to emerge in a big way owing to the railway expansion during World War I and World War II. In course of time, industrial uses of many minor forest produces too emerged. A common feature of the exploitation of the forest resources was the progressive exclusion of the local community. For the

colonial administration the forest products which were not marketable were of little interest and that perhaps was the saving grace for forest dwelling and local communities.

The British colonists also came to the conclusion that the communities living in the forest and hinterland were different from the rest of the people which was a carryover belief of what they experienced in Africa or in the New World. A new term, tribe came into discourse on the communities of India. These communities were considered valuable for study in order to provide evidence for Victorian evolutionary theories, but there was no welfare agenda for them. Thus began the anthropological studies in India.

From academic point of view the anthropological studies of tribal people certainly provided a wealth of information and insight into their life but definitely lacked any subaltern perspective. Though anthropologists have advocated prolonged stay among the communities and also participation in their activities, there remains a serious gap in this approach. An anthropologist without any inhibition can participate in the activities of the tribes but the other way round that is the participation of the tribals in the activities of the anthropologist is not discussed or encouraged. While we do understand the purpose of anthropologists in participating in the life of the tribes but what is that interest which can persuade the tribes to help in the study of their communities by the anthropologist? This raises a very important issue and that is whether it is at all possible to study the communities without participating in their productive enterprises as equal partners? This question will forever haunt the anthropologists. No doubt as the communities are becoming conscious of their rights the paradise for anthropological studies provided by tribal communities is getting progressively extinguished.

policies and their implementation in the Post colonial phase are extremely important if the interest of the tribes is the focus. It should be mentioned that the state control of the resource base of the forest which comprises an integral part of the habitat on which tribal people subsist began in a formal way with the consolidation of the colonial rule and continued even after independence. The kind of relationship tribal people developed with the ecology around them, the values they created which had lasting philosophical underpinnings have never been appropriately appreciated. It is stated 'The government in pre and post independent India has failed to understand the tribal economy and livelihood system. Tribal people strongly believe in "need based" natural resource base economy. They use and reuse natural resources for their sustainability. But the government on the other hand imposes exploitative "greed based" development approach. It tries to use and exploit natural resources. As a result there is always a contradiction between government approach to so called development and tribal approach of sustainable livelihood system' (Natural Resource Knowledge Activist Hub, Actionaid 2014: 11). The observations of the activist are certainly valid but the contradiction they are talking about is based on the promotion of interest of different stakeholders. Guha categorically states that there is clear continuity between colonial forest policy and post colonial National Forest Policy, 1952. He writes, 'there is explicit assertion of state monopoly at the expense of forest communities' (ibid: 1888). He further states, 'The unquestioning acceptance of colonial norms especially with regard to the usurpation of state monopoly right, has characterized post colonial policy to this day' (ibid: 1888). But 'the dominant interests behind the formation and

ecution of the state policy have differed. While, before 47, forest were strategic raw material crucial for imperial terests such as railway expansion and the world wars, in e post-independence period it has been the commercial nd industrial interests, who have dictated forest policy. In oth cases, however, the successful implementation of policy uccess from the point of view of those guiding it) has been hieved only at the expense of the forest communities and eir life support systems. The communities, thus deprived, ave characteristically responded through different forms f protest- ranging from relatively spontaneous outbursts nd agitations to more organized social movements' (ibid: 893). Much water has flowed since Guha wrote those lines. On the one hand the State repression of movements has ecome extremely severe and sophisticated and on the other esistance to these forces has become more organized and tubborn which are besides vast infrastructural, technological, ommunicational and demographical changes. Forest dwellers and their value system have been literally pushed o the wall and are gasping. All this would require a separate discussion; let me revert to the main points of divergence after India gained independence.

The foremost point that has emerged after the country became independent has been that the tribes have been constitutionally recognized as a category for the purpose of positive discrimination. There is a clear resolve of independent nation to integrate the tribes with the rest of society and develop them. For this they were not only given reservation in educational institutions, jobs in government institutions and representation in various elected bodies but were also given a prominent position in the development process. The focus of each Five Year Development Plan was changed based on experience, knowledge and priorities. Allocation of funds

for tribal development too has been phenomenally enhanced from plan to plan. Process of democratic decentralization of power and decision making too has been taken to grass root level. Gram Sabha has been incorporated in the Constitution of India through the Extension of the Constitutional provisions to the scheduled Areas Act 1996. This allows every Gram Sabha to safeguard and preserve the traditions and customs of the people, their cultural identity, community resources and the customary mode of dispute resolution. This provision stands out in contrast to the absolute powers assumed by the State in all matters including those concerning natural resources. People have gained voices and they have forums where they express their opinions, demands and assert their rights. In some areas this assertion has taken violent turn which is not showing any sign of cooling down.

Radical legislations too have been passed such as the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers Act 2006. In other words, the country has moved forward but the critical factor is to understand where do the Forest Dwelling Communities stand in this scenario. Ghosh writes 'the noble objectives of the law are lost in the hysterical ways of implementation by the authorities. In many places, it is not the Gram Sabha but the field level functionaries of the forest and revenue department who are dominating the proceedings' (2012: 519). What Ghosh writes appears to be grossly understatement in the light of what happened in the forests around Tirupati region of Andhra Pradesh where 20 laborers of Red Sanders (Pterocarpus satalinus) were gunned down by the police. They were allegedly illegally cutting Red Sanders on the behest of some smugglers. Red Sanders is found in dry deciduous forest and is valued for timber and by dye-making and medicine industries. Estimated price of smuggled wood is rupees 20 to 40 lakh per ton in India and its

value is three times higher abroad (The Hindu April, 8, 2015). Obviously there are huge vested interests in the resources of the forest against which the forest dwellers have hardly any chance, whatever legal rights that may be accorded to them.

Over the years, conservation of forests and its resources have become a major concern for the humanity at large. But the paradox is that the modern humanity wants to conserve it by limitless and ever enlarging indulgence. This presents a huge contradiction. We have categorized the food gatherers and hunters as immediate return people meaning, thereby that they seek immediate return on their labour in lieu of planning for the the future; they do not know how to store. This kind of categorization overlooks their simple life-styles which helped them to conserve resources on which everybody has set their eyes. Their practice of sharing which did not allow anyone to go hungry also negated the need for storing. As against this, we have categorized modern people and their civilization who wait for the returns on their labour, who think of tomorrow and have developed a variety of ways of storing. This categorization is ironic as the delayed return people have caused depletion of natural resources in a big way. They may have silos full of grains but a great number of people may yet be starving. Many other such contradictions can be cited.

As a matter of public discourse conservation of forest and its resources have become a major issue but the ground reality is different. Now the focus has changed from minor forest produce to huge commercial gains from the forest resources, minerals located in the tribal regions etc. With the result that while all obstacles can be created in allowing the forest dwellers to exercise their rights under the new act but on the other side in the name of economic development big chunks of forest land and its resources can be released.

Present controversy over the Western Ghat report is a living testimony of this paradox. Even the survey of sensitive areas in the Western Ghats is being resisted by the vested interest. How do we resolve these issues is a basic question that confronts us?

ENDNOTES

1. Concept of Wasteland is highly subjective as well as loaded in favor of powerful and dominant.
2. Granting of tax free land in frontier regions have been used not only for reclaiming far flung and sensitive areas but also for securing borders. This point is of special interest in understanding the relationship between forest dwellers and encroaching civilization.
3. This word is of special interest to us as the word 'budi' is frequently used by Jenu Kuruba and Nayaka (see Naveh 2014: 345-362) meaning to acquire a certain degree of matured wisdom.
4. Till recently on Vijaya Dashami (10th day of Dussera) Maharaja of Mysore sat on a golden *howdah* mounted on a meticulously decorated bejeweled elephant and were taken out in a procession. This procession was ritualistic but was very popular. This procession is still organized but instead of the prince it is the statue of the deity Chamundeswari is mounted on the *howdah*. During this period, the elephant trainers and their keepers also visit Mysore. Most of them are the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba from the forest regions of Mysore district.
5. Recently in a seminar organized by the Anthropological Association on Forest and Tribe (10-12 December, 2014) a group of Kadar who came from forest regions of Tamilnadu to participate in the seminar demonstrated what they talk with the elephants and their response to what they talk. A film of one of such episodes was also exhibited.



WHY TRIJUNCTION

It is important that at the outset I explain as to why I have selected trijunction as an illustrative region to understand the relevance and contributions of the Scheduled Tribes in understanding the wider Indian society. There is overwhelming scientific evidence in showing the significant role ecology plays in human adaptation and vice-versa. The location of trijunction is important. To begin with it has significant ecological variations demanding different strategies from humans inhabiting the area. The Nilgiri massif together with its slopes on western and eastern sides, and relatively gentle fall on northern side show quite considerable variability in land-forms, soils, fauna, flora, micro-climates, primates and human habitations (see for detailed discussion on the subject von Lengerke and Blasco 1989: 20-78; Hockings 1989b: 360-76). The trijunction has been home for a number of the Scheduled Tribes. Though their total population may not be as large as say of the Scheduled Tribes in Central India, the population of each of the Scheduled Tribes in this region is small and spread across the entire region. From a theoretical point of view, it is important to underline that though small in population size each maintains its distinct identity. This is in spite of the fact that the smaller groups face pressure of

various kinds. It should be also underlined that though they have been mutually interacting for centuries, social, cultural and linguistic convergences have not taken place. The region and the people in the region have a long history. The region has been a part of the trading link from ancient times. The trijunction is located at the frontiers of three major cultural and linguistic regions of India represented by Kannada, Tamil and Malayalam speaking people. Some two hundred and odd years ago the region came under the influence of direct and indirect colonial rule. The colonial rulers, for their own vested interests supported and generated sufficient documentation on various aspects of the region which is an asset to a cautious researcher. Besides the Nilgiri plateau region of the trijunction 'is perhaps the most intensively studied part of rural Asia' (Hockings 1978: 2) which allows for an informed



Figure 1: The Trijunction region: Political boundaries of three states: Kerala, Karnataka, and Tamilnadu are outlined in bold dashed lines

e on the region and its people. A lot of data relating e ecology of the region has been generated since the nction, which is a part of the Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve was eclared in 1986. In the post colonial period there has been nsive industrial and agricultural development in the region des development of road and transport which is radically nsforming the region. The crucial question is how are the mbers of the Scheduled Tribes responding to these Changes. ere is yet another subjective reason for selecting trijunction d that is I have been associated with it for more than five ecades. At times my involvement has been quite intensive.

Here my basic objectives are two-fold. First, how all these cological variations, archeological and historical details are elpful in understanding the lifestyles of the present day Scheduled Tribes inhabiting the region? Second, to explore if there is any link between the present-day Scheduled Tribes with past history of the region and if so what is it?

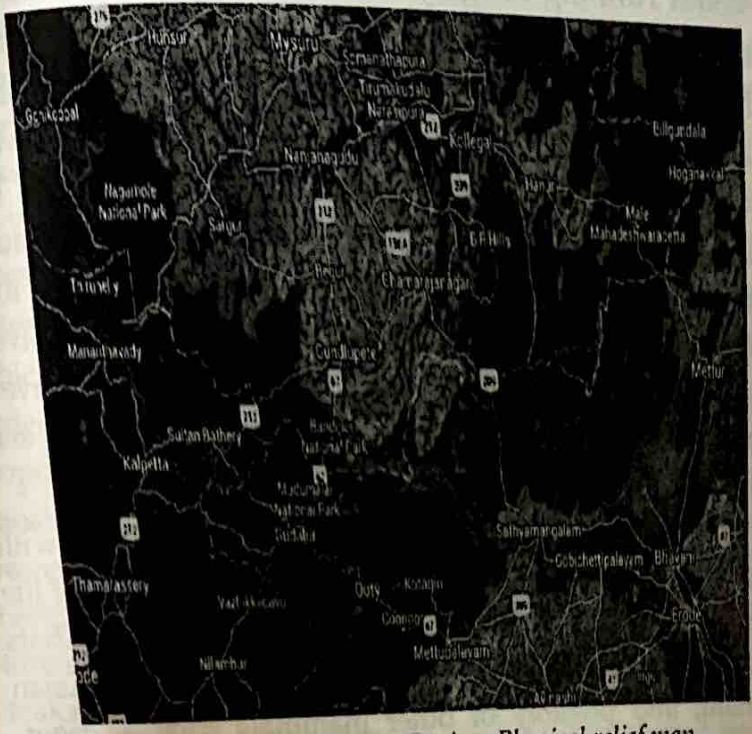

Figure 2: *Trijunction Region: Physical relief map*

Trijunction part of the Western Ghats

The trijunction region in terms of environmental heterogeneity and rich natural resources base is one of the most important parts of the Western Ghats. The Western Ghats is diverse and is considered to be one of the most significant repositories of India's bio-diversity. No wonder the region has been home for numerous indigenous communities, often called as *Adivasi*, most of them have been identified by the Indian constitution as the Scheduled Tribes besides settled cultivators and traders. The region has a long history of human habitation and trade. In this chapter my objective is to present the situation of the Scheduled Tribes in the overall context of the Western Ghats of which trijunction is a part.

Features of Western Ghats

The term Western Ghats refers to the practically unbroken hill chain running roughly in the north south direction for about 1500 km parallel to the Arabian Sea coast from the river Tapi down just short of Kanyakumari to the tip of Indian peninsula. The entire region is considered a treasure trove of bio-diversity and a water tower of the peninsular India. The annual rainfall in the Western Ghats ranges from as much as 8000 mm in southwest corner of the Upper Nilgiris to a mere 500 in the Moyar gorge just 30 km to its east. Given this rainfall variation, the western slopes of the Ghats have a natural cover of evergreen forest which changes to moist and then to dry deciduous towards the eastern slopes.

The great topographic heterogeneity together with rainfall variation gives rise to a tremendous diversity of life forms and vegetation types. It is reported 'Western Ghats region harbours the largest global population of the Asian elephant, and possibly of other mammals such as tiger, dholes, and gaur. The Western Ghats also harbour a number

of wild relatives of cultivated plants, including pepper, cardamom, mango, jackfruit and plantain. This biological wealth has paid rich dividend over the years. In fact, the tract was famous for its wild produce of pepper, cardamom, sandal and ivory' (Gadgil 2011: 10). The Ghats open up, to a long coastal line, its northern and eastern parts to the plateau and plains respectively, providing enough scope for movement of the people and goods. The western coastal region has been known for its maritime trade since ancient times.

The diversity and rich resource base have been on decline since the colonial regime which got further intensified in recent decades, 'with many biological communities and types being almost totally eliminated' (ibid 10). The traditional land use in the Ghats has been the cultivation of paddy in the valleys, supplemented by cultivation of millets and legumes on the hill slopes. Hill slope cultivation was largely of the shifting slash-and-burn type which got changed to terrace cultivation. A number of horticultural and tuber crops were introduced to this region, through European influence such as tea, coffee, rubber, cashew, tapioca and potato. Pepper and cardamom, which are native to the evergreen forest of the Western Ghats, were converted as plantation crops on a more extensive scale. Many of the newer plantations were taken up by clear felling of natural evergreen forests tracts which were basically home of the Scheduled Tribes. In order to understand the relationship of the forest dwelling population with the wider society it needs to be noted 'the most important forest produce of the Ghats in earlier times were cardamom, pepper and ivory although teak wood had been exported from the west coast parts even in medieval times. The earliest forest plantations recorded were the teakwood plantations raised by the Angres, Maratha naval Chief of Shivaji in the 17th Century. Exploitation of timber

on a large scale, however, started only with the British. The evergreen forests were extracted for railway sleepers and deciduous forests were progressively replaced by teak plantation.....The community held grazing lands and forests cover extensive areas in many parts of the Western Ghats, as do privately held forest lands to a lesser extent. These lands have been considerably over exploited and degraded in recent decades' (ibid: 10). This degradation got intensified owing to the explosion of forest based industries such as paper, plywood, polyfibres and matchwood. In addition, several industries were started primarily to utilize forest resources of the Western Ghats such as saw mills, brick and tile, paper, polyfibres etc. A few other industries have sprung up based on mineral resources of the hills. As a result of all these developments, the confidence that the Western Ghats were ecologically stable and sound region began to shake to a great extent. In 1986, prompted by UNESCO through its Man and Biosphere Programme, Government of India identified the Nilgiri Bio-sphere Reserve, as representative of bio-geographical zone of the Western Ghats. The objectives of the setting up of the Reserve were to conserve in situ biological diversity, to restore degraded eco-system to provide baseline data for ecological and environmental research and education, and for developing projects for sustainable development in the Reserve Zone.

Diversity of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve

The Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve (NBR) is located in southwest India, north of Palghat Gap between 10° 45′ - 12° 5′ latitude and 76° 10′ - 77° 10′ E longitude. The NBR is 5520 sq.km in area encompassing the trijunction of the three southern states. The hills of the NBR are ancient. It has dense forests and wide-ranging landscapes. It has the towering Nilgiri

Hills that extend into the north and south of varying ranges. The northern parts of the NBR extend into Mysore plateau and the southern end tapers off into the Coimbatore plains. While the southwest slopes and the coastal belt are high rain areas, the Mysore plateau and southern end have moderate and scanty rains respectively. NBR represents one of the hot spots of the world's bio-diversity with more than 3700 plant species and 684 vertebrate species, of which 156 are endemic (Daniel 1996). Having such a complex eco-system and diverse fauna and flora, its ecological importance has been recognized worldwide. Besides its natural heritage, this Reserve has since long been home to a rich diverse cultural and linguistic human populations. Besides cultivators, traders, artisans there are several scheduled tribe communities inhabiting the NBR, many of whom have been professionally studied by the anthropologists.

The richness of the NBR has attracted settlers, fortune seekers as well as adventurers and plunderers since ancient times. The first systematic and irreversible exploitation of the NBR began when the British colonist put a foothold in the Nilgiris. They not only changed the traditional land use but also introduced plantation of commercial crops in a big way, encouraged by large scale felling of forest for timber and other industrial use. They introduced many exotic trees, plants and vegetables. They opened up the area by laying down roads and most importantly mountain railway line which disrupted the ecology of the area and also changed the demographic pattern in a significant way. In post colonial period, the most significant changes that were introduced were laying down dams over the rivers and establishment of several industries. These and many other changes not only disturbed the ecology but also the entire social, cultural fabric in which the members of the Scheduled

Tribes have been systematically marginalized – the people who stoutly conserved the resources. The central, state and local governments are concerned with the developments and would like to halt the brazen degradation of the environment. In 1970s while laying down the parameters of development, the key feature was to integrate the needs of the development with the protection of the environment. The emphasis was on sustainable development. However, in spite of such laudable thoughts the ground reality was becoming extremely adverse. With the recognition of NBR which clearly underlined the necessity of conservation and an alternate model for sustainable development, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India constituted a Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel in 2010 to assess the current status of ecology of the Western Ghats region of which the trijunction is a part.

Huge Contradictions

The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP) noted that owing to the high human population density and major transformation of the landscape, there is need for urgent conservation of the Ghats and its resources. Another study had found that in the southern region, about 40% of the original vegetation was lost or converted to another form of land use, between 1920-1990 (Menon and Bawa 1997). Thus, on the basis of compilation of information and wide ranging field visits, consultations and analysis the panel 'designated the entire Western Ghats as an Ecologically Sensitive Area (ESA) and assigned three levels of Ecological Sensitivity to different regions of it' (Gadgil 2011: 1). Report of the panel headed by Gadgil (popularly known as Madhav Gadgil report) was made public in March 2012. Soon various peasant organizations, socio-political movements and all the six states

the Western Ghats namely Gujarat, Goa, Maharashtra, ...erala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu leveled widespread ...iticism that the report has overlooked the fundamental ...ghts and livelihood issues of the people and if implemented ...ould impede local developments. Under this backdrop of ...assive opposition, the Ministry of Environment and Forest ...ormed a High Level Working Group in August 2012 under ...he chairmanship of Kasturirangan, a space scientist and a ...member of the Planning Commission to revisit the report. ...Kasturirangan submitted his report in August 2013 (popularly called as Kasturirangan report). In response to the pressure from Supreme Court and the National Green Tribunal, the Ministry of Environment and Forest hastily initiated steps to implement the recommendations of the Kasturirangan report. Accordingly a number of villages in each state were identified as falling under Ecologically Sensitive Areas. The intention was to impose the Indian Environment (Protection) Act on all these villages. The step taken by the government has lead to widespread opposition from different stakeholders. The allegation is that these two reports are environment-centric and do not take into account human livelihood and development issues and therefore should be kept in abeyance.

In the meanwhile, in Kerala, the demarcation of Ecologically Sensitive Areas for the conservation of the Western Ghats was completed which generated a lot of opposition. In November 2013, a meeting organized by the Expert Panel that coordinated the redefinition of ESAs proposed by the Kasturirangan Committee, opposed the Zoning of the Western Ghats. The overall opinion was that such Zoning would cry halt to the development of the entire region, affect construction activities, agriculture and tourism and stop the development of the famed Sabarimala hill shrine. It was reported that residents were living in fear

of being evicted from their land. The lone legislator from Wynaad (a member of the Scheduled Tribe) who argued in favor of the restrictions on development was shouted down. In January 2014 Kerala Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution urging the Union government to exclude human settlements and agriculture land from 123 villages identified as ESA by the Kasturirangan Committee report. Later the Kerala government adopted the stand that only protected forests would be demarcated as ESA which invited criticism from environmentalists. The government ordered another round of field investigations. The opinion of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad, the people's science movement in Kerala was that it would be disastrous to the Western Ghats to earmark only protected forests as ESA. The stiff resistance to the recommendations of the Madhav Gadgil Committee and the Kasturirangan Committee show that both the ruling and opposition parties have capitulated to vested interests (The Hindu August 2, 2015). Kerala is emerging as a test case for conservation of the Western Ghats. At the time of writing this, there is a sort of a stalemate. The debate clearly underlines huge contradictions between the unbridled development agenda as against the environmental realities. Imposing a few restrictions here and there is not going to resolve the contradictions. The issues are much more intricate and basic. On one hand there are interests of different classes of stakeholders and on the other there are serious ethical issues relating to development such as are there any limits to development? What about equity and fair distribution? Imposition of any restriction in isolation of what is happening in the larger society will only heighten the conflict. As is very well illustrated by the state of affairs, around national parks in this region and protected forests; these now look like small islands, surrounded by fields where intensive commercial agriculture is being practiced, establishment of chain of

high class resorts promoting elite tourism, crisscrossed by network of roads on which traffic is increasing by the day. In this scenario where do the members of the Scheduled Tribe with their simple, humble, restraint and peaceful ways of life stand? These issues will be discussed later; here my purpose is to highlight the rich resource diversity of the region, its long history and also that there has been increasing and accelerated degradation of natural resources base which is bound to have its lasting impact on the people in general and the members of the Scheduled Tribe in particular.

Early History

Foragers do not leave many footprints in the march of the history. Once upon a time foraging and hunting was a dominant way of life but that way of life has been progressively marginalized. It is well known that while the history of the people in the plains have been studied in much detail, the same is not true for those who inhabited the forest and hilly regions. However the archeologists working in southern region of India have established that there was some human activity in the region during early Pleistocene period (Pappu et al 2011: 1596-9). With the arrival of agro-pastoral way of life in the Neolithic period which appears to have begun sometime in 3rd Millennium BC, hunting-gathering became less dominant on the landscape of the region (see Paddayya 1973; Fuller et al 2009: 775-8). Boivin et al, think that transition from foraging to farming in Southern Deccan suggests indigenous plant domestication in the region. These scholars believe while there is a strong case for indigenous development of plants, animal herding may have been introduced as no wild ancestors of those animals have been found. Such animals may have been introduced in mid-third millennium BCE (2007). According to these

scholars 'what is clear that by mid-third millennium BC, southern Neolithic sites had a mixed economy of pastoralism and indigenous crop cultivation' (ibid 2007: 3). These scholars make an important observation when they write 'despite the importance of internal processes, however, Southern Neolithic Societies were not isolated entities functioning as solitary and self-sufficient communities somehow isolated from the rest of the world. On the contrary, our working (and still partly hypothetical) model of Southern Neolithic Society recognizes contact, exchange and interdependence as key factors in the emergence of ashmound tradition as well as the changes that subsequently led to the development of very different societies at the beginning of the iron age' (ibid: 6). They think that ashmounds were the sites for some communal rituals. But what they write further is most significant from the point of view of archeological history of South India that re-analysis of the site and radiocarbon dating indicates the ashmound sites pre-date the Neolithic settlements. If that be so, who were responsible for creating those ashmounds? The ethnographic data noted among the classical foragers, Cholanaickan, who are one of the cave dwelling populations of South India[1] provide a possible thought about ashmounds besides others which have been proposed. In the humid climates insects are a serious challenge to both the animals and human beings. Ash is one of the devices human beings use to protect themselves from the threat of insect infestation. However, the observation that the Southern Neolithic Societies were not isolated entities is of much significance in understanding the growth and emergence of societies and their network. In this respect it is important to underline that forests have been a major source for resources which continues even now. Therefore when it is stated that agro-pastoral life emerged, it does not necessarily mean that forest lost its significance. It suggests t[illegible]roduction that is

animal husbandry and cultivation increasingly became the dominant modes. A multitude of resources still continued to be extracted from the forest for consumption, manufacturing various objects and for trade. Obviously those who continued to stay in the forest or made to stay or who on account of some other reasons sought refuge in the forest, subsisted on forest products as well as became suppliers of the products.

The age following Neolithic in South India is Iron Age which began around 1000 BCE. The authors of the age are often called as Megalithic Builders. They have left a rich variety of archeological data (see Gururaja Rao 1972, Leshnik 1974, Zagarell 1997, Moorti 1994 and several others). This period saw the dominance of the pastoral[2] way of life but there are substantial indications of some tilling of the soil and foraging continued. Selvakumar observes 'Iron Age, which began around 1000 BCE in South India and which saw the building of burials for and worship of the dead, further increased the cultural complexities. Pastoral life in the major regions and tilling the soil in limited areas became dominant mode of subsistence. It has been argued elsewhere by the author that some of the megalithic burials of the Iron Age South India could have belonged to hunter-gatherer groups' (2014: 258). This observation is well supported by the fact that the forest have continued to remain an important source of resources. The extraction of those resources in the past was mainly carried out by the people who lived in the forest areas. Fox calls them as professional primitives (1969: 139-160). This situation began to change significantly with the establishment of the colonial rule when forests began to fall within the ambit of large scale commercial exploitation and plantation. From the perspective of our study Megalithic graves are important because a number of grave sites have been discovered both in the lower and the upper Nilgiri

regions. The earliest Megalithic graves are found on the base of the Nilgiri Hills which very well correspond to Pandukkal complex found in other parts of south India. The graves at the base of the hills are considered to belong to 800 BCE to the turn of the millennium, followed by sets of Megalithic graves appearing on the upper plateau. It has been generally agreed that the grave complex in upper plateau began around 400 CE to 600 CE (Zagarell 2012: 583-86).

The study of the Megaliths in the Nilgiri allows us to have some glimpses of the life of the people in those times. But before I discuss that let it be stated that death rituals among the members of the Scheduled Tribes inhabiting the NBR are elaborate and play an important role in their social lives and provide an occasion for reconciliation, consensus and trust in sustaining their culture as moral communities (See Demmer 2014: 263-87). It is a dimension to be kept in view while searching for links with the past.

It has been established that not only there is time difference between the Megaliths of the lower Nilgiri and Upper plateau but there are other significant differences in form, orientation, wares found in situ etc. However, Zagarell (ibid: 583-86) is of this view that the grave sites in the lower and upper Nilgiri show a continued tradition with Pandukkal grave complex of South India which indicates that the population inhabiting the Nilgiri were not totally independent. Zagarell further writes that varied Megalithic tradition in the Nilgiri have continued to play an important role till recent times which possibly could be associated with ethnic identities. These differences have been associated with the contemporary ethnic groups found in the Nilgiris which would suggest unchanging ethnic landscape. This view was based on the assumption that since the Nilgiri has been an isolated region the traditions c[illegible]ued. This assumption

has been questioned by Zagarell himself. He writes, 'the hills themselves offer no significant barrier to groups moving up and down the hills' (ibid 583). It may be further added in support of the arguments of Zagarell that in spite of the fact that the communities that have been living in close proximity to each other and interacting in various ways have maintained their separate identities. This situation challenges the assumption that contact should necessarily lead to social and cultural convergence.

Zagarell has further noted that apart from the fact that the Megaliths indicate varied communities spatially separated but also there are large and small cemeteries. What does that mean? May be the difference is on account of the fact that there were some dominant communities in the region. Further it has been noted that some graves were conspicuously large and elaborate which certainly point towards some kind of emerging inequalities (ibid: 585). Inequalities can emerge owing to generation of surplus and some acquiring the muscle or ritual power to appropriate that surplus. Zagarell writes 'evidence of ceremonial activities is also apparent. At several cemeteries shreds are found over the entire surface, whereas others are completely clean. Some cemeteries have indications of low walls, suggesting a ritual inside separated from the outside world' (ibid: 585). These observations certainly indicate stable community life. From 7th Century onwards there are 'indications of broad regional trade and a complex political structure begin to emerge' (ibid: 585).

To sum up, this brief pre-historic and historic peep into the NBR region indicates that colonization of the region is of great antiquity. While the rock art suggests some kind of animal herding it raises an important question that the animals that were eventually herded did not have wild ancestors. The

megalithic traditions found in the Nilgiri foothills and plateau indicates some continuity with the Pandukkal complex tradition found elsewhere in South India but there are marked differences in the tradition between the lower and the upper Nilgiri regions. The spatial separation between the grave sites and their varied forms do point out towards different ethnic identities. The differences in the size of cemeteries suggest some kind of dominance of some groups, while there is also indication of emerging inequalities. There were also sure signs of observance of some rituals and ceremonies besides clear indications of trade. We also get distinct impression about the existence of stable communities. There is also evidence for the emergence of complex political structure.

Social Relations

Zagarell (2002) has suggested 'these earlier communities at least since the eighth or ninth centuries and through the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, operated in a world of episodic state authority, stratification, taxation, and organized military activities. I have argued that these periods of state control, direct and indirect, created the conditions for classical Nilgiri social relations' (ibid: 79). For providing some clues to get insight into past Nilgiri social relations, he studied hero-stones found in the region. He found that the Nilgiri hero-stones are broadly similar to those from other areas of India which are dedicated to those who died heroic and honorable deaths. He writes, 'the specific details of these deaths vary but all those distinguished in this way are thought worthy of long-term respect and veneration' (ibid: 79). The hero-stones are found both in the lower Nilgiri and in the upper Nilgiri regions. Zagarell suggests that hero-stones of upper Nilgiri 'not only emulated the art styles of lower Nilgiri elites but also expropriated and imp[illegible]tly, transformed ideologies

of power, social hierarchies and gender from the latter' (ibid: 79). He says that 'Upper Nilgiri groups idealized woman not only as protectors of family solidarity and virtue but also as active protectors of the communities, in some cases as actual armed warriors' (ibid: 79). This gives clear indication that the status of women was different than that found in the lower region. Zagarell observes that majority of reliefs in the Moyar Ditch area refer to the period of twelfth through seventeenth century which is the era of 'settlement, state domination and administrative control'. During this period and immediately after the fall of Vijayanagara the 'state was actively intervening, administering, raiding and collecting taxes from various communities in highlands' (ibid: 81). There are some important similarities and differences between the reliefs of lower and upper Nilgiri regions suggesting some contact, and differences could be owing to variation in social conditions and practices. The reliefs at the higher reaches are poorly executed as compared to the ones executed at lower levels indicating lower degree of professionalism. Some of the relief sites are littered with shreds suggesting larger congregations and celebrations at such places. Some of the hero-stones are conspicuously large. The erection of these reliefs obviously required labour and effort which directly suggests generation of some surplus and its appropriation by those who could acquire power.

Archeological and historical sources clearly indicate that the region we are focusing on in spite of the fact being an area of thick forest, rugged cliffs, gently rolling hills surrounded by valleys and crisscrossed by numerous streams, was not a barrier for people to move in and out of them. There has been varied kind of contacts and state control. Certain traditions noted in different parts of South India have been noted in the Nilgiri region though in modified form. The significant

aspect which gets repeatedly reflected is the existence distinct communities which maintained their identiti Though Zagarell cautions us by categorically stating 'cultur interaction change over time and that present day cultur configurations and behaviors cannot be simply presume to model the past' (ibid: 80). We need to squarely face th question of how do we explain the existence of present day foragers in South India as well as in other parts of India We want to understand if the past can give some clues in understanding the existence of foragers in modern day India which is one of our objectives.

It may appear a bit digressive but it is relevant. At some stage the Government of India realized that some of the Scheduled Tribes being vulnerable were not getting adequate attention under general plan of development and welfare of the Scheduled Tribes. Therefore in order to allocate separate funds for their development and welfare they were recognized as Primitive Tribal Groups within the larger category of the Scheduled Tribes. The recognition was done on the basis of their dependence on forest, pre-agricultural level of existence, stagnant or declining population, low literacy rates and subsistence based economy. Since the term Primitive Tribal Groups was not found appropriate, they were renamed as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups. The Government of India has identified seventy five such groups all over the country. Although the list does not cover all those who are closely connected with the forest, their number is high. According to Hitchcock and Biesele, citing an as-yet unpublished report by D. Venkatesan that there are 1.3 million present and recent hunter gatherers living in mainland India which will be approximately 25% of the world total (2000: 4-5). Observing on these figures Gardner writes 'this would mean that India is home to five times as many

hunter-gatherers as North America and circumpolar region combined, more than four times as many as Australia, and approximately three times as many as Africa '(ibid 2014: 243). Even if we may not agree with the figures, it can be easily conceded that their numbers are high and their existence needs to be explained. This issue becomes all the more important as we have been getting loud and clear messages from the prior reviews that hills and forest were no big barriers for people to move in and out of the region and that the foragers have not been isolated population of the region. Gardner reaffirms by stating 'hunter-gatherers in South India too had centuries of contact with more powerful peoples (ibid: 243). In the foregoing pages we have cited archeological and historical evidence that the entire NBR has experienced a variety of military, state domination, administrative control, internal and external trade connections. Some of the groups inhabiting the region have been close to ancient towns having distant trade links. Many of their locations are dotted with ancient pilgrim centers too. It can be safely stated that their existence was recognized, respected, perhaps dominated too. But apparently there were no overt and covert attempts to convert them till the British colonial period.

Purely from materialistic point of view, the forest has been a major source of resources which was extremely important in pre-monetized phase of Indian economy. Extraction of those resources was important for foragers, peasants and town dwellers who consumed them directly and for others who generated wealth out of them. In pre-colonial and pre-industrialized phase of the Indian economy there was a kind of loose and ambiguous control over the regions that generated those resources. The forests were a sort of commons.

From a non-materialistic point of view it appears that the larger society looked at them with some respect, admiration,

awe and fear but there must have developed some mutual interdependence too. Gardner writes that there are aspects of the Hindu culture which may provide answer for the existence of such a large number of the forest dwelling populations. He observes that the Hindu sacred texts emphasize mutual dependence of the occupational specialists. Also it recognizes that the foragers have a unique and valued occupation within the greater society. Until recently few have sought to compete with the foragers. The important thing to be underlined is that in spite of long-term economic exchange, the foragers remained aloof and maintained their identity. Gardner argues that the Hindus 'view austere, itinerant forest life as purifying'. He further argues 'whether or not Venkatesan's population figures actually are accurate, it appears that Hindu concepts might well have served to foster relatively respectful Indian treatment of foragers in recent times. It should not surprise us then the foragers had survived as forest people in South Asia well into 20th Century' (ibid: 244).

This review thus strongly suggest that foraging emerged as a way of life at some point but all along was linked with the larger society providing them goods and services. It is certainly possible that many more groups were engaged in extracting the forest resources which at some point of time took to stable food production. Notwithstanding adversarial relations between peasants and foragers, purely on material grounds so very well illustrated by the kind of relations Badagas had with the Kurumbas (Hockings 2013: 161-63) the larger Hindu society also viewed them with respect, purifying, and valued their occupations.

This situation began to change radically during the colonial rule and got further accelerated in the post colonial phase of Indian history. The forest dwellers except for the services and goods they provided became a nuisance. They

were marginalized and displaced from the support base of their subsistence. Their life-styles got degraded. Commercial agencies were appointed to extract the forest resources in a massive way for distant markets, and a kind of slavery like system got introduced.

ENDNOTES

1. Each Cholanaickan household in the caves they inhabit keeps the fire on all the time particularly in the night. While fire provides them warmth and protects them against wild animals, the resulting ash is extremely useful for them. Varieties of insects abound in the humid climate of the region, particularly in the caves they live in. They have to protect themselves from these ever persisting insects and also the food they collect. While they smear their bodies with ash, each household fixes a bamboo or tree branch with its side branches cut short to a length of 6 feet, close to the hearth. They pile up ash around these poles. The notches in the pole are used to hang the food they have collected. Different items are bundled separately in pieces of cloth or other packing material such as leaves and hung on the notches. These poles are actually devices for storing their provisions. The hot ash from the hearth prevents insects from climbing on the pole. Moreover since they do not have much horizontal space in the cave the poles provide vertical space (Bhanu 1989: 88).
2. Selvakumar (2014: 216) mentions that Sangam literature often refers to cattle lifting and trading. He suggests that act of lifting cattle may have been used as a strategy by aggressive hunter-gathers to switch over to pastoral way of life. But the animals were not of local origin.



THE SITUATION OF THE SCHEDULED TRIBES

The situation of the Scheduled Tribes has not been static anywhere, more so at the trijunction. But it can be easily conceded that the changes in the living standards of Scheduled Tribes and their development has been slow, to very slow. It may be pertinent to ask why have these changes been slow. The tendency among the people who have reported about the Scheduled Tribes, including the professional anthropologist is to freeze them in time. This is rather paradoxical for this region because the people whom we now know as the Scheduled Tribes remained in 'primitive' stages, while, all others 'moved up' socially, politically, linguistically. Besides there have been waves of settlers from remote parts, arriving like an avalanche after the region saw the occupation by the British colonizers. In fact Zvelebil (1981) proposes a grand hypothesis that the Southern Region in prehistoric times was inhabited by Negrito and Proto-Australoid people who later came under the domination of Dravidian speakers of South Dravidian speech variety which 'later developed into Tamil-Malayalam and Kannada features' (ibid: 523) that in turn influenced characteristically the tribal speeches. The

essential point that emerges is that throughout this long history it is assumed that the Scheduled Tribes remained frozen in their traditions and subsistence activities despite rapidly changing environment and people around them. This formulation although problematic indeed can be discussed at length with reference to the trijunction, particularly Nilgiris because a part of this region has been extensively described and studied since the arrival of the British, besides there are some earlier stray observations of some travelers, missionaries, etc. These descriptions and observations, at times are challenging because there are significant variations in their observations, sometimes it is unknown whether one is discussing about the same or different people. There have been some notable attempts by the experts on the Nilgiri to wade through the literature and present a systematized and refined picture of the region (see Zvelebil 1981, Bird-David 1987, Bird-David 1989 among others). Before I highlight some of the sources which are responsible for the creation of the confusion, I would like to raise an important question of why have the Scheduled Tribes which includes the foragers of the region have changed very little, particularly, since the arrival of the British in the scene, whereas, others like erstwhile British colonizers and their agents, administrators, planters, contractors, traders, missionaries, anthropologists, linguists and sundry others have prospered. For all these people the region has been virtually and literally like gold mine. While they have been digging gold[1], the native people were described as 'exceedingly poor and wretched. In the fields near the villages, they build miserable low huts, have a few rags only for clothing and the hair of both the sexes stands out matted like a mop, and swarms with vermin...' (Buchanan quoted in Thurston and Rangachari 1909 iv: 163-4). Dubois described them, 'as less intelligent even than the natives of Africa, these savages of India do not possess bows and arrows which they

do not know how to use' (1897: 76). Breeks the Commissioner of the Nilgiris found the Irulas very frustrating because he could not elicit the information he wanted from them and he concluded 'at all events, there is no reason to suppose that they were ever anything but a jungle race and it is needless to say they have no tradition of their own' (1873: 71). He was writing this about the Irula who have a long history, tradition, plenty of folklore, folksongs, ballads, complex social structure and language (see Aiyappan 1948, Zvelebil 1981, Jebadhas and Noble 1989, Perialwar 2014, and Prema 2008). Branding one group inferior as compared to others is well known strategy employed by third party to exploit the targeted groups. The descriptions given by different writers on the tribes of the Nilgiris aptly apply to the allegory cited by Banaji and Greenwald in their book Blindspot: Hidden Biases of Good people (2013:123). In this story one set of birds having a star on their bellies felt superior to other set of birds who lacked them. They would not invite them in their picnics or parties The birds which lacked the star internalized their inferior status till the arrival of an entrepreneur who stamped stars on the bellies of the birds lacking them for a fee. This infuriated the original starred birds. The entrepreneur had the solution to remove the star but of course for a higher price. Thus started the ruinous game of stamping in and out which resulted in destruction of both set of birds. The entrepreneur exits laughing and whistling.

Kapp and Hocking in their article have tried to clarify the position of the Kurumba tribes who have been among the most persecuted population in the Nilgiri region. They noted 'Noble (1968: 105) has pointed out that various nineteenth century accounts of Kurumbas reported them to be dwelling "in 1) caves or rock shelters, 2) dispersed dwellings near forest clearings and 3) houses or huts in small hamlets". Morgan,

a forest officer, noted (1867: 99) how isolated were the lives of some Kurumbas even as compared with the neighbouring Irulas, "a couple frequently living alone, in the centre of dense forest and cultivating a small patch of raggy" (finger millet). Yet on the very next page Morgan showed that their social and economic isolation was by no means total: in addition to honey, "These men collect almost all forest produce, such as soap nuts, myrobalans, dye barks etc., which they sell for trifle to the plain traders whose debtors they are, in return for salt, grain, chilies and other necessities...." (1896: 100 emphasis-mine). The variability in Kurumba residence is still observable. While to-day the great majority of Nilgiri Kurumbas live in substantial huts, Hockings recently encountered a sizeable group of them, twelve families living under a concrete road bridge at the forest of the hills' (ibid: 234-35). Cholanaickan in the Wynaad side even now live in caves (see Bhanu 1989). Lavi and Bird-David in a recent paper have described in detail the kind of miserable shelters in which the Naickan live (2014: 407-432). Kapp and Hockings write, 'in recent years the best, tribal people have been able to hope for, has been a daily wage of Rs. 3 when they work at plucking berries on the coffee plantation' (1989: 236). That is, the economic situation of the tribes has not changed much since what Buchanan a traveler wrote, or Breeks the Commissioner of Nilgiri, or Morgan the forest officer or trained professionals in recent times. The irony is that throughout the long history of the region, there has been intrusion of the outsiders to obtain the forest resources for extraction of which the labour, skills and knowledge of the indigenous people whether they were Kuruba, Irula or Urali must have been considered essential. In spite of all that it also goes to the credit of the indigenous people that they conserved the natural resources of their region and their identities. F
the past we do not have precise and authen

of the mechanism that was employed for extraction of those resources. But after the arrival of the British, the situation changed rapidly. The British not only occupied the region but were responsible for changing the socio-economic, political and demographic picture of the region as well as the legal framework. Its resources were extensively exploited for outside market. The traditional inhabitants of the region were continuously displaced into more inhospitable areas and also extinguishing whatever customary rights they had on the resources of the region. For instance there is absolute silence by the professional observers as well as administrators on the issue of assessing the impact, first of the entry of the Badaga who came as a refugee in the forest and later they became successful farmers, and second the entry of the Europeans as rulers and also as planters, on the forest resources as well as on the people like Kurumba who were critically dependent on the forest resources. The impression that has been created is as if these factors were neutral on the lives of the Kurumba and the indigenous inhabitants. The simple logic indicates that if the forest were the resource base of the forest dwellers, their displacement from their habitat must have been traumatic and much cause for their miseries. Further, they must have made social, cultural and psychological adaptation in a very difficult situation. Hockings has drawn our attention to their massacre owing to the alleged fear of Kurumba sorcery (see Hockings 2013: 162). The Kurumba in particular were the persecuted population. Their persistent persecution must have instilled in them a sense of helplessness and unfathomable fear of the outsiders. No wonder they tried to shun contact with outsiders, who besides killing them were continuously cheating them, obtaining forest goods for a 'trifle' and keeping them perpetually under debt' (see Noble above). These outsiders may themselves have been in trouble over time, because of shrinking forest, over exploitation of

certain forest resources to meet the demands of the market by the ever expanding colonial establishment.

At this stage, I will have to widen the scope of my discussion here in order to build my argument that professionals like anthropologists and linguists were not asking the right questions relevant to the people they were studying. Hence, whatever they have produced so far and continue to do so, may be alright to supplement their theories about social, cultural, linguistic evolution among the population but the same populations have been persistently subdued, indicating that there was some social disturbance in the total system. Obviously it clearly indicates that what they were studying was not relevant from indigenous people's point of view but also not good enough even for understanding the micro situation without bringing in the larger system

Larger Framework

The extensive research of the historian Dalrymple have shown that the East India Company and its successors the British Government, organized, loot of the Indian sub-continent and plundered its resources (forthcoming book to be published by Bloomsbury and Knopf). I have cited previously there was a kind of rush to extract timber from forests, establish plantations, and dig for gold for distant markets. Of course there are historians particularly of Cambridge School who strongly believe that the British rule did India good and I may also add that the Europeans supposedly believed that they were also enriching anthropological literature by focusing on some people whom they called as 'primitive'. These scholars usually mention that the European colonizers introduced democracy, viable administrative system, the rule of law, systematic revenue system, effective communication, English education, tea and one should not forget cricket. I

may be accused of being partial but I should also mention that they introduced anthropology in India, the characteristic feature of which was that the Europeans began to study the tribes in different parts of the country and later Indians trained by the Europeans also joined the enterprise. It was only later that the other populations came into the purview of anthropology. There were two other important features of this new enterprise, one that it was not done in the partnership with the people who were being studied, second the issues which blocked their natural progress were either never probed or if at all partially. Now let us have a brief idea of the critic of the British regime in India. Of course the story of British Industrialization was built on the deindustrialization of India is now considered an elementary knowledge. The 200 years of the British rule in India made it incredibly poor. All the so called modernizing efforts were peripheral and were meant to perpetuate colonialism in an effective manner by designing a system of dividing people on communal lines or aggravating the already existing fissures in the society and creating a differential privilege and a pecking order down the line. The raw material was systematically moped up from different regions and the finished products were dumped into the country. It was not only the peasants who lost their autonomy by growing commercial crops instead of food crops, the artisans were also ruined. Seshan writes, 'Landlords and money lenders with the blessing of the government had a field day in hastening the process of de-peasantization' (Deccan Herald 31, July 2015). There were famines after famines in India during the British rule. According to Shashi Tharoor between 15 and 29 million Indians died owing to starvation. The last tragic famine took place as recently as 1943 in Bengal when the British administration 'deliberately ordered the diversion of food from starving Indian civilian to well supplied British soldiers and Europeans stock piles'

(Shashi Tharoor's speech in London reported by NDTV http: www.ndtv.com/article/opinion/how-a-debate-was-won-in-london-against-british colonization-of-India by Shashi Tharoor-596716/pfrom=home-top stories).

A quick glance of the anthropological and linguistic literature produced during the last 200 years on the Nilgiri region indicates as if what was happening in the larger frame of India had no relationship with the people and Nilgiris as a region or was considered irrelevant in understanding the communities, their inter-community relations and symbols of their identity formations. It was assumed that so much variety in Nilgiris was owing to the fact that it had been an isolated area. The variety as well as the comfort of working in a 'hill station' under the colonial rule made the anthropologists, linguists and other professionals rushing into the area in pursuit of data to authenticate their formulations which directly or indirectly were inspired by evolutionary theory. No doubt these pursuits resulted in masses of literature and even the minutest of variations were put into 'similar' or 'dissimilar' slots without trying to make clear as to what is the significance of these variations, and how these variations were relevant to the 'wretched', 'miserable' lives of the people. The scholars even now are busy recording speech variations, variations in the social organization etc., which in fact has become an enterprise in itself but the moot question is what about the people who are grilled to 'cough out' the data. Up till now, it was mainly the European scholars who were in this business. But now it is the Indian scholars too who have begun to descend on the so called indigenous populations to collect the data in a big way. In the colonial period the scholars did not ask the question of what are the causes on account of which they could not 'progress'? or what was the colonist regime doing to them? The absence

of raising these questions indicate that it was assumed that the presence of the colonists was totally neutral to the social organization, belief system and speech variation of the tribes. Such questions were not asked then and are not being asked even now as if the pursuit of knowledge should avoid politically sensitive questions. However, the fact remains that the indigenous people continued to suffer with prejudices. Zvelebil, the internationally famous linguist, in a scholarly paper writes, quoting from Draft Project Report for the Development of Primitive Tribes in the Nilgiris prepared by the Government of Tamilnadu's Department of Harijan Tribal Welfare, 'it is not only the factual errors and inadequacies but also the tendencies and the prejudices which still mar even the official publications. Thus in the above mentioned report, we read that the Todas are "a somewhat lazy lot" (p 42) who have shunned agriculture because "they are not known for hard physical labour"; they are also described as being, by physical appearance "a little aggressive" (!) but in spite of that, "offences like physical violence are almost rare among them" (p 42). The tribals it is maintained, "do not realize the value of time" but this attitude "can and must be changed" and they should benefit through "contact with the urban population and other advanced communities particularly Badagas". It is a sad truth that the tribal communities were forced to allow those "other advanced communities" (particularly the Moplas, Chetties, Badagas) to usurp their lands' (1981: 474). This is indeed a factual reporting by Zvelebil but in these statements he should have seen the echo of the earlier European observations. Further, he completely overlooks the role of the Europeans in the category of usurpers. The irony is that the indigenous populations have been collecting valuable resources from the forest on which the middle men have immensely profited and the recipient of these goods

prospered. One can blame the ignorant government officials, contractors etc., but what about the trained professionals. In the same paper Zvelebil, is not at all inhibited in exhibiting his communal prejudices, slanted class views and racially loaded expressions. Let me quote a little extensively to highlight these issues. In describing his visit to some tribal villages in the midst of a Roman Catholic Church and a monastery in Gobi Taluk of Coimbatore District, Tamilnadu, where he met a group of Uralis, he writes, 'what was striking at once was the welfare appearance, the obviously greatly improved conditions in which these Uralis lived, compared to maltreated poor, lonely Uralis of Budimadu, suffering from exploitation and malnutrition. The Uralis of Gundri were proud, well-fed, handsome, clean, well dressed, and above all, self-conscious and self-controlled, well aware of their identity as a separate community in possession of their own language which they called erula, i.e., Irula' (1981: 480).

Later in the same paper while highlighting ethno linguistic features of Irula speaking groups he also describes their somatic features as 'most handsome', 'less handsome' and 'least handsome' (p. 508). Such comments are not isolated, way back in 1921, Hutton writing about Sema Naga states, 'among the women, however, ugliness is the rule. A pretty Sema girl is hardly to be found... The women generally are very short, squat and horny-headed. In fact, beards among men are about as rare as beauty is among women' (p.9). I should not hesitate to write that much celebrated scholar Furer-Haimendorf in an oft quoted paper on Wynaad Naika writes, 'they are of small stature, slight build, dark skin, wary or curly hair, and primitive facial features (1952: 20; emphasis-mine). Bird-David in her much researched paper provides a top' quote from one Gopalan Nair which reads 'Jain Kurumbers and Kattu Naykans are a primitive race

without a history and they are happy in their mountain slopes with means of subsistence always available in the shape of edible roots. Another decade, they will also be working for wages in the tea estates; earning livelihood like their brother aborigines of Wynaad' (1989: 249). This is just to underline that the inherent theoretical bias has been that the present day forest dwellers are the survivors of the early human beings. The intervening period is of no consequence, as well as in and out migration of the people, changing political economy, technology, ecology etc., and the epistemology of their understanding of the total environment around them.

In the following pages I will discuss the tribes that have been identified in the trijunction, the confusions that have been created and finally the tribal situation before transformation.

The Scheduled Tribes at Trijunction

The Key Stone Foundation has identified thirty two Scheduled Tribes of the Nilgiri Biosphere area which is slightly larger than the trijunction I have been discussing and certainly larger than the Nilgiri region identified by the scholars like Zvelebil. The difference in the size of the area does not matter as the region is contiguous but there are significant variations in terrain and vegetation. For outsiders, the forest and hills appear formidable and impregnable but for the people living in the region those have not been barriers for inter-community relations, communication, trade and developing knowledge of people and places across those physical or administrative boundaries. It is also emphasized that in spite of the fact that the area looked like 'no man's' land different political establishments, petty landlords have been collecting tributes and also thoughts from the people living in the region, also ideas and technology have been flowing in and out of the region (refer to [illegible]ion on prehistory and

history).

The groups identified by the Key Stone Foundations are as follows: The Toda, the Kota, the Irula/Kasaba, the Aalu Kurumba, the Paalu Kurumba, the Jenu Kurumba, the Kaadu Nayaka or Kattu Naicken, the Soliga, the Betta Kurumba, the Urali Kurumba, the Kaadu Kurumba, the Paniyan, the Kadar, the Cholanaicken, the Pattinaicken, the Muduga, the Adiyan, the Arnadan, the Kuruchiya, the Mullukurumba, the Malaivedan, the Panjari/Badava Yeravas, the Tani Yerava, the Karimpalan, the Pathiyan, the Malapulayan, the Malai Kudiya, the Muduva, the Mala Malasar, the Malapanikkar, the Malamuthan and the Thachanaadan. They also say that besides these, there are groups like the Badaga, Wynaadan Chettis and Manthadan Chettis, who are not classified as the Scheduled Tribe 'but are part of the ecological and social heritage of the Nilgiri region' (p. 52).

Conceptualizing Variation

Notwithstanding that there is some confusion on the nomenclature of some groups, it is important to point out that population size of all these groups is small. Further, it is extremely important to ask how do we explain the existence of so many different groups distributed in different niches of the region? It should now be possible to make attempts to answer this question as aerial view of the entire region and large scale data from Censuses, surveys and results of numerous ethnographic studies are available. Zvelebil though directly does not attempt to answer this question. But has done an extremely valuable paper in systematizing the information on the Scheduled Tribes of the region. His paper is 'Problems of identification and classification of some Nilgiri tribes' (1981: 467-528). Of course he got bogged down by the issue of finding out which one of the communities

is linguistically and culturally independent. In view of this author, it is endless and futile exercise in the light of Zvelebil's own grand hypothesis which he has proposed in this paper which is 'The assumption that such languages as Irula, Solega, Kurumba or Paniya are not to be considered direct "descendents" "branched-off" dialects of Proto-Tamil, or Proto-Kannada, or Proto-Malayalam, but rather speech forms which were evolved by the tribal communities-originally linguistically non-Dravidian-from "mixtures of various pre-Tamil, pre-Kannada, pre-Malayalam dialects which were, some 2500-2000 years ago, superimposed on these (Negrito-cum-proto-Australoid) tribals by conquering Dravidians. The result are tribal languages belonging undoubtedly to the South Dravidian sub-family, which are "more or less" "Tamiloid" or "Kannadoid", or "Malayalam- like" (showing a few retentions of older stages of these large languages) and manifest a few typical innovations of their own and a few features which are typical for the Nilgiri area. They may also have preserved a few (lexical) substratum (pre-Dravidian) forms' (1981: 523-24). This is indeed a profound and challenging hypothesis which poses several questions and needs to be approached from several angles. For a cultural anthropologist it will be more interesting to focus on the process of differentiation, consolidation, localization and universalization, and determine its direction. Of course these processes are not necessarily linear. While biological evolution is an established fact, the social and cultural evolution are not. Social and cultural changes are complex, and often they yield to various kinds of direct and indirect economic, political and technological changes. Social and cultural changes are not always amenable to rational explanation. Social and cultural changes can at best be described and possible correlation between various variables can be indicated, beyond which it becomes a matter of opinion ircuitous reasoning. But

there is another realm which is relatively stable, viable and lodged deeply in the social and cultural fabric of each society and that is its values. Values are hard to define though they are a kind of fulcrum on which the social and cultural actions are not only continuously evaluated but also are modified. For instance, there is no way to explain why clan system is absent among the Kota and they have instead *Kere* system which regulates their marriages. Absence or presence of a particular institution cannot be evaluated on evolutionary scale. Some of the foraging communities are so strongly committed to individualism that they do not have leaders or persons having privileges though the external environment in the modern times demand that they should have one to carry on the agenda of development of the government or NGOs. The concept to control others is alien to them. It has been observed that, astute forestry officers and contractor's agents asking socially skilled foragers to coax their fellows into joining a work party to extract forest produce. Explaining this situation Gardner writes, 'given the requisite humility, diplomacy, or clowning, the appointed individuals can be quite effective. Because, most of such foremen, disclaim possessing any real power prerogatives or right to role....for us to refer them as "headmen" is greatly misleading' (2014: 239). While many of the foraging communities have gender equality and practice egalitarianism, the so called developed societies practice gender, class, caste, racial discrimination though they may be professing just the opposite.

Morris while discussing Malaipantaram, a foraging society of Tamil Nadu states that their essential ethos was both egalitarian and individualistic but the surrounding agricultural communities emphasize on hierarchy both in relation to gender and castes (2014: 309). In spite of such clear evidences the general tendency has been to put the foraging

and the Scheduled Tribe communities in lower evolutionary slots, though as pointed out earlier those who traded with them or extracted tributes from them or occupied their territories or snatched away their traditional rights or even those who studied them, profited from them. In the words of Shashi Tharoor, these communities have been paying for their own 'oppression'.

Zvelebil's Findings

Zvelebil observes that the prevailing distribution, identification and classification of Nilgiri tribes are 'inadequate and slanted; often quite incorrect' (1981: 473). To support his argument he has even quoted Emeneau 'It has been the experience of ethnologists in India that no summary accounts of communities hitherto published can be trusted. Even the best of them, such as the various Castes and Tribes volumes are highly untrustworthy (1941 [1967]: 252)' Zvelebil (1981:493). Let us for the sake of argument assume that 'untrustworthiness' of the information is not deliberate then we need to seriously debate as to how the 'untrustworthiness' has crept in. Obviously, it means there must be some other reasons on account of which in the light of the present knowledge what has been written about the Scheduled Tribes of the region has been considered to be unworthy. Zvelebil in his paper (1981:467-528), has tried to grapple with some of the issues and based on his research mainly ethno-linguistics has identified sixteen tribal communities in the region which are as follows:

1.	Todas: estimated in 1977 at 1200 total (645 males, 555 females)
2.	Kotas: estimated in 1977 at 1300 total (664 males, 636 females)
3.	Badagas: 1961 Census gives figure of 85,463

	Pallu Kurumbas: estimate of Dieter Kapp 1977: 800
	Alu Kurumbas: estimate of Dieter Kapp 1977: 1000
	Jenu Kurubas (alias Kattu Nayakas) estimated in 1977 at 1300 total (656 males, 644 females)
	Betta Kurumbas : no figures available
	Mullukurumbas: no figures available
	Urali Kurumbas : no figures available
	Mudugas : no figures available
2	Mele Nadu Irulas and Vetta Kadu Irulas : estimated in 1977 at 5800 (2950 males and 2850 females)
	Urali Irulas : my estimate (1978) ca 3000
	Kasabas (alias Kasava, Kasubas): my estimate (1978) ca 1000
.	Paniyas : estimated in 1977 at 5700 (2883 males, 2877 females) [the 1961 Census gave 4777)
6.	Soligas: estimated in 1971 as 8310

On the basis of detailed linguistic evidences, Zvelebil, tried to classify the above mentioned groups into three isions, namely, Toda-Kota subgroup which may go back a Proto-Toda-Kota stage, second group are Tamil-like 'Tamiloid' languages comprising of Male Nadu Irula, ette Kadu Irula, Urali Irula, Kasaba Irula, Pallu Kurumba, Iuduga and Paniya the third is Kannad-like or Kannadoid ubgroup comprising of Alu Kurumba, Soliga, Badaga, Jenu Kurumba and Betta Kurumba (1981: 497). The Urali Kurumba and the Mullukurumba have not been considered in the above classification by him owing to lack of data at the time of his classification. However, this classification is certainly an improvement on the existing understanding about the Scheduled Tribes in the region. Let me also briefly indicate some essential differences between the groups identified by the Key Stone Foundation and Zvelebil. Disregarding the

differences in the spelling of the names of the groups, the Key Stone Foundation has identified 32 groups whereas Zvelebil has 16 in his group which includes the Badaga who are not a Scheduled Tribe. The Key Stone considers the Irulas and the Kasabas as one group. Zvelebil has put the Irula in two distinct groups namely the Mele Nadu Irulas and the Vette Kadu Irulas, and has identified the Kasabas as a separate group. The Key Stone has identified the Kaadu Nayakas and the Kattunaicken as one group while Zvelebil has put the Jenu Kuruba and the Kattu Nayakas as one group. The Key Stone has identified the Kaadu Kurumbas as a separate group but Zvelebil has not identified any group as Kaadu Kurumbas. The Key Stone has identified the Kadars, the Cholanaickan, the Pathinaikans, the Adiyans, the Arnadans, the Kurichias, the Malaivedans, the Panjari/Badava Yeravas, the Tani Yeravas, the Karimpalans, Pathiyans, the Malapulayans, the Mala Kudiyas, the Muduvas, the Mala Malasars, the Malapanikkars and the Malamuthans and the Tachanaadams but the same have not been mentioned in the Zvelebil's list. This is perhaps owing to the reason that Zvelebil's region is a bit restricted. However, the important contribution of Zvelebil is in identifying the Urali Irula as a separate group.

Zvelebil in identifying groups on the basis of the influence of Kannada, Tamil, Malayalam language on the speeches of the specific Scheduled Tribe makes it very clear that these communities have not been living in isolation of other communities. They have been having social and cultural interactions. I may add a further caveat in this regard based on my research among the Jenu Kuruba in Heggadadevanakote taluk of the Mysore district in 1960s. At that time their habitats were not permanent and often shifted their habitats disregarding the state, the district or taluk boundaries. Though they have been described basically as foraging communities their interactions with the local peasantry, contractors and

forest officials were certainly more than with the me
their own community members. As a result of this the differ
groups of the Jenu Kuruba display the influence of dominant
language spoken in their surroundings. Bird who has done
intensive work among the Naiken in Wynaad, writes, 'The
name Naiken perhaps was given by Malayalam speaking
neighbours (Furer-Haimendorf 1952: 20). Local government
and other agencies use the names Jenu Kurumba and Kattu
Naiken. It would appear that as the observer moves closer
to the people both in terms of spatial and social distance,
so the name changes from Jenu Kurumba to Kattu Naiken
and finally to Naiken' (1987: 179). She further observes that
they live throughout 'the Wynaad in small local groups each
situated discontinuously in a pocket surrounded by other
populations. Each such group comprises 2-5 clusters, each of
1-5 huts, with an average distance of about 4 miles between
clusters. The huts in the clusters are scattered randomly,
often with their opening facing in different directions and
with no central place amidst them. Sometimes there are a few
huts located outside the range of a local group near market
villages and places of employment. Beyond these huts on the
fringe of the local group, the Naiken usually does not know
where other local Naiken group can be found' (1987: 180).
She further writes that besides speaking their own language
which contains elements of Kannada, Malayalam and Tamil,
all Naiken 'speak fluently that language which they use
frequently in their interaction with the non-Naiken neighbours
whoever they may happen to be in each particular instance.
The languages spoken around them also affect their dialect
and there are variations in the Naiken dialect between local
groups and even between huts in different localities of the
same local group' (ibid: 180). Thus, these observations allow
two inferences. One, the neat picture of classification Zvelebil
has tried to draw is problematic on several counts. Second,

the tendency to isolate the Scheduled Tribe communities from their universe has distorted our understanding of their place in the regional social, cultural, political and economic framework.

Let me also add a note that what was observed by me in 1960s or by Bird in late 1970s and early 1980s is no more valid as regards the mobility of the Jenu Kuruba, their demography and density of the population in the region is concerned. On account of various factors their habitats have been fixed, though the individual families may go out for seasonal wage-earning work in the neighbouring plantations.

Confusion Regarding Identity

In the earlier part of this discussion, it was noted that there are significant variations in the names as listed by the Key Foundation, Zvelebil, and in the vast literature on tribes that exist. It is a complex issue. For instance Bird-David continues to call the group she has worked with as Naika. Quoting Furer- Haimendorf, she observes that the name Naiken perhaps was given by Malayalam speaking neighbours (referred to above). Local government and other agencies use the names Jenu Kurumba and Kattu Naiken. In Kannada speaking region, they identify themselves as Jenu Kuruba, that is the name I continue to use in my writings but others like Demmer refer to them as Jenu Kurumba (2014: 363-388). The confusion regarding the names of the Scheduled Tribes is owing to a variety of factors. It is not possible to identify all of them but some are as follows.

First, the confusion often is owing to the popular usage of the term. The popular usage many a times depends upon the mother tongue of the speaker and the status of his community in relation to the community to which he is referring to. For example Kadu or Malai in Kannada speaking area means

forest and hill respectively. Often the word Kadu or Malai is prefixed to the community inhabiting forest or hill region. In Mysore side of the trijunction there are several groups identified as Kuruba, the Jenu Kuruba, the Betta Kuruba, and the Kadu Kuruba etc. Simple Kuruba without any prefix refers to the community of shepherds widely found in the villages of Karnataka. The Jenu Kuruba refers to the people, who are honey collectors, the Betta Kuruba literally mean hill Kuruba and Kadu Kuruba means forest Kuruba. For forest contractors and various other people who come in contact with the people inhabiting the forest regions are referred to by a blanket term as Kadu Kuruba without making a distinction between different forest dwelling communities. Lavi who has been working on the Naika in Wynaad region tells me that the bus drivers and several others who casually come in contact with the Naika are referred to by a generic name Adivasis[2] (personal communication).

Second in Dravidian languages use of plural form in addressing others is considered honorific. The person belonging to a dominant community does not address or refer members of other communities particularly whose status in the regional hierarchy is low in plural forms. This distinction is either not fully understood or ignored as a result of which when their names are rendered in English cause much inconsistency in anthropological literature, administrative and census reporting.

Third, there is the issue of how people identify themselves. This is a problematic area. Way back in 1967 when I was doing my fieldwork among the Jenu Kuruba in Mysore district, I asked an elderly Jenu Kuruba as to where else the Jenu Kuruba were found. Tapping the Earth he pointed out that wherever this earth was there lived the Jenu Kuruba. Writing on this issue, Gardner observes, 'there

are inconsistencies in anthropological literature as to how people do label themselves' (2014: 231). This inconsistency is partly owing to the ignorance of the anthropologists but 'how people label themselves' is an intricate problem and is often contextual. In other words, contrary to the expectations of an anthropologist or an administrator, there may not be a standard label for themselves in all contexts. For example, if the speaker is answering this question to a fellow of the same community, he may identify himself with the name of 'hadi' (settlement) where he is living or with his lineage. But for a stranger there could be a variety of answers. The crucial aspect is 'who is asking the question' and 'how that person is identified by the respondent's community'[3]. A lot of inconsistency which Gardner is referring to is owing to the fact that the investigator has taken one as a standard version, which in fact is context bound. For example, in Tamil speaking areas when a Scheduled Tribe certificate is issued to a Toda, he is referred to as Thodhuvar and a Kota as Kothar which are formal and respectable forms in Tamil but these are not the terms recognized either by the official list of the Scheduled Tribes or in Census enumeration or in day-to-day speech.

Fourth, often the Scheduled Tribe community in a region is called by different names by the members of different communities. This gets best illustrated in the Nilgiris. For example, Zvelebil asserts that, 'the Urali Irulas of Tamilnadu – Karnataka border are as an independent endogamous tribe, linguistically very closely related to the Irulas of the Nilagiris with whom they form a large Irula tribal complex and anthropologically as well as culturally (folklore, myths) related intimately to the Solegas. Outsiders call them Urali (the Tamil name), Urvi (Badaga name), Urali (Kota name), Urayi (Kurumba name). and Erl (Toda name). They call themselves "Erularu". They call their language, *namma vatta*

or *namma naya* or "our tongue"' (p. 482).

Fifth, the confusion as exists in the literature has often been compounded by attempts of the authors to identify one group with the other and in finding a common origin of these groups. For example, in the Census of Karnataka, up to 1921, the enumeration of the various groups was under 'Kuruba' only. In 1931 Census, Kuruba Hindu and Kuruba tribals were separately enumerated. By Kuruba Hindus they perhaps meant the shepherd Kuruba found extensively in the villages of Karnataka and by other Kuruba they meant those who inhabited the forest region. In the 1961 Census, the Jenu Kuruba and Kadu Kuruba were separately enumerated which continued in the subsequent Censuses. Perhaps, in order to sort out this confusion, for the first time in 1984, Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs issued a **Brochure Containing The List Of Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes and Guidelines for Verification Of Claims For Issuing Scheduled Castes And Scheduled Tribes Certificates**. This brochure has listed Jenu Kuruba and Kadu Kuruba separately (p.22). In 1967, when I worked in the forest of Mysore district, settlements of the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba used to be close to each other but were quite distinct. The settlement of the former were always dispersed while that of the latter were compact with a clear community shed in the middle of the settlement. But then there were no settlements known by the name of the so called Kadu Kuruba. It was explained to me that the people who have been identified as Kadu Kuruba were actually Betta Kuruba. The Betta Kuruba themselves as well as others identified them as such. But now (2015) the term Betta Kuruba has been given up by all. Erstwhile Betta Kuruba are referred to as Kadu Kuruba. At one time the identity of the Jenu Kuruba, in the eyes of outsiders, often used to be as Kadu Kuruba, meaning thereby

the Kuruba who lived in the forests. But now the identity of the Jenu Kuruba has become quite distinct. They were one of those people who were identified as Primitive Tribal Group (now called as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups). As a result of this identification, there were more funds available for their welfare. This difference was made so very apparent in Ashram Schools and also schooling of the Scheduled Tribe Children. The children of the Jenu Kuruba were entitled for better uniforms, stationery and educational allowances. It had gone to such an extent that a Jenu Kuruba child in addition to other things was given an umbrella which in rural areas at one time was a status symbol. A Jenu Kuruba child had no hesitation in displaying all that as a status symbol. There were other entitlements to Jenu Kuruba as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. As a result of special attention being given to them as vulnerable group their identity has become distinct and standardized. But there is another serious problem that the Kuruba (community of shepherd) are claiming to gain the Scheduled Tribe status on the basis of similarity of their name with the Scheduled Tribe; gate crashing into the Scheduled Tribe list is another serious and widespread matter which need not be discussed here.

Gardner, in order to standardize the spelling of names of some foragers in South India, employs double letters to indicate long vowels, c to represent the sound written 'ch' in English and uses upper case letters (2014: 231). While his attempt is laudable; but at this stage in Indian history on this matter, it is not a practical solution on account of the fact that several groups are competing to enter into the list of the Scheduled Tribe. There are scores of cases pending in the courts where the academic writings, Census reports and notes by travelers are being cited as evidence in support of their claims. Any attempt to change the spelling of the names of the Scheduled Tribes will lead to legal arguments and

counter arguments for inclusion or exclusion of a group's name from the Schedule.

Considering the above, it has to be accepted that ground reality as far as the identity of the Scheduled Tribes is concerned is quite complex and fluid. Often the situation has been further complicated by the observations of the outsider be they were travelers, missionaries, government officials, Census operators and also professional scientists who often had a partial understanding of the ground realities. There are innumerable stories of how many new castes and tribes were invented by the census enumerators on account of their lack of local knowledge and also lackadaisical approach.

Three sub-regions

The trijunction has three sub-regions. Keeping in view the Scheduled Tribe populations namely, Mysore (identified by me as Manantodi region in my paper 1983: 325-37), Nilgiri and Wynaad (identified by me as Sultanbatteri region in the paper quoted above). The change in the nomenclature is being made for practical reasons. The earlier nomenclatures were identified on the basis of the forest or hill the Scheduled Tribe I was dealing with inhabited. But the present nomenclature is being done on the basis of the district in which those tribes inhabit. Most of the Census and other data generated by the government agencies are in terms of the administrative units such as district, and hence I found it more practical to identify them after the name of the district.

As indicated earlier, though there are several Scheduled Tribes, inhabiting the trijunction region (Key Stone Foundation 2007, Zvelebil 1981) I will be dealing with the Jenu Kuruba, the Betta Kuruba and Soliga in the Mysore sub-region, the Badaga (though a non-tribe), the Toda, the Kota, the Kurumba in the Nilgiri sub-region, the Kuruchia, the Mullukurumba,

Urali, the Kattu Naicken in the Wynaad sub-regions. The communities I have selected for my discussion here is simply because I have had the first hand direct experience with them, more intensively between 1960-75 and occasionally afterwards. First I will discuss the general features of the Scheduled Tribes at the trijunction, second I will try to highlight the pattern of adaptations that emerges and third I will try to deal with the problematic issues of the Kurumba of which the Jenu Kuruba are one of the communities. The discussion on the Kurumba is important to understand the relationship of the larger community with the communities who were suppliers of forest goods and denizens of the forest.

General Features

It has been observed all over the country that the Scheduled Tribe populations are relatively denser and concentrated at inter-state boundaries, close to hills and forest. Even till the middle of the 1960s the forests in the trijunction were much thicker and rich in fauna and flora. Except near the district headquarters, the road linkages and transport network were scanty. The interior areas, if at all, were connected with dirt roads. In 1967 when I did my fieldwork among the Jenu Kuruba, in Heggadadevanakote taluk of the Mysore district there was an un-metaled road connecting Mysore with the taluk headquarters. From the *Hand Post* a popular landmark at the junction of Mysore-Manantodi and Heggadadevanakote-Sargur roads, there was a dirt road going through dense forest of Karapur to Maantodi (now spelt as Mananthavadi) which is in the state of Kerala in Wynaad. At Karapur there was the Mysore Maharaja's forest lodge which was taken over by the Karnataka State Forest Department. This forest lodge was on the banks of the river Kabini which had seen many visitors to the state

for *Shikar* and to witness *Khedda* operations. This forest lodge at that time used to display photographs, typical of the era, which will be considered extremely disgraceful now. These photographs show the dignitaries in their *Shikari* dress with one foot on the head of their 'kill' and their hands resting on the gun. There were many photographs showing scenes from Khedda operations. Of course in these photographs there was no place for backroom boys- drummers, chasers who risking their lives brought the game in front of the brave 'dignitary hunters'.

From Karapur guesthouse, roughly about 3 kilometers across the river Kabini, there was a multi-caste village of about 500 souls called Begur. In summer months, to reach Begur village one could wade through knee deep waters of the river at Karapur forest lodge and then walk about 2 kms through agricultural fields. The location of this village and similar others on the edge of the forest clearly indicated that in the past the peasants had moved into these places displacing the forest dwelling populations. In order to work out the historiography of the area it is important that historians should take up the history of the villages located on the edges of the forest. From Begur again a walk of about 3 kms would reach us to the two settlements of the Jenu Kuruba namely Maldhadi and Amtehadi and there were two other settlements nearby of the Betta Kuruba namely Donnemaranhadi and Campanhadi. From Mysore there used to be one bus service a day for Mananthavadi which used to take roughly four hours to reach Karapur. By the time one was able to reach Karapur, the bus and the people used to get enveloped in the red soil. Arrival of the bus either from Mysore side or Mananthavadi side was indicated by a cloud of red dust from a long distance. I am deliberately detailing the description because for t[illegible]resent day visitors

to this sub-region it may be difficult to imagine what was th situation in 1960s. Now all through Mysore to Mananthavad there is a fine metaled road. In between Heggadadevanakot and Karapur there are no forests any more, instead there are agricultural fields growing commercial crops. Most of the fields are secured by fencing. Begur and all the adjoining villages and hamlets inhabited by different Scheduled Tribes have been submerged into the backwaters of the river Kabini owing to the erection of a dam at a place called Beechanahalli in 1974. Approximately 606.06 kms of forest land went under water. Recently when I visited Karapur I saw a huge sheet of water there. Here and there, wherever the water was shallow one could see stumps of trees jetting out of water surface indicating that once there were flourishing trees. As recently as June 2015, I took a boat ride on the back waters of the river Kabini. While in the boat ride, I was recollecting the forest, the wildlife, the people and the variety of experiences that I had, during my stay there which were all drowned under several feet of water. It was a kind of strange feeling that all that I had experienced during my stay there including the hut I had lived in were beneath the boat I was on. At that time except for the local people, forest contractors and occasional forest officials, none liked to enter the 'wild' area. But now it is different. These waters are a great attraction for the high-end tourists. All around the back water now called as Kabini lake resort, there are luxurious tourist lodges instead of hamlets of the Scheduled Tribes. Now, one can see wild life around the lake from the secure seat of the motor boat. It is a huge change from the past. Of course, now wildlife is displayed as if on a stage. But the people who lived amidst the wild have been uprooted and settled away.

In 1979 Bird conducted her field work among the Naikens, a local community located near the plantation in

Gir valley in Wynaad district. At that time, there was a 'jeep worthy' track to the Gudalur-Calicut road which was only useable during the dry season. Since the track was long and winding through the jungle, all the valley residents used only the steep short jungle footpath. The plantations were cut off from outside with no telephone line, no electricity connection and no piped water (1989: 260).

A short distance away the place where Rajalakshmi Misra conducted her fieldwork in 1965 among the Mullukurumba, near a village called Erumad located on the border of Kerala was connected by Gudalur-Sulthan Batteri Road (via Cherambadi), which was paved in 1954. She writes that the Erumad village some three decades ago was amidst thick jungle and was abode of wild animals (1971: 3). The same area is now very well connected with network of roads and has glittering shopping arcades, schools, colleges, hospitals, government offices etc.

As far as the Nilgiri plateau is concerned its modernization started soon after the British began to settle there, which had significant impact upon the communities inhabiting the region. One of the first things which the Britishers had done then was to connect the Nilgiri with the plains in Tamil Nadu and in the west with the Wynaad region. The road connection to Mysore was improved. Besides, the British laid down the mountain rail road connecting it with Coimbatore. In short the Nilgiri region was well connected with the seat of administration at Chennai.

The above brief sketch of the places where fieldwork was conducted by the anthropologists in 1960s through 1980s shows that significant physical changes have occurred in the intervening periods.

Habitats

As indicated earlier the habitats of the Scheduled Tribes in all the three regions though located amidst forests were not far away from the peasant villages and trading towns located at the edges of the forest. For the Mysore sub-region it was Sargur, for Nilgiri sub-region it was Gudalur and those in Wynaad it was Sultanbatteri. There were others too. Besides, there were vendors and contractors who were regularly visiting the interior hamlets. In the peasant villages there used to be petty grocery shops who acted as agents of contractors collecting forest goods from the members of the Scheduled Tribes. Hockings has provided a detailed description of the state of economy before regular market began to develop at Ooty around the year in 1825, highlighting the items exported and imported into the region (2013: 173-188). The important point to note is that though the Nilgiri plateau has been generally described as 'remote and wild' and hence an isolated area was still very much in the trading zone as well as an arena to establish power in the frontiers. Hockings has drawn our attention to an important point in this regard by drawing a map of fortification of the region which throws much light on the pre-modern relations with the power structure. Hockings believes that these fortresses were constructed 'mainly to guard the passes around the foothills and leading up to the Nilgiris, but incidentally to terrorize the tiny Badaga populations as well' (Ibid: 52-53) and to collect tributes in the form of grains. The construction and maintenance of these forts indicate the concern of the ruling powers in looking after frontier areas. Zagarell has succinctly stated that earlier communities, in the Nilgiri region operated under a world of episodic state authorities, stratification, taxation and organized military activities (2002: 79) and he also mentions that the hills and the forests though appeared impregnable

re no big hurdle for the people, traders and expansionists. may be underlined that safeguarding the frontier regions uld not be merely for the sake of establishing military thority but also for extracting and managing the forest sources which were as vital as what was produced from the ricultural lands.

For the Soliga, located near Biligiri Rangana hills, the arest trading center was located at Yelandur and Kollegal out 16 kms through shortcuts. But their settlements were sited by the petty traders dealing in earthenware, agricultural ols, clothes, tobacco, eatables etc., who exchanged their oods for grain and cash (Morab 1977: 51). Rajalakshmi Misra rites that the Mullukurumba of Kappala visited a weekly arket held on every Sunday to procure the things required rough barter or cash. But their settlements were regularly isited by roving Kannada and Mopla merchants who brought variety of goods to them which the Mullukurumba obtained y exchanging paddy. The Urali living in the neighbourhood rought baskets, pots, winnowing fans and iron implements o the Mullukurumba settlements (Rajalakshmi Misra 1971: 78). These few illustrations clearly indicate that, though habitats of the Scheduled Tribe populations were located in the interior areas they were a part of the regional economic network. It may be further added that the Jenu Kuruba who lived in small hamlets around Begur and other peasant villages regularly visited the petty shops located in these villages and bartered the forest products they collected for the goods they needed such as salt, *biri*, *ragi*, clothes etc. Besides, the Jenu Kuruba also looked after the cattle of the village landlords. In other words, the Jenu Kuruba in particular and also the Betta Kuruba were a sort of extension of the economic structure of the villages in the neighbourhood.

Settlements & Dwellings

Mysore sub-region:

In Mysore sub-region while the settlements of the Jenu Kuruba were dispersed, the settlements of the neighbouring Betta Kuruba were always compact. The contrast between the patterns of settlements of the two communities was striking though they shared the same environment and were often neighbours. The membership to the compact Betta Kuruba settlements was based on close kin ties. The houses were relatively well made and the split bamboo walls were plastered with mud. The most striking thing was that in the centre of every Betta Kuruba settlement there used to be a large thatched shed commonly used by the inmates of the settlement for personal and communal needs. Members of the Betta Kuruba settlement, had strong 'we' feeling. The marriages were generally arranged by the parents of the boys and girls and the marriage rituals were systematically performed with the cooperation of all the members of the settlements. Marriages and other ceremonial occasions were marked by communal cooking and feasting. The Betta Kuruba had their strong council. The jurisdiction of a Betta Kuruba council was spread over several settlements. The leaders of the council and the headman of each settlement had certain authority and roles to play (Misra 1970: 78-86, Misra & Misra 1982: 381-82). In contrast, the Jenu Kuruba settlements were not only dispersed, but also gave little clue about forming any pattern, may be that was their pattern. Their settlements which were often not more than a few huts had no central focal place, and huts faced away from each other. The walls of the hut were made of flattened bamboo splits which were generally not plastered with mud. The roofs were thatched with grass. At the time when I did fieldwork among them in 1967, the impression that I got was that they showed

hardly any attachment to their huts or the settlements they lived in. They could easily abandon them for slightest of the reasons, in spite of the fact, that even at that time they were beneficiaries of various welfare programmes of the government. It is important to note that the description of the houses and settlements of the Naikens in Gir forest area in Wynaad given by Bird-David based on her fieldwork in 1979 (1989: 266-69) is strikingly similar to what I found in 1967 in Mysore sub-region. Furthermore, she pointed out that her observations compared very well to what Noble had observed about the Kurumba in the Nilgiri (Noble 1968: 107-08). The Jenu Kuruba hardly had any kind of strong feeling for their community and gave an impression of being fiercely individualistic egalitarian and in a way anarchist (See Morris 2014: 303-324). Based on my fieldwork in 1967 among the Jenu Kuruba, I had recorded that to most of my questions their stock answer was 'do not know'. So much so that when I asked an elderly person about the composition of the family of his son who was living in the next house, he told me that I should better ask his son (Misra 1969: 190). It is worth quoting what Demmer has written about the Jenu Kurumba based on his intensive fieldwork among them. He writes, 'the Jenu Kurumba are a tribal community of gatherers/hunters and forest-traders in South India. Their social fabric is marked by a key feature, namely by the absence of what is elsewhere called "society". There, are no clan groups or other group-like and rule-based institutions that regulate marriages or property, nor are there legalizing institutions like a council of elders, chiefs or a court. In fact, the Jenu Kurumba does not organize their social life in terms of a "society". Instead they live in circles of approximately 300 to 350 persons and understand themselves as a moral community where social life necessarily has a pronounced negotiated quality' (2014: 365). On the face of it [illegible]d as an extreme position but

certainly tallies to a great extent by the observations made by Bird (quoted above) and myself and compels us to understand their concept of society and follow the thought pattern of the community rather than categorizing them as 'immediate return people', 'people lacking in storing resources' or lacking in rule based institutions and hence primitive people. They in fact pose a challenge to the social scientists to broaden their horizon. They are indeed a moral community in theory and practice.

Morab who studied Soliga in Biligiri Rangana Hills, in Yelandur Taluk of Mysore district found that the Soliga settlements were located in the interior of the forest areas where people practiced shifting cultivation, but were all situated around the famous Sri Rangaswamy temple where they had some role in the temple rituals. The Soliga settlements though dispersed but not as far and wide as the Jenu Kuruba. The membership to a settlement remained flexible. The houses of the Soliga were simple, resting on wooden posts. The four walls, like that of the Jenu Kuruba huts, were made of spliced bamboo, which were secured with mud pilings at the base both from inside and outside. Each house used to have attic where they stored grains etc., and for drying freshly harvested maize (1977: 24-26). The Soliga like Jenu Kuruba were extremely reluctant to part away any information. Morab being a Kannadiga had no difficulty in communicating with them but this is what he wrote, 'Many a time individual Soliga would not give information on any matter but would show ignorance by a simple "don't know" whenever a person was repeatedly questioned. Sometimes, a Soliga would direct the author to approach other Soliga for eliciting information. Experience showed that attempts to seek information from others too were in vain as the response was almost similar' (1977: 7). He further states that he tried to

them in the night when they had gathered around fire or he daytime when they were relaxing under a tree but even h attempts were fruitless as they would slowly disperse ay.

Compared to other Scheduled Tribes of the region rticularly the Jenu Kuruba, one important difference in the e of the Soliga was that they were directly connected with presiding deity of the Rangaswamy temple as indicated different versions of a legend (see Thurston 1909: 381, njundayya & Iyer 1931: 592-99, Luiz 1963: 181). Besides ing integrated with the sacred complex of the temple, Soliga visited the Hindu temples like any other Hindu grim but continued their traditional religious practices well and like the Jenu Kuruba believed in the spirit of e dead (cf. description of Jebadhas and Noble of the Irula iests officiating on the top of Rangaswamy Betta in the ilgiris 1989: 299-303).

ilgiri sub-region:

With the numerous writings of scholars spread over or more than hundred years and more intensive writings last fifty years particularly of scholars like Hockings see the Encyclopedia of the Nilgiri Hills 2012), and from rganizations like Anthropological Survey of India (see People f India volumes on Tamilnadu), Peoples Linguistic Survey see Gnanasundaram V and K. Rangan 2015) substantial and uthentic information on the Scheduled Tribes of Nilgiri sub-egion is available.

The extensive research of Hockings have established that the Badaga though not a Scheduled Tribe were an immigrant population in the Nilgiri. Th igrations must have started owing to the fall of Empire around the

latter half of the sixteenth Century. They came as landless refugees but in course of time they became dominant farming community who produced surplus food which could be traded with the Toda, Kota, Kurumba and Irula (Hockings 1980: 13-44). Their population which was mere 500 in 1602 spread in three villages grew to around 10400 spread over 370 villages in 1974 (Hockings 1974: 207). Their estimated population in 2011 was 150, 000 (Hockings 2012: 252).

Hockings (1974: 207) had shown that there was a clear ecological distribution of the different communities in the Nilgiri. The Toda occupied the higher and western plateau area, the elevation of which ranges between 6500 feet to 7500 feet. Their population in 1901 was 807 and according to 2011 Census it was 1509 in the Nilgiri district. But according to Socio-Economic Survey of the Scheduled Tribe in Nilgiris in 2010-11 conducted by the Tribal Research Centre, Udhagamandalam it was 1608 (Sathyanarayanan and Chandra 2012-2013: 598). The Badaga occupied the eastern half of the Nilgiri plateau which was intensively cultivated by them. The elevation of their settlement ranged from 4900 feet to 7300 feet which was suitable for growing millet. The Kota inhabited almost the same elevation as that of the Badaga who were spread out in seven settlements. The Kota, were considered master craftsmen but they also practiced agriculture and kept cattle (Verghese 1969: 123-134). They too like the Toda were a small population. In 1901 their population was 1267 and in 2011 it was 2024 (Sathyanarayanan and Chandra 2012-2013: 598). The Kurumba and the Irula occupied lower slopes of the Nilgiris at elevation varying from 1500 to 500 feet. These two populations did not practice plough cultivation but whatever they cultivated they combined it with what they gathered from the forest to trade them with the settled cultivators and middle-men to obtain other items to meet their requirements.

The Kurumba population (all groups) was 6552 and that of Irula was 6020 in the Nilgiris in 2010-2011 (Sathyanarayanan and Chandra 2012-2013; 598). The Toda settlements were quite unique and distinctive. Perhaps they were among the few people in the world who had barrel-vaulted houses and dairy buildings. The most significant aspect of their dwellings and settlements was a clear reflection of their notion of purity and pollution in the demarcation of spaces. Their dairy was sacred and there were different grades of sacredness attached to the dairies. Hence the dairies were separated from the dwelling huts. The Toda hamlets were scattered widely in the high regions of the Nilgiri plateau. In 1976, Walker who conducted intensive ethnographic study of the Toda found that they inhabited 56 hamlets. He observed, 'the principle requirements in sitting a *mund* are a good pasture, a *shoal* and a running water nearby. A typical Toda settlement comprises of one to five dwelling huts, one to three dairy buildings, at least one buffalo pen, one or more calf sheds and sometimes a separate calf pen. The dwellings are invariably built close together, sometimes in a line, and a single house or line of houses is usually surrounded by a low stone wall or a fence, with an entrance wide enough to admit a man but not a buffalo' (Walker 1986: 47). The rounded part of the house was made of rattan, supported by cross-poles of hardwood or bamboo and grass used for thatching. In 1984 when they were renovating their conical shaped dairy hut considered to be very sacred, materials such as rattan, bamboo and grass used for erecting it were scarce. They had to search for them deep in *shola* for days together. Inside the Toda dwellings the front and rear were clearly demarcated into pure and impure areas. Only in the pure front part of the hut may the household's milk be churned to produce butter and buttermilk. And as churning is exclusive to males, the front part of the house is

associated with the men folk. The impure area behind the mortar where the hearth is located is particularly associated with the women who are a principal source of ritual impurity in their society' (Walker 1986: 50). These few details about the Toda settlements and their dwellings indicate of a society quite complex and closely linked to its overall concept of purity and impurity. The concept of purity and pollution is pervading and pivotal of the Hindu society. In fact Walker makes a categorical statement that in doing the book on the Toda his chief concern 'has been to correct the view of Toda society as an isolated, non-Hindu, "tribal" people, comparable in some ways to those rigidly-bonded island societies which Rivers went on to study in Melanesia' (ibid: 7). Based on his sustained research spread over two decades, Walker was able to show that the Toda were within, not outside the Hindu world of South India.

The Kota settlements were compact. Verghese, himself, a Badaga hailing from a prominent Badaga village in the Nilgiris wrote a book on the Kota (1969) based on his fieldwork among them. He observed that the Kota houses were seldom in isolation but in rows. The Kota villages were strikingly similar to that of Badaga excepting that the Badaga villages were larger and as indicated earlier spread over a large part of the Nilgiris, whereas the entire Kota population inhabited seven villages in the Nilgiris.

The Irula settlements were nucleated and mostly located on the eastern side of the Nilgiris. 'Just like the majority of the Indian farmers' (Jebadhas & Noble 1989: 283). Their houses were built of split bamboo and thatched with grass. Like several other communities, the Irula had a separate hut for menstruating women and mother undergoing a post natal pollution. The most important aspect of the life of the Irula was their integration into the Rangaswamy temple rituals

ere one of the Irula tribesmen acted as a priest. In this nple there is a complex inter-penetration of the Vishnu d Siva forms of worship (see Jebadhas & Noble 1989: 281-3). The Irula combined their agriculture activities with od gathering and hunting which got restricted after the tablishment of the colonial power.

ynaad Sub-region:

The most distinguishing feature of the Kuruchia were at they practiced matrilineal form of society, lived in xclusive habitats, had a strong belief in their high purity tatus and maintained a kind of joint management of kitchen nd various household activities. They were mostly found in orth and south Wynaad. Their population in Wynaad district f Kerala in 2011 was 25093. They practiced agriculture and supplemented it with some hunting and gathering of forest products. The boundaries of the Kuruchia houses were clearly defined and were generally located on a higher level which enabled them to maintain a distance from all other communities considered inferior to them (see Misra & Sastry 1977: 395-406, Mathur 1977: 77-78). In 1977 we noted that a 30 member Kuruchia household was considered normal while there were households which had more than 100 individuals managing a joint establishment under the leadership of the wife of the *pittam* who used to be the oldest male and knowledgeable person who exercised authority and control of the household.

The most distinguishing aspect of the Mullukurumba was their habitats and dwellings. The Mullukurumba lived in uni-ethnic settlements. Regarding Mullukurumba settlements Rajalakshmi Misra wrote, 'have certain characteristics in common, which give them a striking and unique experience by which they are easil[illegible]able, as belonging to this

tribe. The cleanliness of the surroundings in the settlement, the neat rows of houses, the uniform colour scheme for walls and verandahs of all the houses in the *veedu*, the high roof with their eaves reaching low, and covering the high verandah, high plinths, the paddy husking sheds encircling the settlement site and the central temple house portraying the Mullukurumba women's artistic talents on all its four walls are the striking features of a Mullukurumba *veedu*' (1971: 9).

Rajalaksmi Misra has given a detailed description of the houses and the way they are constructed. A Mullukurumba house had verandah in its three or four sides. These spaces served several purposes. People relaxed on verandah particularly during day time as the low eaves provided cool shade. Ceremonial feasts were also served in these verandahs. In the rainy season people could walk from one verandah to the verandah of another house without getting drenched. Besides verandah, the open space in front of each house were clearly demarcated from other spaces which was allowed to be used according to the rank of the person in terms of ritual status. Thus demarcation of spaces as well its level allowed them to maintain their notion of purity and pollution with respect to the other communities inhabiting the region as well as individuals of their community who were polluted for one reason or the other. For instance, the menstruating women or mothers who had given birth would not be allowed anywhere near those spaces. The larger society was clearly stratified. The Chetties were the richest in the area and they enjoyed the highest status. The Mullukurumba considered the Kuruchia superior in status but other communities like the Urali Kurumba, the Kattu Naicken and the Paniyan lower to them in that order. The hierarchy was clearly reflected in the celebration of *vilakku* festival which all the Scheduled

Tribes of the region celebrated jointly (Rajalakshmi Misra 1972: 135-48). Besides, it is important to note that the hierarchy was reflected in their economic pursuits, the services the Mullukurumba received from others and the services they offered to others, in their commensal relations, in the social distance they maintained with others and the way the members of other communities were addressed. The general understanding is 'a tribe of higher status will not accept cooked food or water from a tribe belonging to a lower order in the hierarchy' (Rajalakshmi Misra 1989: 306). All this goes to show that the communities of the region were tied into a complex social, economic, ritual network which was once dominated by Nayar feudal lords who extracted tributes from different communities.

Generally, in the literature the Urali Kurumba and the Betta Kuruba have been considered as the same population, the former name is popular in Tamil and Malayalam speaking areas while the latter in Kannada speaking areas. Though they may be the same population, as they share various features in common such as inhabiting in compact settlements, their settlements being nearer to the settlements of other communities and being master craftsmen of the region they inhabit. However, the important point is that there is hardly any evidence of some interaction between the communities or an awareness of the presence of their community in other regions. Further the ones who are in Tamil, Malayalam and Kannada speaking areas, their speech varieties bear the impact of the standard language spoken in the area they inhabit. There is another very important reason and that is, each community is identified by other communities living in the region differently is based on several factors but essentially relate pe and summation of the respective social stat on.

The characteristic feature of the habitats of the Scheduled Tribes at trijunction was such that each tribe lived in uni-ethnic settlements, not far away from the settlements of settled agriculturists, who certainly had advanced material culture. While the dwellings of the foraging groups like the Jenu Kuruba, the Soliga, the Kattu Naicken, the Irula and the Kurumba group appeared temporary mostly made out of bamboo and thatched with forest grass. But the dwellings of the Toda, the Kota, the Kuruchia and the Mullukurumba were stable, quite distinctive and certainly were identity markers of each of those groups. Though the people themselves made their dwellings, their designs and constructions were intricate. It is important to point out that though the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba in Mysore sub-region, the Toda, the Kota, the Irula and the Kurumba group in the Nilgiri sub-region, the Kuruchia, the Mullukurumba and the Kattu Naicken in Wynaad sub-region had lived close to each other for a long time, their dwellings and way of life remained distinctive. In other words, each though small in number, maintained their identity. This is extremely interesting and important point.

Economy of all the groups in the trijunction was closely connected with the forest. The dependence of the Jenu Kuruba, the Soliga, the Kattu Naicken and the Kurumba group was direct and much involved. Some of the forest produce they collected were consumed by themselves and the rest was bartered away. Apart from doing odd forest related jobs they did for the neighbouring landlords they looked after their cattle and occasionally collected specific forest items demanded by them.

In the Nilgiri sub-region the relationship of the Kurumba group with the Badaga, the Toda and the Kota has been extensively discussed in anthropological literature. The relationship between these groups was constructed after the

arrival of the Badaga in the Nilgiris but we do not know what the situation was before their arrival. The inter-relationship between the communities collapsed on the eve of the Second World War. The collapse of that relationship is instructive. While the market forces began to bloom the authority of the Badaga was considerably undermined by the establishment of the institutions such as police, court and colonial bureaucracy by the colonial power.

The economic scenario of the Scheduled Tribes in Wynaad was certainly different. The Kattu Naicken were mostly dependent upon forest and forest related work, the Panya worked as bonded laborers on the fields for farmers, the Kuruchia and the Mullukurumba had already become settled agriculturists. It is reported that in the past they paid tribute to the Nayar rulers. These two populations in particular had advanced tools for hunting, trapping and fishing. In fact they were known for their marksmanship and the legend has it that once they were soldiers in the employment of local rajas.

Socially the Scheduled Tribes population in Mysore sub-region remained somewhat aloof from each other. They did not establish reciprocal social, cultural or ritual relationship with other groups living in their neighborhood. The classical case is of the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba, who lived close to each other but did not have any interactions between them. The Soliga at Biligiri Rangana Hills were a case apart, owing to the location of a famous Hindu temple there. Not only they were involved in some of the temple rituals but the priest of the Hindu temple issued a *Mudre* (seal) to the headman of the Soliga (Morab 1977: 85-86) which gave him the authority to carry on his duties as headman.

Purity, Pollution **rchy:**

The notion o sed on the principle of purity

is central to the Hindu caste system. In the inter-community relationship in the sub-region of the Nilgiri the notion of hierarchy was well established though the relationship between the Badaga and the Toda were a bit ambiguous. The Toda considered themselves to be most superior and the Kurumba at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The Toda themselves claimed to be vegetarians, and custodian of their sacred dairy complex. They were quite conscious of their purity status and strongly believed that status could be disturbed by various acts or coming in close contact with those who were not 'pure' which would result in pollution and hence they lead exclusive lives.

The Toda customary rules about purity were complex particularly for the ordained priests. There were numerous taboos for them to keep away from contaminating agents which was reflected in what they were allowed to eat, or drink, or wear and the places they could visit and so on. Walker has categorically stated that the Toda accepted efficacy of two parallel ritual system namely that of their own and that of popular South Indian Hinduism (1986: 297). In this statement of Walker, the dominant western thought pattern is clear which is that the tribal system was different from the Hindu. But the field evidence shows otherwise. It is not only on the issue of hierarchy based on the principle of purity and pollution and numerous others particularly language indicates mutual borrowing, sharing and adaptations. Since the Kota was considered to have inferior position, it could be argued that they were part of the ideology that believed in purity and pollution. Though the Kurumba group, on account of the fear of their alleged sorcery was kept at a distance in social and cultural interactions with other communities of the region, they too had some notions of purity. Though they perfo[illegible]ery few rituals, it was essential that these rituals

were performed after having bath. In the Hindu concept one of the ways to attain the purity status has been to have ritual bath.

In Wynaad the situation regarding the notion of purity was clearly exhibited which gets very well illustrated in the observation of rituals in celebration of a festival (Rajalakshmi Misra 1972: 135-48). It may be further stated that the Mullukurumba were tied in a network of ritual relations with some other castes such as Nair barber and Nair washer men to break pollution owing to childbirth and puberty attainment of a girl (ibid: 103-04) which goes to suggest that the Mullukurumba were being treated just like any other caste of the region. Further, as a general feature, almost all the Scheduled Tribes in trijunction believed that birth, puberty and death bring in some kind of pollution which required some seclusion and observance of some rituals.

Gods and Goddesses:

Excepting the Kattu Naicken, the Kurumba group, the Jenu Kuruba, each of the other Scheduled Tribes believed in their own gods and goddesses and also the gods and goddesses of the Hindu pantheon (for Soliga see Morab 1977: 93-108, for the Kota see Verghese 1974: 114, 151-62, for the Toda see Walker 1986: 119-83, for Mullukurumba see Rajalakshmi Misra 1971: 82-96). The variety of gods and goddesses, spirits and divinity that exist in the Hindu pantheon show much affinity with what has been observed among the Scheduled Tribes of the trijunction. However, the position of the Soliga in the Biligiri Rangana Hills and their role in the Hindu temple there can be understood only if they were considered as a member of the clean caste. Gardner has argued that by allowing the meat eating Paliyan into a sacred Hindu temple, transgressing the caste barrier could be

explained by considering the foragers to the level of ascetics who are not bound by any caste (1982: 472-9).

The idea of purity and pollution is widespread and deep rooted in the Hindu society. In its practice there are wide regional variations as well as individual community based variations. In the Hindu texts the concept is systematized, refined and elaborated. According to which the ultimate aim of the Hindu is to get relief from the cycle of births and seek salvation. That can be attained through a continuous effort to gain purity status both in action as well as in thought. For that one has to be ever vigilant. A Toda may not be able to explain the philosophy behind the notion of purity but every aspect of his life reflects the danger of getting polluted and hence an elaborate norm of dos' and don'ts'. A Jenu Kuruba insist on taking a ritual bath and wearing a clean garment before performing rituals connected with death or before starting the rituals connected with communicating the spirits of the dead.

Walker in his well researched book on the Toda comes to the conclusion that the modern Toda accept the efficacy of two parallel ritual systems: his own and that of popular South Indian Hinduism. It will be indeed difficult to define what popular South Indian ritual system is. There are scores of castes and sub-castes: their identities are reflected in their cultural practices and ritual performances. To conceive that, there are two parallel systems is problematic. What is the ambit of popular Hinduism is a difficult question to answer. If it is conceded that there are two systems, how does one explain so much variety in deities, ritual performances and conceptualization in what is considered as part of popular Hinduism. All along this thesis we have maintained that tribes neither a definite type of society nor a definite stage of evolution. They have contributed to the development of

the Indian civilization. Take for instance purity, pollution and hierarchy which are considered to be essentially and typically a Hindu concept and practice are found among the tribes also, the manifestations of which have a lot of variety. For instance, Kurchia believe that they get polluted if a non-Kurchia touches them. In order to get rid of the touch pollution they have prescribed how many numbers of dips one has to take in water. The lower the statuses of the person causing the pollution higher are the numbers of the dips.

Languages Spoken:

The Scheduled Tribes at trijunction share yet another feature with the society at large and that is each one of those groups speaks their own language which belongs to South Dravidian family. At the time when Nilgiri was being explored by the European scholars they found that Nilgiri communities were unique in many respects as well as linguistically (Emeneau 1989: 133). This view is getting modified significantly as more research is conducted. The languages of Tamilnadu published by People's Linguistic Survey of India (Gnanasundaram and Rangan 2015) have identified twelve of the Scheduled Tribes in the Nilgiris. Each one of these tribes speak a language of their own which belongs to Southern branch of the Dravidian family of languages. These languages are of great antiquity, possibly pre-Tamil or pre-Kannada or pre-Malayalam which in course of time were 'Tamiloid' or 'Kannadoid' or 'Malayalam like' according to Zvelebil (1981: 524). Both the factors that they have retained their languages and these languages are of great antiquity are extremely important to understand the situation of the Scheduled Tribes in general and with respect to the trijunction in particular. None of the groups inhabiting the trijunction were large or politically dominant. They were also

not isolated as we have repeatedly stated. Forests have been a major resource base in Indian economy. To extract those resources, the labour, skills and the knowledge of the forest dwellers were very much required by the larger society. That is there has been long term and continued interaction with those populations. The linguistic data from the trijunction reaffirms that each community enjoyed a certain degree of autonomy. It has been shown that the trijunction has distinct social, cultural and linguistic sub-regions as well as each community retained its identity. Even though many of the languages spoken in the region were mutually unintelligible, they could live in each other's neighborhoods, observe their own cultural practices and transact whatever business they intended to do. Obviously it indicates acceptance of each other's autonomy and to communicate across their groups they adopted a flexible approach that is speaking more than one language or adapt as the situations demanded. For instance, the present day Mullukurumba, speak their own mother tongue plus Tamil or Malayalam, the same is true for the Jenu Kuruba in Mysore sub-region or Kota in the Nilgiri sub-region. Thus even a small region like trijunction has been a repository of a variety of cultures and languages. It also establishes that though each group maintained its identity and autonomy, they shared a mutually intelligible universe of culture and languages of the region which in turn is interconnected with still wider framework of the Indian civilization.

Problematic: Kurumba Group

Kapp and Hockings have tried to sort out the confusion regarding the tribes identified as Kurumba (1989: 232-34 also see Sathyanarayanan & Chandra 2013). Their attempts are certainly helpful and in appreciating that in the past many communities were clubbed together owing to the

lack of information and also in understanding the sources of confusion. Here I do not intend to go into its details but I would briefly discuss the people who have been identified as Jenu Kuruba, Jenu Kurumba, Kattu Nayaka, and Naiken or simply as Kurumba. Sathyanarayanan & Chandra observed that in government listing the Kurumba in the Nilgiri district were considered as a single community, without recognizing the different endogamous groups living in the Nilgiri having Kurumba, Kurumban or Kurumbar suffixes to their independent names. Further they consider that Alu Kurumba, are also known as Pal (u) Kurumba (ibid: 597). However, Kapp and Hockings consider Alu Kurumba and Pal (u) Kurumba not only as separate groups but occupy different regions of the Nilgiri. Mandelbaum (1941) and later Hockings (1980) did not make a distinction between Alu Kurumba and Pal (u) Kurumba. They considered them under the popular name Kurumba. Since my discussion on the taxonomy of the Kurumba will have to refer to the inter-tribal relations in the Nilgiris, I will follow the categories of tribes as observed by Mandelbaum and Hockings referred to above.

I strongly argue that the Jenu Kuruba who till recently have been considered as an isolated foraging population should be considered as part of the larger socio-economic framework of the region in which they exist. It may not be out of place to reiterate that in pre-modern phase of India, forests have been a major source for resources. Collection of those resources has been a major enterprise. Some of which was locally consumed by the primary collectors and rest of which was consumed, processed and used at different levels. A network of intermediaries was involved in its transportation and trade. Here I am not concerned with what happened to those resources after it was collected except to point out that the network can be properly understood within the framework of the larger political economy.

The traded forest goods generated wealth. The farther they traveled more wealth was generated. Obviously, its control and distribution comes into picture. For example, a vital resource such as an elephant has to be captured first before it is domesticated, trained and exported. Similarly, herbal medicines, spices, decorative animal horn, skin, fur or bone have to be obtained first before the process of value addition begins. The vital and crucial question is who were the primary collectors? what was their status? what kind of relationship was established with them? We may not have direct answers to these questions but we can surmise on the basis of whatever information is available. But before I consider that let it be stated that the larger society considers that any activity inside the forest as hazardous, risky and dangerous. The dominant view of the civilized society is that the forest is wilderness abode of non-human beings, darkness, unpredictability, cruelty, lawlessness, land of spirits and demons. Here is a huge paradox: the forest is valued for its goods but not the forest. Forest needs to be cleared for civilized people to live in. Those who inhabit the forest therefore are just extension of wildlife, jungle, lacking in culture, uncouth, undeveloped, primitive and are like animals ready to devour anything and consume immediately. Even in anthropological literature, they have been called as immediate return people. The so called civilized people need forest goods but they themselves would not like to go in the forest and collect them. The first option to deal with the contradiction has been to clear the forest but that does not solve the problem because there are plenty of essential goods that are required from the forest. Therefore, the solution was to make the people inhabiting the forest to collect those goods for them on a continued basis. Various strategies have been used to keep the forest dwellers in the forests and use their labour, skills, knowledge and adaptation to the forest

environment in collecting forest goods.

The trijunction provides excellent illustration to the various strategies that were adopted by the larger society to ensure continuous and regular supply of those goods. However the first option of occupying the forest after clearing it for habitation and also converting into agriculture land has always been there and widely practiced. In the Nilgiris this process became more intensified during the colonial regime and got further aggravated after India became independent.

Pre-historic and historic studies indicate that the Nilgiris sub-region has never been isolated though the popular perception is just contrary to it. But we cannot discuss those periods in detail on account of the lack of systematic information. However, for the latter period, Hockings, through his longitudinal studies of the Badaga (2013) has shown that the Badaga began to enter the Nilgiri region from Mysore plains in small numbers after the fall of the Vijaynagar Empire in sixteenth Century. This exodus from the plains of Mysore continued for a long time which in itself indicates that those who had arrived earlier found the Nilgiri environment congenial and favorable to settle down, sending signals for others to join them. Before the arrival of the Badaga on the scene, the information that is available is patchy, which are mainly the observations of some travelers and missionaries which suggest that the other populations who inhabited the region at that time, were the Toda, the Kota, the group of the Kurumba and the Irula. The population of the Toda and the Kota were small but the Kurumba group of tribes and the Irula were relatively large and spread out in the forest regions of the Nilgiris. None of these communities had the tradition of plough cultivation. Except for the Toda who occupied the plateau grassy areas reared buffalo, the other communities heavily relied on forest for its goods for self consumption,

exchange and trade, besides practicing shifting cultivation. On the basis of the available information it is difficult to reconstruct the story of the reaction of the population living in the Nilgiris on the arrival of the Badaga in the Nilgiris. Hockings writes, 'William Keys, an official who in 1812 had already recorded 41 principal and 119 subordinate Badaga hamlets' (ibid: 3). The Badaga population began to grow rapidly. According to Hockings the Badaga population in 1821 was 3778 which by the beginning of twentieth Century 'had climbed to 34000' (ibid: 337) which tells its own story that they found the Nilgiri plateau favorable for their agricultural enterprise and habitation. According to Kota folklore it was the council from three resident tribes who allowed the Badaga to settle down. It appears that the Badaga took over a number of sites of the Toda, the Kurumba and the Irula for their habitation (Hockings 1980: 64-65). The Toda and the Kota may have found the Badaga a food producing population settling down in their region as favorable and complimentary to their economic activities but certainly there must have been a conflict of interest between the Kurumba group of tribes and the Badaga. The forest was critical for the survival of the Kurumba group and the Irulas. They being basically food gatherers, hunters and shifting cultivators required larger area for their subsistence which began to be rapidly encroached by the expansion of the agricultural activities of the Badaga. They must have resisted their expansion which was bound to lead to conflict. The two parties were vastly unequal in experience, technology and power. The Badaga had already secured the support of the Toda and the Kota. The relationship which eventually has been described by Hockings and others should be viewed under those circumstances. The Badaga painted the Kurumba as an evil force, sorcerers, dangerous who had to be contained, evicted and eliminated. The Badaga believed 'the Kurumba

can kill victims at a distance with a spell, can secretly remove the internal organs from the living, can violate women without their knowledge, can enter a locked door, and change into an insect or any sort of mammal' (Hockings 2013: 162). Any misery, disease or misfortune befalling the Badaga, their cattle or crop was associated with evil design of the Kurumba. Often the Kurumba were massacred. Hockings writes, 'on several occasions (1824, 1836, 1875, 1882, 1887, 1891 and 1900) the Kurumba were massacred by parties of the Badaga. The techniques of killing varied from case to case but usually involved burning down a hut or even a whole hamlet to make the slaughter seem accidental. In 1875 a head Kurumba had bewitched a Badaga woman into loving him and had supposedly caused a fever among the Badagas. He was killed in a gun duel, and altogether six households of the Kurumba were massacred with axes. The story was immortalized in the epic ballad of *Kadare Gauda*. In the gruesome case of 1882 the family of another sorcerer was impaled and burnt alive. Common to such killings was the fact that they followed closely on some catastrophe in the Badaga village responsible for the carnage, and also that one or two Todas were always involved. According to the Badaga witnesses at the ensuing court trials, Kurumba sorcerers had caused deaths or epidemics in the Badaga village and their sorcery might be halted by the massacre only if a Toda, himself considered sorcerer, were to strike the first blow against the unfortunate Kurumba' (1980: 200). A simple analysis of the above findings, indicate that massacring and burning of the Kurumba habitats was a common occurrence accepted as socially appropriate by the Badaga. A Badaga woman falling in love with a Kurumba man was intolerable. The Toda who themselves were accused of sorcery were forced to participate and accomplish such gruesome acts of violence. Metz who was doing missionary w[illegible] the Badaga had written, 'I was

repeatedly asked to rid them of the Kurumba, that is to get them hunted down like wild beasts and exterminated, and they would remember my name with gratitude' (Metz 1862: 123 quoted by Hockings 2013: 162). These incidences pertain to the period when European travelers and colonial administration began to record their experiences in the Nilgiris which began around mid nineteenth century but what was the situation soon after the Badaga began to arrive when there was no government in the Nilgiris as a whole except that some tribute was being collected from the inhabitants of the Nilgiris to fight the feudal lords from the neighbouring regions. In other words, it will not be too much off the mark to speculate that till the British Colonists took control of the Nilgiris there must have been periods of frequent conflicts, and also establishment of temporary truce during which period there must have been some exchange of goods and services under duress. Although the Badaga were not a military power, they had the ability to produce food, were experienced peasants and as refugees on 'foreign' soil were united. Eventually the Badaga were able to prevail and establish their domination in the collaboration with the Toda and the Kota. The Kota too had negative perception of the Kurumba and they too killed them whenever they felt they have been aggrieved (Verghese 1966: 98-166). It is indeed difficult to imagine what was the perception of the Kota, before the arrival of the Badaga? However, the picture that emerges is that the Kurumba group was a persecuted population but the services and goods they collected from the forest were required by the larger population. Mandelbaum (1941: 19-26), Hockings (1980: 99-131) and several other scholars have extensively written about inter-tribal relations in the Nilgiris, akin to jajmani relations found in rural India. In these writings however, the element of coercion has been completely overlooked (Misra 2007: 165). The entry of the

aga and their rapid expansion in the Nilgiris not only placed the Kurumba from their habitats and pushed them per into the forest but also depleted the forest resources which they were critically depended. It has been a popular ion the world over to consider the ranges inhabited by agers as 'waste land', free for anyone having strength to upy. This is exactly what the Badaga were doing. The da and the Kota, as stated earlier were small population d were going to be the beneficiary of the Badaga agriculture onomy. They became their allies. The Badaga began to pay *du* (a sort of tribute) to the Toda thereby acknowledging eir presence in the Nilgiris, if not their authority. The Kota turn found in the Badaga their customers for their xtraordinary skills in craftsmanship. The relationship with ne Kurumba group was to keep them suppressed as they vere 'dangerous' but also extract goods and services from hem. The strategy the Kurumba adopted was to withdraw nside the forest to retain their autonomy but supply the goods and services the Badaga, the Toda and the Kota wanted from them in return for some peace, some cereals, dairy products, some tools and periodical repairs of their tools by the Kota. In addition they needed some assurance that they would be treated kindly and that is how the Kurumba were appointed as watchmen in the Badaga villages. However, it should be noted that the fear of unfathomable power of the Kurumba never left the Badaga and the Kota (even now you can hear the stories of the miraculous power of the Kurumba from the Badaga or the Kota in privacy and strict secrecy) which in the past often became an excuse for severely punishing them. The entry of the colonial regime heightened the tension and conflict of interest between the Kurumba and those who were expanding their interest in the Nilgiri forest areas, in other words, occupying their habitats. The colonial regime took away the rights of the people on land and forest

by virtue of the power they had acquired as occupiers. The main difference was that the Britishers were a much superior power, and had no fear of the black magic of the Kurumba. The colonial regime imposed taxes and began imposing restrictions on extraction of forest resources except when colonial regime itself was clearing forest for laying road and rail links or supplying timber for similar projects elsewhere. They also started clearing virgin forests and in its places started growing commercially viable eucalyptus and other exotic species. They released land for urban expansion as well as for plantation of tea and coffee. The establishment of plantations and importing labour to work there were new addition to the Nilgiri scenario. In the plantation on labour lines, slave-like conditions prevailed (see Daniel 1975: 1-13). The colonial regime encouraged local populations, the Badaga in particular to grow crops required for market rather than for consumption of the local populations. This accelerated monetization of the economy made traditional callings of the Kota, the Irula and the Kurumba redundant. They became marginalized. They had no option but to become wage-earners. The Badaga took advantage of the situation and as could be expected there was complete breakdown of the traditional relationship between the Badaga, the Toda, the Kota and the Kurumba group. The Toda began to supply milk to the market and also developed interest in holding land and its cultivation. The Badaga began to enlarge their land assets and switched over to commercial agriculture and took advantage of education as well as other modernizing forces and entered into government service, took over to professions like engineering, medicine, law, business etc. The Kota gave up their traditional occupation and tried to take advantage of the opportunities coming their way. It was the Irula and the Kurumba group in particular who were left in the lurch. The Kurumba group not only had lost access to

forest but also carried the stigma of being sorcerer. That is their entrapment during the colonial regime continued with a major difference that their access to the forest was being also progressively restricted. But their labour in the forest and plantation was required. They became wage earners and collected forest goods for wages. With this brief narrative of the Nilgiri sub-region, we are in a position to state that the Kurumba group and the Irula were the primary collectors; their status particularly of the Kurumba group was that they stood in the outer fringe of the economic relationship. Unlike the Kota, the Kurumba were not considered untouchables but feared and kept aloof except that they were invited to perform some rituals for the Badaga. The element of coercion was built in to whatever relationship the Badaga, the Toda or the Kota established with the Kurumba and the Irula. The colonial establishment extinguished social, cultural, ritual trappings and had purely economic relationship based on their superior power with the inhabitants of the Nilgiris.

Among all other populations in the sub-region, the Kurumba group was the most persecuted population at least since the arrival of the Badaga in the Nilgiris. In order to understand the situation it is necessary to keep in view the following factors. First, the nature of traditional village society is that, though each caste is tied with other caste in a stratified network of economic, social, cultural and ritual relationship, is left free to organize its internal activities. The *jati* system is highly decentralized system. Both revered text and actual practices emphasize mutually dependent relations among occupational specialists which have been going on for centuries without any significant convergence. In this framework the foragers like the Kurumba had unique and highly valued occupation which no body competed for but certainly wanted to acquire from them the valued forest products. Second, while these products were being acquired,

they were systematically displaced from their habitats. Third, a myth that they possessed some hidden power was cultivated which was on the face of it immediate cause to keep them away and persecute them. But a deeper cause was basically to acquire the forest regions for extension of agriculture activities and later in the colonial period to establish plantation, lay down rail and road connection and expand urban development. Fourth, which is very important to understand is how the Kurumba group handled the situation they were caught in. For this, it is essential to focus on their world view and thought pattern. Misra observed, 'they respect autonomy. They share in conditions of scarcity; they also share, even with outsider, if they find that they are in need, rather than storing for themselves. They strongly believe in social storage rather than individual hoarding. They found strength in resilience. They consider themselves as the part of the nature they live in. That they establish personal bonds with nature and this phenomenon has been very well documented by Naveh (2007 and 2014). They have immense capacity to tolerate pain and sorrow, and they believe in living simply' (2014: 294). They have innate attachment with the forest not merely on account of the fact that forest is primary cosmic provider for them but it is abode of their spirits with whom they often communicate, negotiate and seek guidance. In spite of the fact that they have been persistently persecuted they have remained peaceful. Just now what I have stated about the Kurumba group is applicable to those who have been called the Jenu Kuruba and the Soliga in Mysore sub-region, the Cholanaickan in Wynaad sub-region except that these groups have not been accused as sorcerers but nonetheless entrapped into the forest. Those who were enticed to come out of the forest like the Paniya, Adiyan, Pulayan, Kuruchia and Kattu Naickan were enslaved, the popular term for which is bonded labour. Mathur who has done extensive research among the

Scheduled Tribes in Kerala writes, 'the bond-labour still exists not only among the Paniyan, Adiyans but also among the Kattu Naickan, Wynad Pulayans and even among the Kuruchians.....The Kattu Naicken must have adopted bond-labour for their subsistence when they gave up their food gathering and hunting, whereas the Kuruchian became bond-labourers probably on account of excommunication and the resultant forfeiture of property (1977: 98).

Though there is no evidence of the Jenu Kuruba being enslaved as Paniya were, they have been in the trap of indebtedness which was repaid by collecting forest produce and looking after the cattle of the peasants. What had happened in the past can be surmised by the location of the agricultural land around their habitats. It is clear that the peasants have been continuously extending their land into the forest region pushing the Jenu Kuruba deeper into the forest.

The Forest Department too have vested interest in the presence of the Jenu Kuruba as well as the Soliga inside the forest. The Forest Department has a variety of tasks which only the forest dwellers can do efficiently. They 'summon the services of the Jenu Kuruba as and when required' (Misra 1977a: 109). They also encourage them to do *Khumri* cultivation for two to three years. *Khumri* lands are those plots from which timber has been removed and new plantation work has to be undertaken by the Forest Department. While the Jenu Kuruba, work on such lands, they loosen the soil, sow it, and protect their crops from wild animals, the Forest Departments plants saplings of commercial trees on those plots of land. In about three years the saplings would have grown into young trees when the Jenu Kuruba are asked to move on to another part of the forest where they might repeat the process all over again. This arrangement is highly exploitative, 'in any case, it appears that the lower echelons

of the Forest Department not only decide who will cultivate how much land, but also get some or most of the *Khumri* land cultivated for themselves' (Misra 1977a: 113, see also Rajan 1984: 193-204).

The case of the Soliga in Biligiri Rangana Hills is significantly different as they have been integrated into temple complex through the decrees made by the Old Mysore State. In 1799, after the British colonialism defeated Tipu Sultan, Mysore kingdom was restored to erstwhile rulers. They in turn decided to renovate the temple at the hills; Srivaishnavite Brahmins residing on the foothills were asked to take charge of the temple for which 22,300 acres of forest was granted to the temple. The role the Soliga play in temple affairs is peripheral as far as their economy is concerned but it is important to note that a good part of the forest on which they had been critically depended was assigned to the temple and to the community of Brahmins who were settled there. They were made responsible to manage the temple. Thus the Brahmin community got a foothold in the hilly and wild forest region of the Yelandur taluk of the Mysore district for which they were also assigned some villages to support their economy (Rajan 1984: 195). This way the political power at Mysore could extend their authority in a frontier region and in the process the Soliga lost their homeland. No doubt, linking of the Soliga with the temple rituals enhanced their social status but in real material terms it did not mean anything to them. They continued to do shifting cultivation and collection of forest produce, in addition to the work that was imposed upon them by the Forest Department, peasants and the temple functionaries. Thus apart from the interest of those who were directly benefiting from labour and skills of the Soliga, like the Forest Department, the forest contractors, the peasants who entrusted them to look after their cattle, deliver forest produce on their door step, and lastly serve

as the temple functionaries, the Soliga themselves had least material gains. The interest of all these groups was that the populations like the Jenu Kuruba and the Soliga stay put in the forest. They were entrapped though may not have been persecuted like Kurumba group in the Nilgiri sub-region.

ENDNOTES

1. Literally, there was gold rush in Wynaad. Let me quote Bird-David 'Plantation started in the Wynaad area in 1839 and later, the upper part of Gir valley and the area towards Pandalur were planted with coffee. In 1874, however, rumors started spreading about the presence of gold boom between 1880 and 1882. During this short period, Pandalur – otherwise an unmemorable small Indian village – blossomed into a busy mining centre with a race course, a club, a saloon, rows of substantial bungalows and a post office. Most of the plantations in the area were dug up (forty one gold mining companies registered in London and with prices for land reaching £ 2600 an acre!)' (1989: 259). This piece of information is vital to understand the big game that was being played under the colonial umbrella. Once the entire Wynaad region was the homeland of the indigenous people, but progressively they began to be denied of their natural rights in the forest, and also access to its resources which they had been trading for a long time. Later, forest began to be cleared for timber in a big way. Soon tea, coffee, rubber plantations began to get established and on the top of it the rush for gold market were sky rocketing, the indigenous population were being pushed aside.
2. *Adivasis* a Sanskrit word which literally means the original settler equivalent to indigenous community. This is the term which has often been used in place of the Scheduled Tribe but could not get wide currency excepting in some regions like Kerala.

3. Elsewhere (Misra 2007: 153-154) has reported that James Wilkinson Breeks who was Commissioner of the Nilgiris and wrote the famous book 'An account of the Primitive Tribes and Monuments of the Nilgiris', mentions that in spite of his and his officers best efforts they could extract only eight women's names from the Irula men who were brought to Commissioners tent. This incident is relevant as it not only raises the issue on interview as a technique for data collection but also the context of the tent of the Commissioner who also happened to be a 'white' man surrounded by his security men plus multiple translators through whom the messages of the commissioner and the Irula were being transmitted back and forth. Further, often among some forest dwellers, the persons among themselves are identified on the basis of their peculiar physical or some special traits, practice of having formal names as such may be either absent or irrelevant (it is used to be true in Indian rural areas too). Of course it is also quite possible that Irula at that time would have been most reluctant to give any identity of their females.



TRANSFORMATION AT TRIJUNCTION

The issue of changes at trijunction has occurred at several places in this dissertation. Here my endeavour will be to consolidate all that and focus on how the members of the Scheduled Tribe are coping with the changes that are taking place around them and also highlight the basic contradiction in the development paradigm.

The trijunction is ecologically diverse area. Geologically its hills are of ancient origin. Its topographic variation, range from low lying areas in the west, which we have identified as Wynaad sub-region to mountains going up to 2000m, identified as the Nilgiri sub-region, and varying land space covering the Mysore sub-region and partly the Nilgiri sub-region. This has resulted in diverse climatic vegetation – dry scrub and semi-evergreen forests, the montane *sholas* and grasslands. The trijunction has been inhabited by human beings for a long time who have been engaged in hunting and gathering, shifting cultivation, and particularly collection of forest goods for trade. The significance of the trade gets highlighted by the fact that the junction lies at the frontier of three major cultural regions of India represented by Kannada,

Tamil and Malayalam speaking people, each having its long history distinct traditions and inter-connection with the centers and network of Indian civilization. Right away, this may also be stated that these three major cultural regions had marketing towns located at the edges of the forest which could be considered as primary collection centers of forest products. Though the forest and hills looked formidable, they were no major barrier for people to move in and out of the region. The long coastal line in the west was gateway for internal and external trade which got developed since ancient times.

In the previous chapters we have briefly given an idea of the prehistory and history of the region. The convincing picture that emerges is that even in the remote past the region was not isolated as generally believed. However, we learn that with the fall of the Vijayanagar Empire in the 16th Century the Badaga began to move into the Nilgiri sub-region. What must have begun as a trickle, in course of time acquired a kind of exodus of the people from the adjoining plains of Mysore who had the experience of settled agriculture. They knew the value of the land and quickly began to spread out in the plateau region of the Nilgiris. Hockings, who has done considerable work amongst the Badaga calls them as ancient Hindu refugee (see Hockings 1980). They began to clear the forests to occupy the land for habitation and cultivation although they did not overtly disturb whatever rudimentary political structure was prevalent. Obviously they ran into conflict with those who were mainly dependent on the forests for their livelihood. The history of the Nilgiri plateau began to change but soon got stabilized in the typical tradition of Indian rural areas. That is, a kind of interdependence though unequal and coercive relationship got developed between the communities living in the region. The unique part of the arrangement which was significantly different from what it was in the plains was that

there was a near absence of an overt political authority and also of a priestly class. How did the arrangement function without these two very important pillars of Indian social organization? The answer to this question perhaps lies in the fact that the arrangement was fluid and was in the process of evolution. However, on the face of it each community enjoyed autonomy but exchanged goods and services with others. This indeed was near replication of the arrangement found in the Indian villages, in which the forager stood at the outer periphery of the exchange relationship and occasionally interacted during observation of ceremonies, rituals at sacred places, marketplaces and fairs. They often formed ceremonial friendship (see Sinha 1958: 504-18). But here in the Nilgiris the situation was different. The Badaga were hoisting themselves in the territories of the foragers. The Toda and the Kota did not object as in any case they were marginal foragers – one was a pastoralist and the other had acquired the skills of multi-purpose artisans, willing to be hired. It was the Kurumba group and the Irula who were fully dependent on the forests they inhabited. Thus it was they who were going to be a serious aberration in the arrangement the Badaga wanted to replicate in the Nilgiri plateau. I have discussed the problematic of the Kurumba group. They were never fully absorbed in the exchange relationship, not only because of the direct conflict of interest between them and the peasant Badaga but also on account of the fact that they were spread out in the forests, they were a highly decentralized community, if at all they can be called a community, were fiercely committed to individualism and egalitarianism. They were painted in extremely negative terms. They were often severely punished and killed. They developed their own strategy to survive such as withdrawing deep into the caves and forests, supplying goods and services as and when they chose and most importantly let the myth about their

mystical power prevail. The last strategy gave them some space in respectability as well as economic benefit. As often they were employed as watchmen, and also called upon to cure illness difficult to manage. The situation in the Mysore sub-region with respect to the members of the Scheduled Tribe was relatively more conventional in the sense they were an extension of village economy. Gardner refers foragers as caste of the forest (1978: 295) excepting that the Soliga had an additional role in the temple activities of the Biligiri Rangana Hills.

It was in the Wynaad sub-region that it was noticed that the tribes like the Kuruchia and the Mullukurumba though they occupied the forest region had long ago developed the tradition of settled agriculture. These people not only had better tools for hunting but also had the tradition of organized hunting. Their agriculture based economy was substantially supported by what they gathered and hunted in the forests. Their inter-relations with other communities extended in the neighbouring peasant villages and it is also reported that in the past they paid tribute to the Nayar feudal lords.

Entry of Colonial Regime

In this scenario entered the British. Before they became the occupiers, some European missionaries had entered the area particularly Wynaad and the Nilgiris and had begun to explore the possibility of their evangelical work plus to establish their foothold. Soon after the British established themselves in the Nilgiris much began to happen rather rapidly. The changes in the colonial period in the Nilgiris were 'so rapid, so far reaching and so permanent as to make one pause and wonder whether the term "cultural revolution" can usefully be applied to such a small region' (Hockings 1989a: 334). It was in 1819 that John Sulliyan, who was then

the collector of Coimbatore, entered the Nilgiri plateau. He was so impressed by the climate and scenic beauty of the place that it is reported that he acquired some land from the Toda by paying them. The British in general discovered that climate at the plateau was salubrious reminding them of home like conditions. They found it an ideal place for retreat of their fatigued soldiers trying to establish colonial rule in the dusty, hot and humid plains of southern India. Soon Sulliyan got his house constructed at Ooty. Other buildings appeared in quick succession. A Roman Catholic Chapel followed in 1823. These facts are important to understand that it was not merely the political force which was in the vanguard but as Hockings has pointed out that it was a kind of 'cultural revolution' of the region that was being attempted. But the moot question which needs to be raised over and over again and also from different vantage points is where did the people who inhabited the region figure in this development paradigm. We need to ask, 'cultural revolution' for whom and what was its purpose. The impact of the development that was being attempted were going to be very important for the people in general and specifically on the indigenous people but unfortunately that aspect was completely overlooked by the otherwise competent ethnographic studies conducted on the individual communities of the region.

The British entered the Nilgiris as colonizer, as they did in other parts of the country. However, the difference was that Nilgiris has been unique and exclusive region, and relatively considered isolated. Besides, there was an absence of overt state power. True to their mission the Britishers acquired all power. They exercised rights over land and forests, developed market and controlled it, and displayed with full effect their vastly superior and efficient technology. From the local standards they lived a life of luxury, privilege

and leisure. They encouraged their heat burnt officers and soldiers working in the plains to come up in the cool climate of the hills, relax and enjoy. Not only these people introduced new plants, birds and many new innovations, but also gave birth to Eurasians which led somebody to remark 'necessity is mother of invention but also father Eurasians' (Hockings 1989b: 350). There was no appeal against them. They were at the top of local hierarchy based on their colour and political power. This was irrespective of the fact that they had their own internal stratification based on faith, class and the region of origin (ibid: 338). After they discovered Nilgiris, the Britishers realized its economic potentialities. They soon started commercial agriculture that is they promoted production for distant market rather than for local consumption – a typical colonial economy. This was indeed a significant move which in turn was responsible for many irreversible changes in the Nilgiris and the adjoining regions.

Commercial Agriculture

The fact that the Western Ghats of which Nilgiris was an important part, was a treasure trove of biological diversity, was given least attention during the colonial period. Stretches of mountain grasslands were considered as 'wasteland' meant to be developed to become productive. Cederlof and Sutton discussing how the Toda and the Badaga were made to part land to the British, and how they were treated differently wrote, 'until the mid-nineteenth Century, forest were largely seen as arable lands where trees could be cropped while "wild-nature jungles" – were considered an impediment to agricultural expansion and effective governance. In the Nilgiris repeatedly unsuccessful experimental plantations of Eucalyptus were prioritized as hills' principal forest resources while the resource-rich, high biodiversity *shola* forests were

gradually cleared to provide firewood and plantation of land' (2006: 172). Destruction of ecology was set in motion in a big way. The Britishers introduced commercial agriculture by clearing huge forest areas. Cultivation of tea, coffee, cinchona, potato and other European vegetables were encouraged. Cultivation of these items required cheap labour. The local population was neither enough nor was suitable for the kind of labour that was required to make the new enterprise profitable. It is well known that plantation and enslavement of labour are intimately connected. Two new factors were introduced into the sub-region owing to the promotion of commercial agriculture; one was to import the labour from the surrounding plains which changed the demography and second the terms on which the labour were brought and the way they were housed and treated amounted to slavery.

Considering the cold climate, unfamiliar work, being away from the family and kin, the labour must have been forced to work in those conditions. Incidentally, for obvious reasons the ethnography of labour was of little interest to the scholars and administrators who were zeroing on the Nilgiris and hence very little is known as to how they were recruited, what wages they got, what were the living conditions in the labour lines, what kind of relationship were established with their employers and also with the other traditional populations in the Nilgiris. However, one may speculate that those who were recruited for work in plantations had very little choice. But several years of experience in the region, gives me the impression that those conditions made a deeper impact on the economy, society, inter community relationship and attitude of the people. The term 'dora' is often used in the Nilgiris region which may ordinarily mean 'white' but it connotes the sense of those who are all powerful, against whom there is no appeal and that was the 'white man' in

the colonial era. Cultivation of commercial crops meant that eventually the market became a major force and as a result of which the much discussed traditional inter-community relationship in the sub-region of the Nilgiris withered away.

Area Opened up

Cultivation of cash crops was meant for distant markets which of course led to the discontinuation of growing traditional crops. In addition, Nilgiris in particular was being developed as a place for retreat, entertainment and sanatorium for soldiers to recover and also some government offices were being established. All this required development of a network of roads. Hitherto, there were some jungle paths which could be negotiated by foot, horseback or bullock carts. Hockings has printed an old photograph (ca 1900) showing Chetti merchants resting their bullocks on Coonoor Ghat road which illustrates the state of the transport then and the trade link between plains and hills (2013: plate 15). The building of early roads up into the hills was done by army sappers. The sub-region of the Nilgiris soon got well connected. Four major towns namely Udhagamandalam (Ooty), Coonoor, Kotagiri and Gudalur developed. It should also be mentioned that in the Nilgiri sub-region a fancy mountain rail was also constructed. The economic and strategic importance of this rail link, have never been made clear but from the ecological point of view the project was a big disaster. The project required a large number of labourers for a long period of time. It took more than 25 years to complete it. It must not have been easy for labour to work on this project considering the rocky terrain, dense forests full of wild animals, the cold and damp climate. Certainly it is relevant to ask who were these labourers? how were they recruited and brought to the Nilgiris? what were their living conditions? what

ere their wages? what happened to them after the project as completed? what were their relations with the local opulations? and so on. These questions have never been sked which certainly reflect on the bias of the scholars in noosing the subject matter of their studies. However, this ail has stayed on and has become popular with the tourists oing to the Nilgiris.

Though we do not have such detailed information bout the transport and communication in the other two ub-regions of the trijunction, the fact is that the process f opening up the area which began in the colonial period gained huge momentum after independence resulting in massive opening up of the region from all sides. Traffic flow has enormously increased with all its associated hazards. The network of roads runs through the thick forest region of the Nilgiri, Wynaad and Mysore districts. The consequences of such exposure are bound to be profound but have not been properly assessed. Anyways, the Forest Department felt that the situation was reaching an alarming stage from the viewpoint of protecting forest and wildlife; they have banned plying of any motor vehicle at night between Mysore-Nilgiri and Mysore-Wynaad sectors. At the time of writing this, the transport companies are protesting against these restrictions. Although the wild life being hit by vehicles has become a matter of common occurrence.

Demographic

Sheer population increase is enormous in modern India. According to the figures by the Census of India 2011 the population of India is 1,21,05,69,873. There is no way to overlook this huge number. It is externally seen and internally felt by each and everyone. Specifically the population at the trijunction which was scantily populated has become massive

now. For example, the population of the Mysore district in 1801 was 112,882 which in 2011 had became 735,394. Hockings writes that when Sulliyan settled in the hills, the only other residents were according to 1821 census, Toda 222, Kota 317 and Badaga 3778 (1989: 338). It may be noted that the two other populations namely the Kurumba and the Irula were not even mentioned. It only shows that the administration did not recognize their presence in the plateau region. Breeks (1873: 5, 40, 49, and 67) records the population of the tribes according to the final census of 15th November 1871 as Toda 639, Kota 1112, Kurumba 613, and Irula 1470. In 2003-2004 according to the census conducted by Tribal Research Centre, Udhagamandalam the population of the Scheduled Tribes was mere 3.71 per cent of the total population of the Nilgiris (Misra 2007: 162) from being the only settlers according to 1821 census. On the Nilgiri side of Wynaad, Tamil refugees from Sri Lanka were rehabilitated. Besides, there has been a significant movement of the population from Kerala which has changed the demography, economics, politics and culture of that region. It also encouraged a lot of traders from Kerala to settle down in the region. Gudalur at any part of the day bustles with activity. It has now a sprawling bus stand and can boast of as an urban centre. In Wynaad, Pulpally once had a number of settlements of different Scheduled Tribes and neighbouring Sultan Batteri were small towns are well thriving urban centres with marketing arcades and glittering shops. According to census of 2011 the population of Sultan Batteri was 297863 and of Gudalur town was 49535. The decadal growth rates of three districts namely Mysore, Wynaad and Nilgiris between 2001 and 2011 have been 23.29, 11.30 and 15.65 per cent respectively.

While the Nilgiri sub-region was under the colonial rule, the Mysore side was ruled by the Mysore Kings where the changes during that time were gradual. The Mysore sub-

region relatively remained undisturbed. But much has been happening after the merger of the Mysore Kingdom to the Indian Union. A dam was built across the river Kabini. Its construction began in 1959-60 and it was completed in 1974. Owing to the dam, the backwaters of the river Kabini submerged 606.06 km which resulted in the displacement of the people living on the banks of the river. Of the entire land that went into submersion 3545.172 hectares were dry land and the rest were forests. All Jenu Kuruba and Betta Kuruba settlements in Begur forest range along with the peasants living in neighbouring villages were resettled in colonies specially built for them. In other words, not only the entire ecology of the area but also the social setting of the area underwent a huge change. The story of resettlement of the displaced people is a long drawn one. the changes that were introduced caused much hardship, anguish and anxiety to the people in general and the tribes in particular. In the case of the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba, they not only lost the forests which provided the subsistence to them but also the very essence of their life. The spirits of their dead live in the forests with whom the Jenu Kuruba communicate and negotiate whenever they face a 'crisis'. That is lost. Whatever is remaining in the name of the forests is reserved, in which they cannot ordinarily enter. They now dwell in houses constructed for them by the government which reflect the ideas of the builders. House construction for the Nayaka in Wynaad became 'a silent clash point between Nayakas and non-Nayaka way of living' (see Lavi and Bird-David 2014: 407-432). Some of the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba in this region have been given title to the land but most of them have not taken up farming in any significant way. For this there are practical as well as deeper philosophical reasons. Most of them have given their land on lease to neighbouring farms themselves go for wage-earning jobs in coffee

plantations. Food gathering and hunting as a subsistence activity has become negligible. A number of welfare schemes such as supply of subsidized ration, old age pensions, support for pregnant and lactating women, as well as rural employment scheme provide much relief to them and also keep them away from the forest. In any case there is stricter vigilance of the forests by the Forest Department. Poachers and smugglers of timber and sandalwood in particular are a constant threat to the members of the Scheduled Tribe because they seek their enforced assistance in illegal activities in the forests. Since, the Jenu Kuruba and the Betta Kuruba are the resident populations of the region and also knowledgeable about the forests they are the ones who are questioned by the investigating officers of the Forest Department. This is a constant worry for them. Therefore, many of them find it safer to work in the plantation away from their habitats. Also the planters' entice them in a variety of way, some of which are certainly unethical. In the past, sheer power of force would bring them to work for the planters which were also applicable to the works conducted by the Forest Department.

Urbanization

There has been more vigilance, patrolling and efforts to protect the trijunction as most of the forests in the trijunction comes under one protection category or another, after the recognition of the Nilgiri Bio-sphere Reserve and the formation of Tiger Reserve Forest area, etc. However, their efforts have not been able to stop urban expansion to the edges of the forests and sometimes there is even clear encroachment into the forest area. A satellite view, shows that urban development is engulfing the forests from all sides of the trijunction which has been well highlighted by Gadgil (referred to earlier) and its ecological impact on the region.

Further the kind of development that is taking place around the forest region is neither sustainable nor aesthetically suitable. They also put forth an unpractical model of development in which the Scheduled Tribe populations have no role. These aspects are very well illustrated by what has happened in Udhagamandalam, Gudalur, Sultan Batteri and Sargur. Excepting Udhagamandalam which became district headquarters, during the colonial rule, others were simple trading centres located on the edges of the forests. But now they have grown into hugely crowded, haphazard urban centres with marketing arcades and cinema halls with very poor infrastructure and civic facilities.

Resort Industry and Tourism

If one drives from Mysore towards the Nilgiris or Wynaad, one cannot escape huge advertisement of forest resorts. This industry is flourishing and attracts high end tourists from far off places. The forest ranges of Bandipur and Mudumalai attract a large number of tourists round the year.

In Biligiri Rangana side it is the flow of pilgrims which has enormously increased, particularly on the days of certain festivals and rituals.

Transport and Communication

There have been revolutionary changes in communication. Earlier, around 1960s there were very few roads and fewer transport facilities say between Mysore and Karapur (where I conducted my fieldwork among the Jenu Kuruba) or between Gudalur and Sultan Batteri (where Rajalakshmi Misra) conducted her fieldwork or between Mysore and Biligiri Rangana Hills (where Morab conducted his fieldwork). Now in all these places the road connectivity

has vastly improved. Government, private buses, besides numerous small passenger vehicles called 'tempos' ply on these roads. In my recent visit in Karapur I noticed that Mysore-Karapur has an excellent road. Since Karapur has Kabini reservoir which is dotted with high end resorts, fancy cars ply on this road. There is another significant change. The main road is well connected with interior villages which are frequently covered by a variety of vendors using motorized luggage carriers. There are now sprawling modern bus stations at Udhagamandalam, Gudalur, Sultan Batteri and Heggadadevanakote indicating that the transport industry has substantially expanded. These centres connect bus services to the hinterland. The number of private owned cars, motorcycles and mopeds have substantially increased and so also the telecommunications. The rural folks including former forest dwellers like the Jenu Kuruba, the Soliga, and the Mullukurumba frequently use mobile phones. Even the so called interior areas are dotted with dish antennas, thereby indicating the exposure of the people to television.

Thus, in physical terms the trijunction which was once considered a forest and remote area has been completely transformed from all sides. The forest area has certainly reduced in comparison to what it was soon after independence on account of expanding urbanization and mega projects like Kabini reservoir, Nugu reservoir, Bhavanisagar etc. Building of Kabini reservoir required resettling of the population for which vast stretches of forests were released. As a result of which what one sees is agricultural lands adjacent to the reserved forests in the Mysore sub-region area. Indeed a highly contradictory situation has developed there. On the one hand there are frequent man-animal conflicts and on the other tranquility of the forest is highly disturbed. The region has become highly vulnerable raising serious questions

about the very purpose for which the Nilgiri Bio-sphere was recognized. These developments have been causing serious concern and that is how Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel, under the leadership of Gadgil was formed. The Expert panel did a meticulous job as they considered the Western Ghats as ecologically very significant. They wrote that the Western Ghats is 'the protector of the Indian peninsula, the mother of Godavari, Krishna, Netravathi, Kaveri, Kunthi, Vaigai and myriad of other rivers, Kalidas likens the Western Ghats to a charming maiden; Agastyamalai is her head, Annamalai and Nilgiri the breasts, her hips the broad ranges of Kanara and Goa, her legs the northern Sahyadri. Once the lady was adorned by a sari of rich green hues; today her mantle lies in shreds and tatters. It has been torn asunder by the greed of the elite and gnawed at by the poor, striving to eke out subsistence. This is a great tragedy, for this hill range is the backbone of the ecology and economy of South India' (2011: V). Their recommendations therefore were to protect and conserve the Western Ghat Region. The comprehensive recommendations of this Expert Committee raised a storm among the different stakeholders which resulted in the formation of Kasturirangan Committee to relook and re-evaluate the recommendations of Gadgil. Even the recommendation of this Committee is being challenged now. This is a huge problem. The general profile of the people in the Western Ghats has many positive sides such as the region can boast of high level of literacy and high level of environmental awareness. The region has well entrenched democratic institutions. Kerala leads the country in popularizing science as well as empowering Panchayat Raj Institutions. Yet the paradox is that the degradation of the environment particularly in the Western Ghats has reached alarming levels.

Development Activities and NGOs

India decided to pursue planned development soon after India became independent. Tribal development became an important component of the development planning. Enormous amount of literature exists on tribal development. It has been periodically reviewed and analyzed by experts, committees and commissions. The planning approach with its focus and strategies have undergone changes from plan to plan. Allocation of funds for development too has enormously increased. The impact of the planned development on the Scheduled Tribes is a subject by itself which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However, it can be safely stated that there is not a single group in the country that has remained untouched by the development process.

In addition to the welfare and developmental programmes undertaken by the government agencies, there are a large number of NGOs also working among the Scheduled Tribes in the region, in the sector of health, education, community development, training and trying to raise their awareness about the development paradigm. Doctor Narasimhan started working in the Nilgiris way back in 1940s when it was not so fashionable to work among the tribal population (see Misra and Rajalakshmi Misra 1988). There are more than a dozen NGOs working among the Tribes in Heggadadevanakote region of Mysore district. Norstorm has written a whole chapter on NGO in his book. He identified more than 21 of them working among the Paliyans (2003: 127-51). On account of the work done by NGOs, political activists and exposure to frequent election to different bodies, the people in general, the members of the Scheduled Tribes in particular have become politically conscious. A number of women belonging to the Scheduled Tribe are representatives in various political bodies and they are beginning to articulate their views. They

are putting forth their demands for fulfillment of their rights to extract minor forest products from the forest under the Forest Rights Acts. There are frequent disputes between the Forest Department officials and the people over the interpretation of the various provisions of laws which have been enacted to protect the rights of the indigenous forest dwellers. In Wynaad reserved constituency a member of the Scheduled Tribe has been representing in the Kerala State Assembly. Though his is a lone voice in the deliberation of the state assembly, there are indications that some sort of political solidarity among the members of the Scheduled Tribes is developing. Recently a Soliga, the first tribal community member, won a Zilla Parishad election in Chamarajanagar district (The Hindu 25-4-2014).

It was pointed out that there are serious contradictions between conservation and the paradigm of development adopted by the modern societies. How to resolve these contradictions is the issue not only before the planners who are looking into the problems at the trijunction but before the entire humanity. For us the important question is where do the members of the Scheduled Tribe, the real heritage people stand in this scenario.

Before this section is concluded, let it be stated that various schemes for the welfare of the Scheduled Tribes and their empowerment, establishment of the democratic institutions particularly de-centralization of power, passing of the recent Forest Rights Act and of the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act 1996[2] are making their impact on the life of the Scheduled Tribes. These are extremely important reforms but outside the scope of this dissertation. However, be that as it may, these measures and acts although are radical their implementation in true spirit is woefully lacking. The Scheduled Tribes at trijunction, the Soliga, the Jenu Kuruba, the Kattu Naickan and the entire

Kurumba group in particular have been overwhelmed by the modern development process. There is neither any scope for them to maintain their traditional life-style in modern set up or any appreciation for their timeless values. They are being continuously displaced and marginalized in the name of mainstreaming them. Pattanayak writes, 'mainstreaming is excluding, marginalizing and demolishing smaller languages and culture. It is another name of genocide. The tribals in particular, who are displaced from their habitat in the forests and mountain, are wrenched from their language and culture and are forced to adopt the dominant regional language as their mother tongue' (2015: XIX). Their world-view, their understanding of nature developed over millennia, their knowledge system built around the core values of nature lie shattered in the name of development. Orality is superstition. The knowledge transmitted through it is false and hence to be eradicated. The relationship they establish with nature is irrelevant. What is relevant is its commodification. There is no patience to spare a thought as to how they sustained themselves with that orality, with that knowledge for such a long period of human history against such a determined and organized onslaught on their way of life, thinking and values. Today when there is so much jostling to grab space in the Western Ghats, more specifically at the trijunction, there is a need to pause to ask how has the rich and fabulous bio-diversity of the region – among the very few remaining in the world been preserved. Conservation and sustainable development are the catchwords but those who have been practicing them are being continuously and persistently marginalized, if for nothing else, at least in the name of development.

In the concluding chapter I will sketch out the lives of a few Jenu Kuruba who have been encouraged to come out of the forests and be part of the mainstream.

ENDNOTES

1. Recently the Jenu Kuruba in Heggadadevanakote Taluk, inhabiting one of the colonies ran into difficulty with the officials of the Forest Department. They wanted to perform funeral rites of a dead Jenu Kuruba at a particular spot in the forest. Among the Jenu Kuruba there are two separate death rituals, one is soon after the death of a person. At the time of the burial the close relatives lament and recall various events connected with the dead person. Second is performed when the dead's relatives have collected enough money to give a feast. The basic objective of this ritual is to help the dead person to reach the Underworld so that it can live in the company of the other dead. During this ritual when a shaman gets possessed followed by a sort of stocktaking of all wrong and right doings of the dead and of course finally after a long session of questioning and answering, doubts are cleared, peace is restored, everything is settled which is followed by a feast. The Forest Department in this case was not prepared to grant them permission for performance of this ritual inside protected forest which caused much anguish among the Jenu Kuruba. For them the spirit of the dead finally has to go to the Underworld. A free floating spirit can cause a lot of worry to the living as well those who are dead.
2. Passing of the Provisions of the Panchayats Act 1996 was a revolutionary step. By this Act the provisions of part IX of the Constitution relating to Panchayat have been extended to the Scheduled Areas which has empowered the Gram Sabha to safeguard and preserve its traditions, and community resources. Gram Sabha has been empowered to approve plans, programmes and projects for development at the village level. Most importantly Gram Sabha's approval is necessary for development projects in the Scheduled Areas.



HOPE AND DESPAIR

This last chapter of the dissertation was being written while the world leaders were meeting in Paris (November 28-29, 2015) to discuss the issues arising owing to global warming. If there is any occasion to appreciate the wisdom in simple, sustainable, peaceful ways of life led by forest dwellers, it is now. The world leaders were of the opinion that there was an urgent need for making some drastic changes in the lifestyles of the modern civilized people. But of course they were shy of stating what changes they intended to introduce in the consumption pattern for obvious economic reasons. Then there are serious differences between the interests of so called developed nations and developing nations which are not easy to resolve.

Global warming is now no more a matter of opinion. It is being realized that the natural system is integrated and cannot be taken for granted that it will be 'ever giving', and cannot remain divided in the name of national interests. It is a kind of poetic justice that the developed and undeveloped nations have to stand on a common platform and look at each other with concern for there is an increasing realization that global warming will not discriminate between poor and rich nations. But the truth is that in the name of development the

civilized world has been harsh both on nature as well as those who have been living close to it.

Though the Scheduled Tribes at the trijunction have been a part of larger socio-economic, cultural and eco-system, their role in it has not been appropriately appreciated or acknowledged. While the larger society has been mainly concerned in 'digging gold', the people mainly the Scheduled Tribes have been harshly dealt with particularly those who were mainly dependent on the forests and its resources, like the Jenu Kuruba, Kurumba group. Not only were they considered 'primitives' but also persecuted, harassed and displaced at will.

In the first part of this chapter, I will like to recall what I observed in 1975 during a rapid survey that I conducted in five settlements of the Jenu Kuruba in Heggadadevanakote Taluk of Mysore district. This section is instructive for two reasons. One, the region has been undergoing changes for a long time but late 1970s saw a spurt of massive mega project like erection of a dam over Kabini river and opening up of the area from all sides. Second, all along our observation has been that the people like the Jenu Kuruba are significantly different from others. Therefore, in the second part of this chapter I will summarize as to what is happening to those Jenu Kuruba for whom the civilized world has provided some opening – they are breaking the traditional shackles of economy, socialization and culture imposed on them and also professional non-professional stereotypes in which they have been held.

The Survey

There were two important reasons for me to have conducted the survey: one was that Dr. B.D. Sharma, who was then the Joint Secretary in the Ministry of Home Affairs,

Government of India, in charge of the development and welfare of the Scheduled Tribes in India had discovered that certain groups among the Scheduled Tribes were not receiving any significant attention in the programmes designed for development of the Scheduled Tribes. On the eve of the Fifth Five Year Plan formulation the entire range of programme under the development of the Scheduled Tribes were being reviewed. The problem of more backward tribal communities was being discussed in considerable detail and it was found that their so-called backwardness needed closer scrutiny. It was found that those groups which were in pre-agricultural level of technology though necessarily were not poor suffer because their access to natural resources had been encroached upon. Dr. Sharma had called for a workshop to discuss the issues of such communities at all India level. Since I had done an ethnographic study of the Jenu Kuruba in 1960s, I decided to go back to the area and find out what exactly had been happening to them particularly relating to their economic status. In the course of the survey, I interviewed scores of the Jenu Kuruba in different settlements to find out how many days of work they were able to get and whether they had any food the day I had contacted and also the previous day of my interview. The second most pressing reason for me to conduct the survey was that a dam was being erected on Kabini river on account of which the Scheduled Tribes and peasants in the region were being displaced from their habitats. Since the Jenu Kuruba was dependent on forests they were the most affected people owing to this mega project (see Misra 1977a: 103-31).

In the workshop, Sinha highlighted the problem of the secondary primitive tribes living in the mainland under the symbiotic pressure of Indian civilization. He stated 'these latter groups are archaic in their productive technology but

have long standing dependent symbiotic socio-economic articulation with the surrounding dominant peasantry. Unlike the archaic primitive, "the secondary primitive tribes" have learnt to accommodate the pressures of encroaching civilization, and at the same time, to carve out an area of relative autonomy in ecological niches outside the adaptive reaches of the larger society. A proper understanding of these "secondary primitives" will have to be based on rigorous analysis of the nature of exploitative pressure of the encroaching larger society and **an understanding of the adaptive strategy of holding on to an eco-cultural niche of their own'** (Sinha 1977: 18 emphasis mine). This statement of Sinha in a few words sketches out the essential relationship of the forest dwellers whom he prefers to call secondary primitives in the context of larger society.

In the same workshop Dr. B.D. Sharma presented a theoretical framework for the development of small tribal communities. In this paper he argued that though anthropologists have been interested in the study of small communities they have not evolved any special theory for their economic development. Generally, it has been considered that general development programmes would take care of the small groups which did not happen, either the development process by passed them or had indifferent impact. He wrote 'other socio-economic forces, operating in the larger areas, have been influencing these groups with different results. In the long history of the Indian nation, some of these groups got fully assimilated as a caste or a sub-caste or as an identifiable distinct group in its expansive social structure. Some groups, however, failed to adjust to the new contact with larger society and a state of maladjustment or confrontation arose. In some cases, individuals got dispersed indistinguishably and the groups vanished. Some groups still

continue to live in varying degree of isolation' (1977:22-23). He presented a model for the development of small communities keeping in view their size, eco-system, ecological equilibrium, situation of confrontation with neighbouring larger group and isolation. He made a strong case for cautious approach in dealing with the development of smaller communities which had to be carefully planned over a long period of time. He argued for a 'pause' in the development process allowing the communities to regain their confidence. According to him, the best way was to plan the development process in stages so that the communities do not get overwhelmed. He reaffirmed what Sinha had said in concluding part of his essay recalling the famous dictum of the well known town planner Patric Gedde 'development through conservation'.

Above was the background in which I undertook the survey of the Jenu Kuruba in forest areas of Heggadadevanakote Taluk of Mysore district. The members of the Scheduled Tribe were overwhelmed by the development process in this area which increased in-migration of the people. They were being either generally by passed by the development process or were having indifferent impact on them. Besides the people like Jenu Kuruba were losing their niche and also their autonomy.

The survey showed that the Jenu Kuruba who were living inside the forests were facing grim situation. The situation was grimmer for them, as they were not covered by any welfare programmes being inside the forests and there were too many restrictions on collecting minor forest products. For majority of them to manage even one meal a day was difficult. Malnourishment was quite visible. The sight of the children with thin limbs and bulging bellies was quite common. For most of the adults there was hardly any work. Owing to the displacement of the population peasants were

being settled next to their *hadis*. Hitherto, their interaction with the peasants, were limited and they could always go back to their niche. The Jenu Kuruba of such settlements were completely cut-off from the forests from where in the past they could always collect edible food and fuel for themselves. The nature of their society being what it has been, they had no spokesperson of their own and there was no effort from any quarter to mobilize them.

On ground, the development efforts were limited, patchy rather unplanned and devoid of any direction as indicated by Sharma (referred to above). For instance, there was some effort to promote agriculture among the Jenu Kuruba. But all the Jenu Kuruba of the region were not given land. Those who received land were not able to make full use of it for a variety of reasons. The major one being that they did not have enough resources to cultivate, apart from the fact that they were not skilled in agriculture work which also requires some planning. In any case, the amount of land that was given to them was not sufficient to survive. A few of them who had become successful in agriculture were acting in a way that could help them individually but not the community of the Jenu Kuruba. These individuals were grabbing the lands of their own people who were mainly interested in maximising their own interests. It could not be otherwise because the social situation around them was based on self aggrandisement. In my survey I had cited the case of a Jenu Kuruba who from local standards had become successful. He had received some money as compensation from the government because his land was submerged in the back waters of the Kabini river. He showed foresightedness by depositing a major part of the compensation in a bank; with the rest he cleared his previous loans, bought new clothes and utensils for himself and his family. He had taken up the lands

of the fellow Jenu Kuruba who were not cultivating them. He employed them as his labourers and paid them wages. He openly stated that he preferred employing his own people because he could have better command over them than if he hired others. He himself had stopped working. In the meanwhile, he married again. At the time of survey, he had two wives. He had four children from his first wife and one from second. Obviously the person was quite enterprising and successful, and showed entrepreneurial skills but this case raises some important questions such as what has been the impact of this man's progress on the community at large and whether the state should be promoting such individuals? Even at that stage it was clear that inequality was beginning to appear among the Jenu Kuruba. The government development agents were quite satisfied with the progress this man had shown and for them he was a show piece. He was also being promoted as a 'leader' of the Jenu Kuruba. But this was a far cry from what Sharma had strongly pleaded for empowering the community so that they can take charge of their own development. In fact the development programmes were conducted as a departmental activity without proper coordination and therefore the success of even one individual was a 'prized catch' for development agents to get their efforts validated. However successful this man may have been, the case presented a great deal of incongruity for a large number of the Jenu Kuruba who, were in great distress (Misra 1977: 103-31). I did not follow this case through. In the meanwhile, the whole scenario of 1970 in Heggadadevanakote region had changed completely (discussed earlier). The situation of forest dwellers and a sharp distinction of frontier zone beyond forests, except in the case of the Cholanaickan had disappeared long ago. Norstrom has shown through his studies of Paliyan that they adopt different strategies to deal with the changing environment around them (2003: 109-

208). Through a case study he has shown how Paliyan were dealing with the contemporary time. They were innovative and willing to take risks. They were challenging not only the widely held perceptions about their community as well as their traditional values of individual autonomy and attitude towards 'work' in general. They negotiate and build alliances across different agents. With the result 'they have been very successful economically over the last decades' (Norstrom 2014: 467). In this sense, the Paliyan, demonstrate political learning. In the process, they have moved away from old world and were trying to create a political space in the new world (ibid: 468).

In the subsequent years the grim situation being faced by the members of the Scheduled Tribes in general, the Jenu Kuruba in particular was eased to a great extent owing to a number of welfare schemes launched by central and state governments and some very sincere work done by the NGOs. The schemes of free and subsidized rations, nutritious food for pregnant and lactating mothers, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act etc., saved many of them from starvation and undernourishment and sheer desperation.

. The Jenu Kuruba in this region, though do not exactly reaffirm the observations of Norstrom, certainly show that some of them have taken initiative and sought individual solution to the challenges they have been facing in the region. Whatever they have achieved is certainly remarkable because of all the members of the Scheduled Tribes, the Jenu Kuruba are most shy and value their autonomy (see Misra 2014: 294-96).

The fact is that the Jenu Kuruba, like the Cholanaickan, the Kattu Naickan, have always lived in dispersed settlements in the neighbourhood of other people. Like the Naickan 'do not conform to the model of a closed and bounded tribal

society. Many traditional societies have no clearly defined boundaries, but the issue with the Naikens seems to be of a different order. There is a formation of small pockets of Naikens dispersed amidst other populations, with no institutionalized communication between them and no pan-Naiken structure (whether ritual, social or economic) linking them. A nucleated pattern of social organization characterizes each segregated local community. The local community is distinguishable for the variability with it, more than for its homogeneity. Occupations and to some extent, even certain cultural practices, seem to be characterized by flexibility and by contextuality rather than by customary cultural prescriptions' (Bird-David 1989: 275). They, like the Soliga (Morab 1977: 17-23) and other groups have lived in terms of local community which was 'distinguishable for the variability within it more than for its homogeneity'. There has been no pan Jenu Kuruba identity or institutional aggregates cutting across different local communities. Their economic activities are characterised by 'flexibility and contextuality'. Often their vagueness and contradictory responses have been observed by both professional anthropologists and others which has been explained by Gardner (2014: 240) and Bird-David as 'the very nature of the people themselves (1989: 275). Brian Morris writing about Malaipantaram has characterized them as fiercely independent leading to anarchical thinking (2014: 303-18). It is indeed remarkable that what was written about the Kurumba in the 19th Century and what Bird noted in her study of the Naickan in 1979 or Morab in his study of the Soliga in 1977 or Misra in his study of the Jenu Kuruba in 1975 shows a certain degree of consistency in their nature, in spite of the fact that these observations were made by different people at different points of time and at different places. These accounts do not provide a coherent and unified picture of those societies. If these accounts provide some idea

of nature of those societies, how do we explain consistency in their nature? This question is particularly relevant because whatever we know of them states very clearly that they have been under a lot of pressure. Is it that we still do not fully understand them? And what happens when such groups who have lost their niche as has happened in the case of the Jenu Kuruba in particular and have began to seek entry into 'mainstream'. How they and their children are going to cope-up with the new environment? This is particularly relevant for these communities. For till this juncture, as it is they are numerically small population and on top of it they live at the terms of the 'local community'. Thus in caste, religion, ritual and hierarchy bound large society they will be a people with a very small network of kin and 'our people' syndrome. The others are not going to accept them even when they become professionally and economically successful. These are going to be the real issues which are going to confront them. But the Mullukurumba or the Kuruchia do not have the same issues with them. They are relatively larger communities. Their group's identity is strong and they often interact with each other on numerous occasions, celebrate life-cycle rituals and festivals. This way their community network regularly gets reaffirmed and refreshed.

Encounters

The encounters I had with the Jenu Kuruba who have made some breakthrough into 'mainstream' are first generation people – literally they are coming out straight from the wilderness. Their every step is going to be historic. In this regard it is worth recalling one particular incidence with the Cholanaickan.

Bhanu was carrying out his fieldwork among the Cholanaickan in Nilambur. He used to live with them in

the caves, deep inside the forest region. I was visiting him. During the course of my stay there, we noticed that one elderly Cholanaickan lady was seriously sick. We wanted her to be attended by a doctor, better if we could shift her to hospital. Bhanu had developed a very good rapport with the local community of the Cholanaickan. He was able to convince them that it was better if she could be shifted to a hospital. There were several hurdles on the way. First was to take the lady out of the forest to our base camp which required trekking a distance of several kilometers up and down the hills through thick forests and then from there to Nilambur Hospital which was approximately 20 kms., which was relatively easier because we had a jeep parked there. The Cholanaickan are expert in climbing up and down, and are very sturdy and strong people. So in no time they made a bamboo stretcher and the woman was carried on that stretcher by the young Cholanaickan boys out of the forest. The boys were very enthusiastic to come along with us to Nilambur hospital. Perhaps they were all looking forward to have a jeep ride. But as we began to leave the forest areas, I noticed these boys were looking somewhat worried and to my eyes as if they were shrinking in size and losing their sense of confidence. I could easily see anxiety on their faces. By the time we reached the hospital, all four of them wanted to go back to the forest. We could not convince them otherwise and we had no way but to bring them back to the forest.

So for the first generation, Jenu Kuruba, it would require a lot of courage and patience to meet the challenges of non-forest life. In one case, through the help of an NGO one Jenu Kuruba has shown a lot of initiative and will to learn Heavy Motor Vehicle driving and was successful in getting a job as a driver in the state transport company. He keeps his family at Mysore while he himself lives at the Bus depots at the places of his posting. He and his wife are determined

that their three children study well and compete to become professionals. Children are smart and talk very well. Right from their childhood they do not have much idea of the forest life. They cannot speak their own dialect. The entire family has very little socialization with others. They are virtually cut off from their forest settlements. But all of them including children look forward to visit their forest settlements perhaps to feel free and uninhibited.

There is the case of another Jenu Kuruba who became a successful and popular actor owing to his expertise in jungle life but then he died suddenly. There were a number of stories floating concerning his sudden demise. His family had no idea how to handle his assets and liabilities. They were completely bewildered and confused. Since he was a popular actor he was very much in media. His case as usual was much discussed in media. But there was hardly anyone to guide his family so that they could bring their lives back to normalcy. At the time it was not clear whether the family will stay back in Mysore or go back to their native settlement. If they decide to go back, the question was how do they will manage their life from there on?

The case of the boy, who became a Mahout in Mysore palace establishment, is different. He is quite happy and satisfied both for his job as well as for being provided with a quarter in the palace compound. He and his family see the glory of the palace which is visited by thousands of people from all over places, every day from very close quarters. He also gives rides to the tourists on his elephant. That means he comes in contact with the people of different communities every day. Two of his children are in his native place with his parents whereas his elder son has taken a job in Mysore city.

There are, a few other Jenu Kuruba too in Mysore city. Generally they do not meet each other but all of them have

mobile phones with them which I am assuming allows them to remain in touch with each other. Their group loyalty is not like that of the Mullukurumba. Therefore, the Jenu Kuruba who have opted for a life of a wage labourer, away from forests have bigger challenges to face. Though most of the children of the Scheduled Tribes go through schooling, the dropout rates are very high among them particularly among the Jenu Kuruba. Even if they go through the schooling process to compete in the job market is an entirely different kind of demand. In their traditional way of life they had no idea of what is competition? In this sense, the Jenu Kuruba children who are studying in schools in a place like Mysore have an entirely different experience. It is difficult to say, what is the future for them? But they have challenges on all fronts which were not faced by the older generations. One of the serious problems which people like the Jenu Kuruba face is what kind of social niche they are going to create within the framework of the larger society?

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APPENDIX

Winds of Change

Raja (name changed) is the 4th child of the Jenu Kuruba parents. He was born in one of the Jenu Kuruba settlements in Heggadadevanakote taluka. He is the only person in the family who has studied up to Pre-University (PUC). His other brothers studied up to primary level. But they were more interested in the traditional occupations of their community, namely, collection of honey and gathering other forest products. Both of his brothers work in plantation as wage labourers. Raja too is very much fond of forest and collections of honey. He said, 'he never hesitates to put his hands in the beehive to collect honey; even now though he is employed as a driver of an interstate luxurious bus service, if he gets an opportunity he would go for collecting honey'. He of course lamented that such opportunities were very rare.

After doing his primary education in the village he was encouraged by some social workers to join residential school at Biligiri Rangana Hills run by Vivekananda Girijan Kalyan Kendra. Dr. Sudarshan is the founder of the NGO. It may not be out of place to say a few words about Dr. Sudarshan.

Dr. Sudarshan was a medical student at Bangalore when he read a feature article on Dr. Narasimhan who was providing medical services to the tribes in the Nilgiris. Dr. Narasimhan started his medical services way back in 1940s, entirely on his own resources. His income was meager yet he introduced a new concept in public health that is taking doctors to the patient. While Dr. Narasimhan had his clinic in Kotagiri, he noted his patients who lived in hills and caves found it difficult to trek to his clinic when they were sick. He decided to establish medical centres nearest to their habitats which he attended late in the evening when the forest dwellers returned to their habitats after day's work. In the beginning the tribals themselves did not believe in the efficacy of his medicines or in his overtures to treat them. But his persistence and sincere efforts to treat them began to melt the resistance of the tribes. There is a very popular story about Dr. Narasimhan that he went through forest in the night to attend to a delivery of a Kurumba lady who was lying in a cave in a serious condition. He not only saved the life of the woman but won the trust of the community. His work drew attention of several well known social workers too and they came forward to help him. Dr. Sudarshan too was impressed by the dedicated services of Dr. Narasimhan. After he obtained his degree he went to Kolkata and joined Ramakrishna Mission Hospital. For his internship he came to Kotagiri and worked under Dr. Narasimhan's guidance. During his internship he observed closely the way Dr. Narasimhan carried out his work among the tribals. He became very much dedicated to him. After Dr. Narasimhan's death, Dr. Sudarshan took the responsibility of the mobile medical service started by Dr. Narasimhan. Later on he established his own unit at Biligiri Rangana Hills in Karnataka which besides medical services provides educational and other extension services to the members of

the Scheduled Tribes living in the region. The organization has grown up substantially. It also now runs a residential school for tribal children.

Raja did his High School under the guidance of Dr. Sudarshan. On his advice Raja came to Mysore and joined a Polytechnical Institute to get a diploma in Mechanical Engineering. Somehow he could not pursue his studies though he was 'naturally interested' in machine operation. Later he went to Hunsur and did his PUC in science stream. He wanted to study further but suddenly his father passed away and therefore he returned back to his settlement and started working as wage labourer and also collected honey and other forest products. He got married. His wife too worked as a wage-earner. They became parents of two daughters and one son.

Since Raja was more interested in mechanical type of works he went back to Biligiri Rangana Hills. With the support and guidance of Dr. Sudarshan, he obtained a Heavy Motor Vehicle Driving License. For a number of years, he worked for Dr. Sudarshan as his driver and also as a mechanic looking after other vehicles of the Association. While he was working with Dr. Sudarshan, he applied for driver's job in Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) for which there was a competitive examination. He appeared in it and also gave an interview. He was successful and he got first position in the competition. He was appointed as a Driver of passenger fleet of KSRTC. He has been working with KSRTC for a number of years and has been posted at different places in Karnataka.

For the sake of education of his children, he and his wife decided that the family should stay at Mysore while he himself most of the time lives at the place of his postings. In those places he stays at the rest houses of Bus depot. According to

n the life in the rest houses is lonely. He does not have any ends. He does not drink or smoke. He does not like going cinema. He is fond of reading newspapers and whenever gets time he goes to the Hindu temples. Once in a fortnight comes to his home in Mysore to look after the family. His me is in the outskirts of the Mysore city. His house is an dependent one room apartment with a compound wall. He nd his wife have furnished their house like any other lower iddle class home. They have a gas cooking stove, a mixi, tainless cooking vessels, a T.V. and a sofa set. In the sitting oom they have a show case in which they have kept some oys of children and some medals won by their children. In he kitchen, they have hung photograph of goddess Lakshmi. n the sitting room they have put a photograph of Gandhi.

His wife has studied up to 8th standard and appeared quite confident and unlike other Jenu Kuruba women was not shy in talking. She had gone to Delhi as part of a dance troop to participate in Republic Day Celebrations. She said that they often go to their *hadi* with children to collect their ration and also meet other members of the family. They hold Above Poverty Line Ration Card which entitles them to get ration at subsidized rates. She said that her people in their *hadi* feel very happy when they visit them. Raja said that his people in his *hadi* 'think very highly of him because he drives a big bus'.

Both husband and wife are very keen that children study well. Both of their daughters have been admitted in one of the prestigious schools in Mysore. This was possible because the children were selected by the Social Welfare Department of Karnataka Government based on competition they conducted. Social Welfare Department has some seats reserved in different schools for the children belonging to the reserved categories. They allot the seats on the basis of merit.

Their elder daughter was 16 years old and was studying in SSLC and younger daughter who was 14 years old was studying in 8th standard. The elder daughter, unlike the Jenu Kuruba of that age group talked fluently and appeared to be quite confident. Both the girls were doing very well in their studies. As per the Jenu Kuruba tradition, the elder daughter would have been married. She said that in school they have friends and they participate in sports. She said that she had gone several times to her friend's homes but she had never invited them to their home. Both the girls commute to their school by city public bus service.

Their younger son was in 6th Standard and was studying in a Christian School in Tarikere. He too earned his seat in that school through a competition and also held a merit scholarship.

At home husband and wife speak in their dialect but with the children they use Kannada. Raja said that when they go to their *hadi* their people laugh as their children cannot speak their dialect properly.

As part of his duty Raja gets opportunities to visit Vijayawada, Hyderabad, Pune, Dharmasthala and several other big cities, on a regular basis. Obviously his exposure to these places and people is considerably wider and significantly different than of his people back in the *hadi*. He wants his children to do well in studies and go for higher studies and become doctor or engineer. He lamented that the people back in the *hadi* had not been able to realize the value of education, and also had not taken advantage of the facilities provided for their education and welfare. This he felt was owing to the lack of proper guidance and also that his community people were all the time under pressure to earn their livelihood.

The story of Raja and his wife clearly indicates that they had to struggle hard in their earlier days but were helped by

some sincere social workers. While there are many children and people who get support from the NGOs it is Raja and his wife could make a breakthrough because they showed enterprise and initiative. Raja perhaps was fortunate that his talents were recognized at the right time. He along with his wife, have been steady in their behaviour and have learnt the ways of city life. They have also realized that way forward is to provide education to their children which they were doing to their best. The environment they have provided to their children is significantly different compared to their own childhood as well as of other children of the same age group back in their settlements. Their children are getting modern education and there is every possibility that they will attain further success in modern establishment. In this sense, their children have a life different from what their earlier generations had experienced.

Through Raja and his wife, and other social workers we came to know about other Jenu Kuruba who have been trying to gain a foothold in the modern set up. There is a story of a Jenu Kuruba who became very famous as he began to work in a T.V. serial as a jungle boy. His shows became very popular and he was selected to act in a film based on forest life. The success of this film was so good that he got chance to act in two other films. During the making of the film he stayed in posh hotels and very soon he acquired a kind of celebrity status. He could perform difficult feats in the films for which he received much acclaim. But he also began to show some psychological abnormalities. One day he fell down from the first floor of his posh flat in Mysore city and succumbed to his injuries – this was an event which was widely covered in the

t opportunity to interview his mother and sister.
ple Jenu Kuruba women who were totally

traumatized by the sudden demise of the boy. They also had to deal with assets and liabilities of the deceased actor. They appeared to be ill-equipped to deal with those complicated financial and ownership of property matters. The media too were after them. They were really caught up in a kind of whirlpool. In the opinion of some social workers, the actor was a simple Jenu Kuruba boy who was extremely talented in the ways of forest and in their traditional callings which was commercially exploited by some T.V. channels. Those programmes became instant success which meant more work and engagement with different kinds of people. He was neither equipped to deal with so much success as well as pressure of work. No doubt this case ended in a tragedy and lot of confusion to his mother and sister. The story also indicates that how much the larger society is eager to know how people live in forest.

Then there is the case of a Jenu Kuruba boy who is employed in one of the posh Kabini resort hotels. He was well dressed in jeans, a matching shirt and a smart belt to go with it when I met him. He spoke in English and told me that he maintained contact with his people in the *hadi*. He had two children and wanted to give them the best of education. He appeared to be quite satisfied with the ways things were moving for him. As a part of his duty at the resort he comes across people from different cultures and countries. His experience too was widening.

There is a Jenu Kuruba girl who was recently appointed as Forest Guard by the Forest Department of the State Government. I was told that she wears prescribed uniform and conducts herself extremely well. She became very popular with her people in her village. The important thing is that she was working in her traditional environment but in a different capacity. She was about 23 years and was still

unmarried. It would be difficult for her to find a suitable boy in her own community to get married.

The case of Kencha (name changed) is entirely different from the cases cited above. He works as a Mahout at Mysore palace grounds. He said that right from his childhood he was very fond of elephants. He used to watch his elders dealing with the elephants. He did not acquire any education. He was brought to Mysore by his relative where he was introduced to an elephant trainer. He began to work as his assistant and soon acquired abilities to manage elephant on his own. Now he had a regular job as an independent Mahout. He lived in one of the quarters in the palace compound. He liked his job very much. He got married to a Jenu Kuruba girl. They had three children. His eldest son, who was 16 years old worked as an assistant in a shop in Mysore. His other two children were with their grandparents in their natal *hadi* where they were studying. He had no intention to go back to his *hadi*. He liked city life but he regularly goes to his native *hadi* to meet his parents and children.

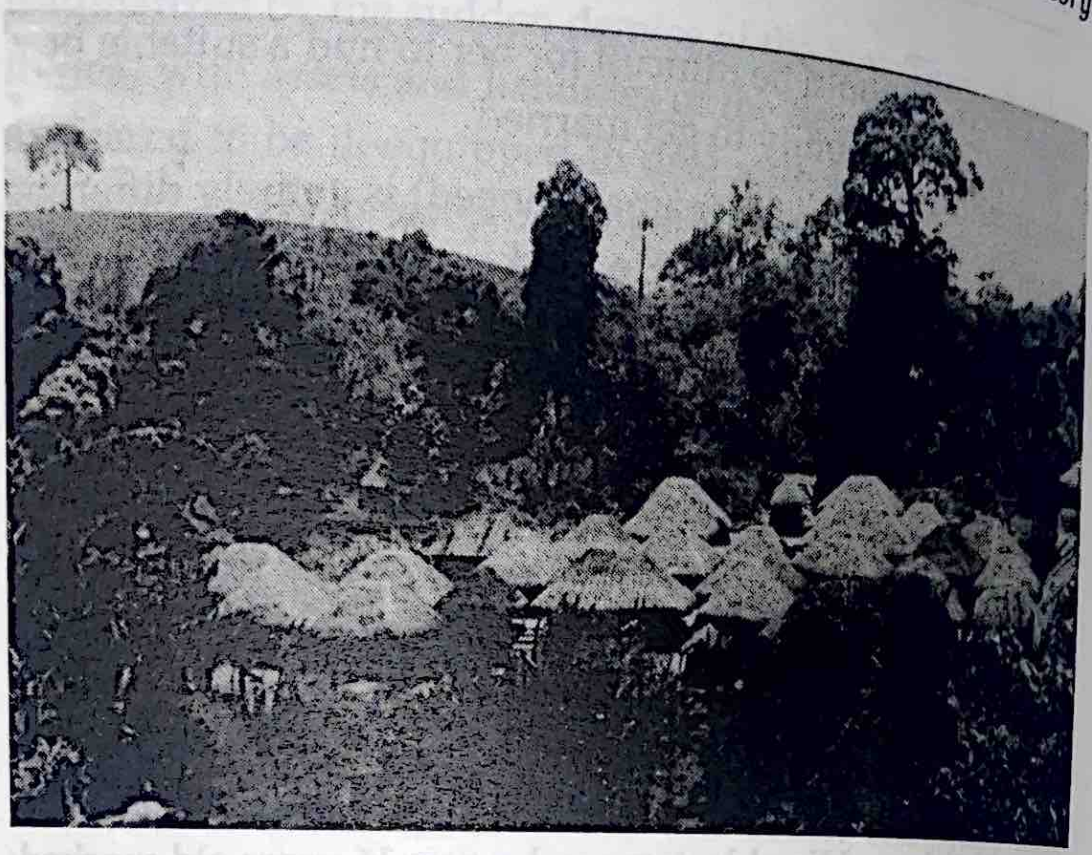

PLATE 1 KAPALA
A MULLUKURUMBA SETTLEMENT ca 1965

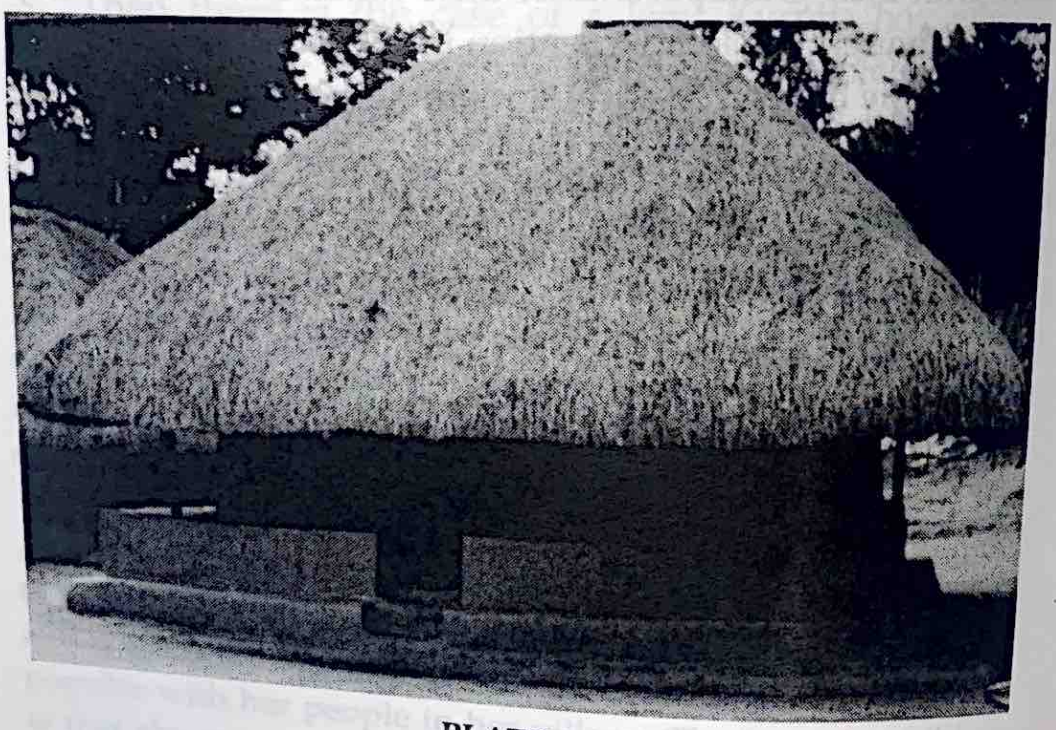

PLATE 2
A MULLUKURUMBA HUT ca 1965



PLATE 3
MULLUKURUMBA ARCHERS' ca 1965



A MULLUKURUMB[illegible] PLATE

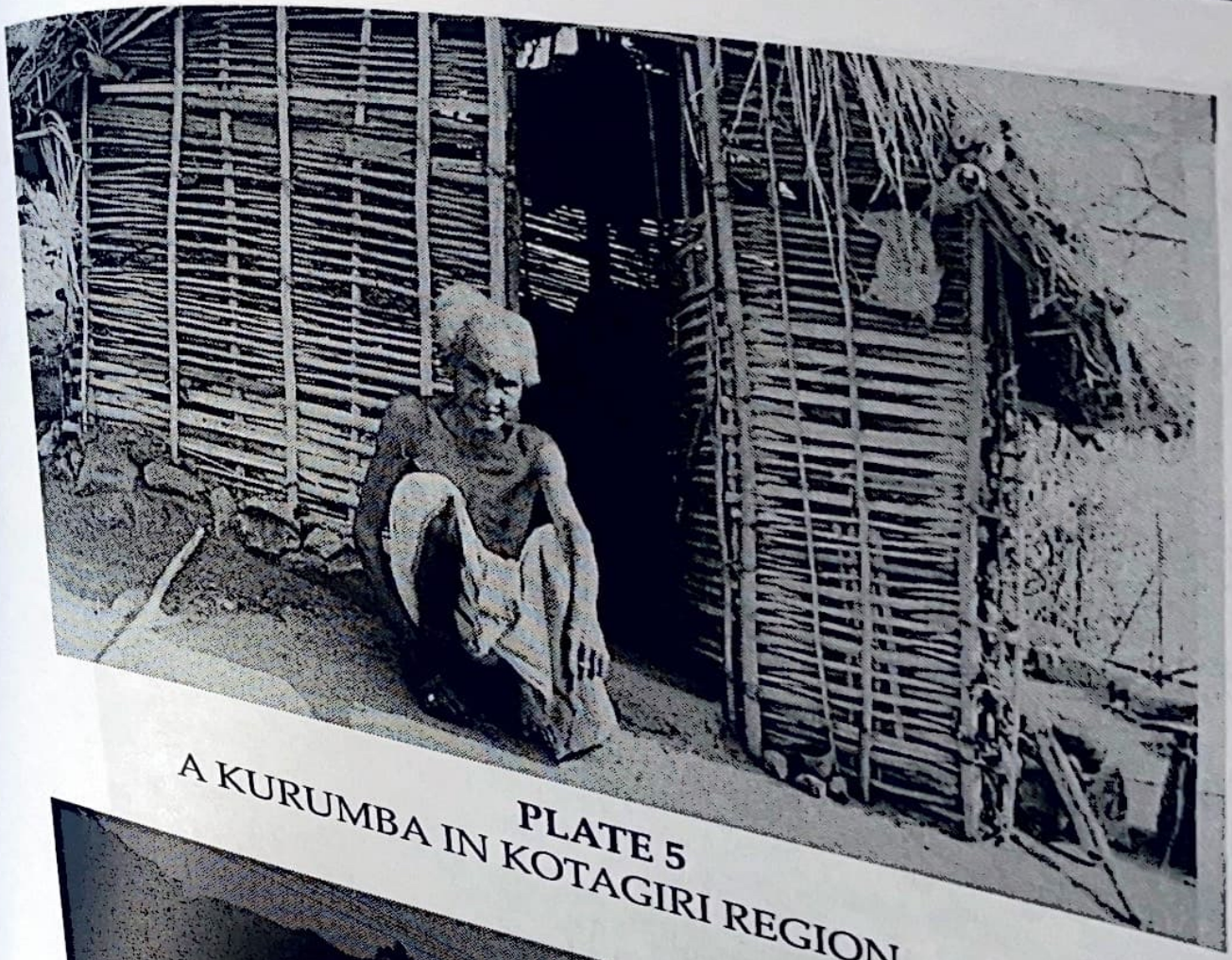

PLATE 5
A KURUMBA IN KOTAGIRI REGION, ca 1984

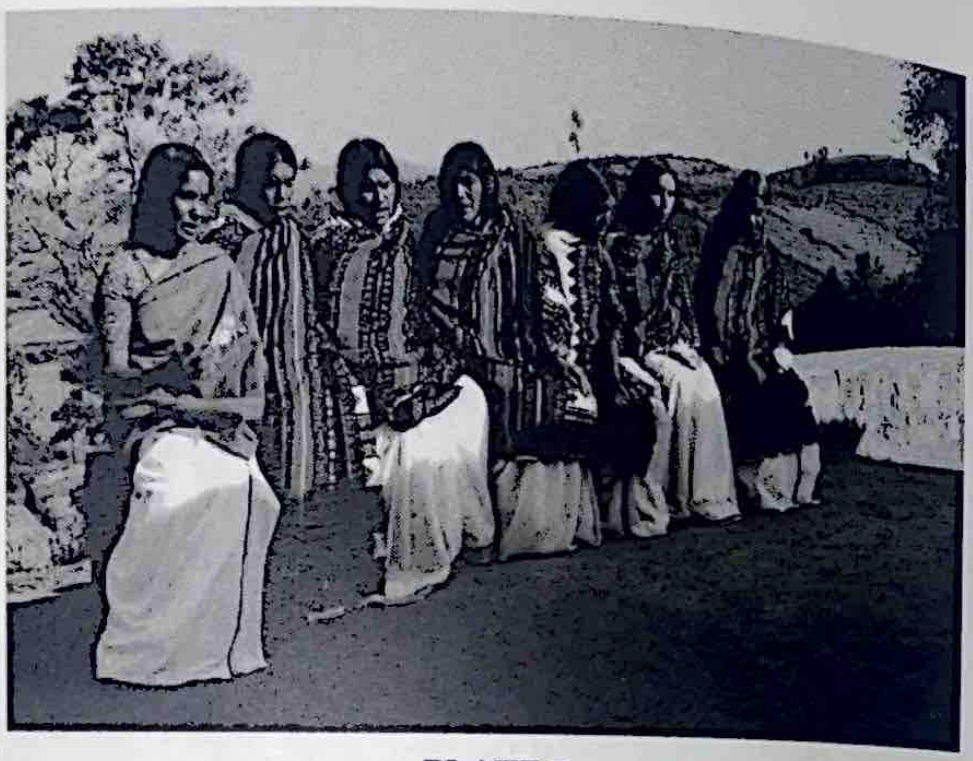

PLATE 7
TODA WOMEN NILGIRIS

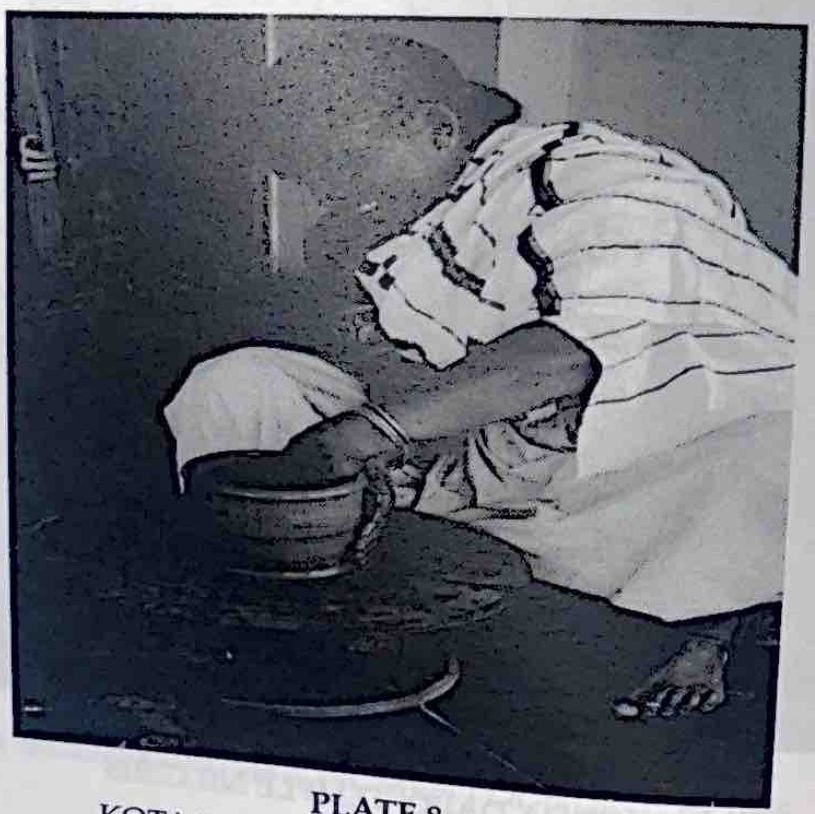

PLATE 8
KOTA POTTERY MAKING NILGIRIS



PLATE 9
BETTA KURUMBA NILGIRIS

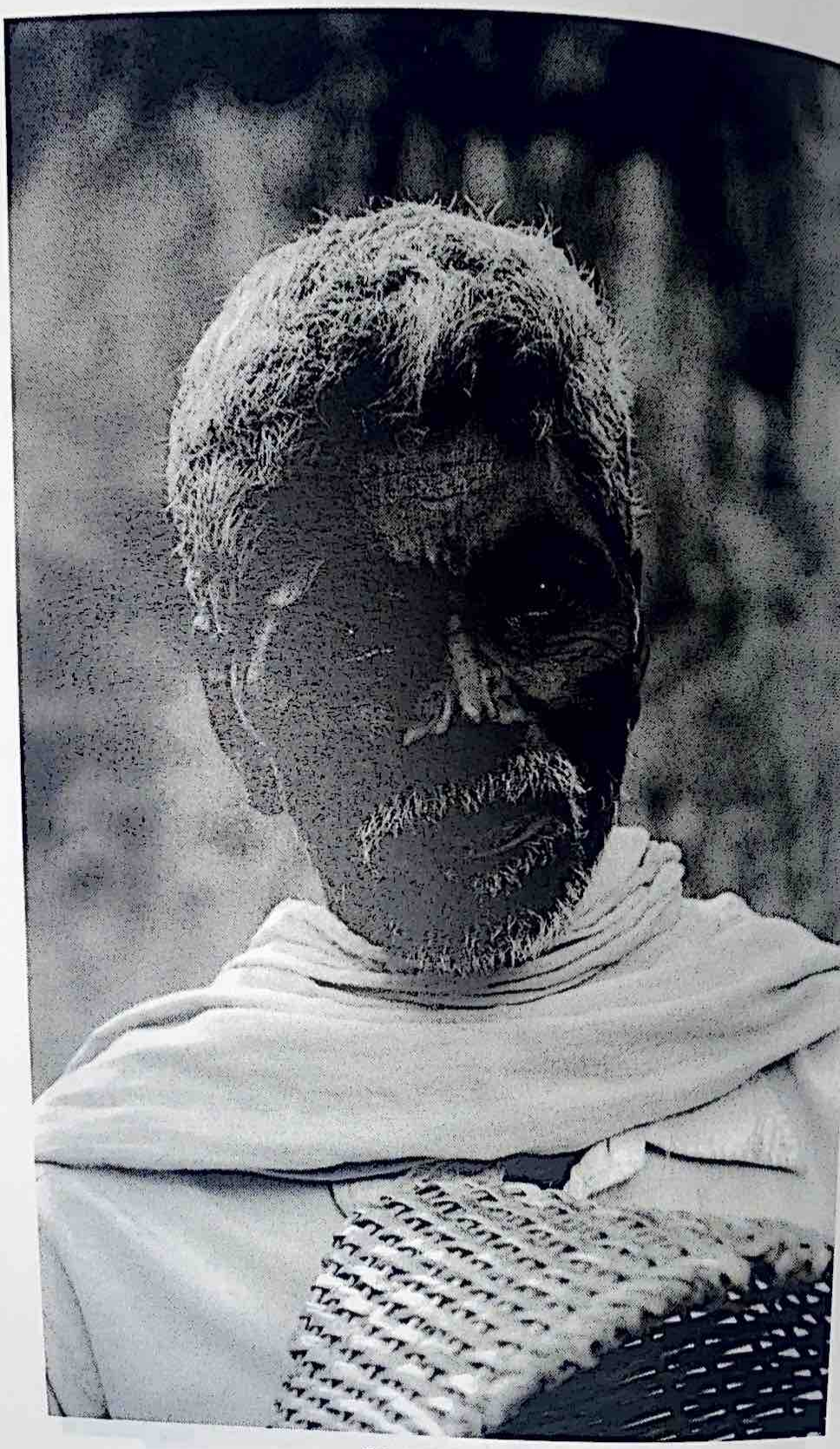

PLATE 10
PANIYAN NILGIRIS

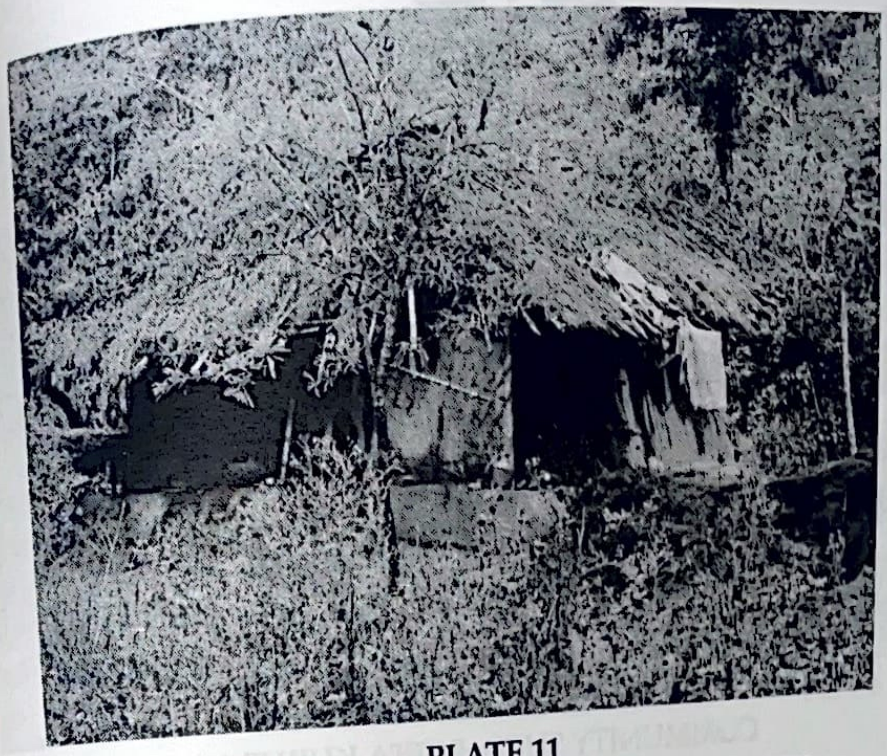

PLATE 11
JENU KURUBA HUT, HEGGADADEVANAKOTE



PLATE 12
JENU KURUBA NEW SETTLEMENT,
HEGGADADEVANAKOTE

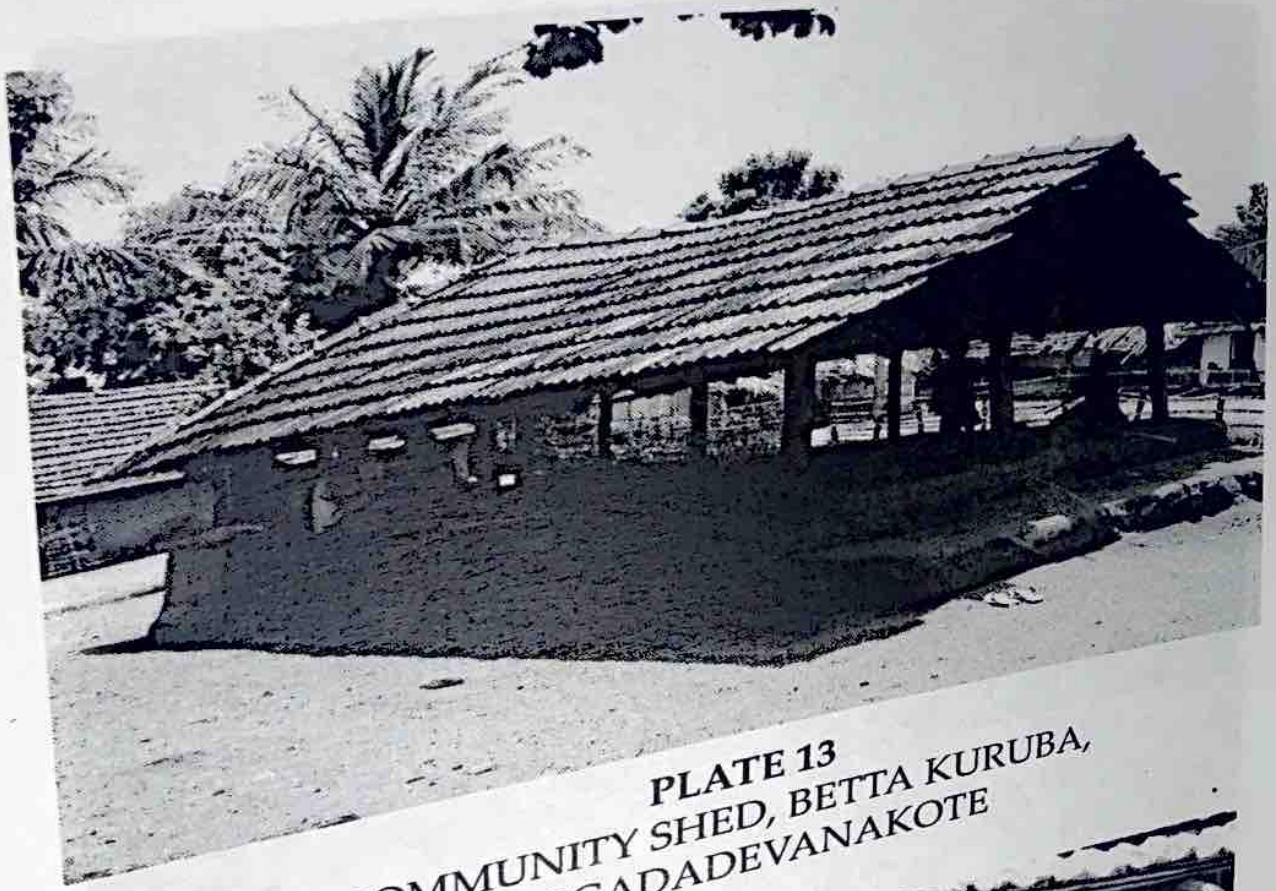

PLATE 13
COMMUNITY SHED, BETTA KURUBA,
HEGGADADEVANAKOTE





PLATE 15
BETTA KURUBA: BASKET MAKING



PLATE 16
KURUBA: BASKET MAKING

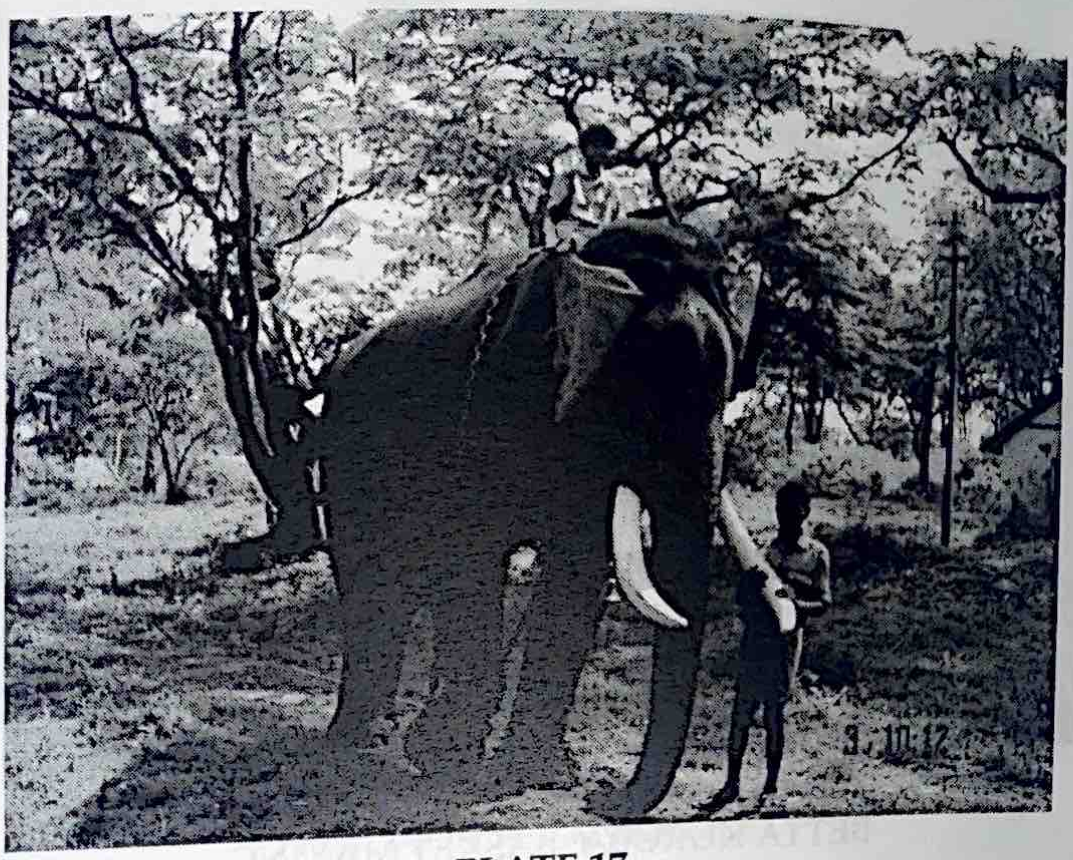

PLATE 17
JENU KURUBA IN THE CARE OF ELEPHANT

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The book is a product of life long research in Anthropology by its author. It provides a critique of the concept of tribe and shows that there was never a distinct category of tribe in India. The people now known as tribe have always been, like others, part of the regional set up, of which forest have been an integral part. In India forests were not simply vast stretches of wilderness but also places for retreat, introspection, learning and storehouse of resources. People who lived close to nature, supplied goods and services and were building blocks of the great cultural community of India. Tribes have values that are not only profound but also ultimate in sustainable development. They maintained their identity and thus contributed to the diversity of India, a key feature of its sustainability.

Realizing military, cultural, economic, religious significance of elephant in India from ancient times, the author opens one of the windows to show the role played by the forest dwellers in capturing and domesticating it and thereby demolishes the view that they have been isolated. All these facts have always been there but the students of tribal studies have not been asking the relevant questions. They were 'digging gold' in trying to validate arrogantly conceived cultural evolutionary ladder. Traditional ethnographic focus on single communities ignoring the larger community, with self-deceiving value –neutrality has proved to be thoroughly inadequate in understanding either the communities or dynamics of the emerging contradictions being part of the larger system.

The author draws illustrative material from trijunction of the southern region of India, which is environmentally heterogeneous, rich in natural resources and has been home of a number of tribes highlighting the transformation scene, indicating the pressure of 'mainstreaming' in the highly unequal and stratified universe of India.



Promode Kumar Misra, was a National Fellow of Indian Council of Social science Research. He was with the Anthropological Survey of India for about twenty-five years. He was a Visiting Professor at Oregon University, Eugene ;University of Mysore, Mysore: University of West Indies, St.Augustine; Professor and Director Tribal Research Institute, Tamil University, Uthagamandalam, and retired as Professor of Anthropology from North Eastern Hill University, Shillong.

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