

**THE FOOD ECONOMY OF TRIBALS IN KERALA:
A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF KURICHIYAR AND PANIYAR**

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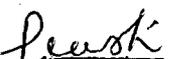
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I hereby affirm that the research for this dissertation titled "The Food Economy of Tribals in Kerala: A Comparative Study of Kurichiyar and Paniyar", being submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University for the award of the Degree of Master of Philosophy in Applied Economics, was carried out entirely by me at the Centre for Development Studies, Thiruvananthapuram


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Certified that this dissertation is the bonafide work of Piush Antony. This has not been considered for the award of any other degree by any other University.



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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Understanding vulnerable communities in terms of their economic deprivation and social backwardness vis-a-vis the better off sections within the Indian social structure has been the focus of many scholarly studies mostly with an inter-disciplinary perspective. Even while assessing the impact of state policies or market penetration into an economy of subsistence, the inter-group and intra-group differences among the vulnerables are not given adequate consideration. A closer look at the internal economic differentiation and social stratification of particular vulnerable groups assumes significance, primarily from the point of view of their responsiveness to state welfare measures as well as of assessing the impact of capitalist incursions into their indigenous economies, which arguably affects different sections differently. The present study attempts to do this by focussing on the food economy of the tribals¹ in Kerala state.

Government policies, both during the colonial and post colonial periods have made the indigenous life support systems of the tribals weak and fragile². At the same time their assimilation into

¹ The concept of a tribe in anthropological literature is summarised by Chaudhari (1992.P.vii) as follows: "Tribe is a social group the members of which live in a common territory, have a common dialect, uniform social organization and possesses cultural homogeneity having a common ancestor, political organization and religious pattern" (However he hastens to add that many tribal group in India do not possess all these characteristics). Further, to quote Sharma, S (1994:4), there is no "neat impermeable demarcation of tribal identity." Incidentally, of late the more acceptable usage to substitute the word 'tribe' has emerged namely indigenous people. However, in the official and constitutional reports ^{the term} now in vogue is still tribe and we have retained it in this study.

² The approaches of the colonial government essentially oscillated from a policy of segregation and isolation to assimilation (Chaudhari, 1992:xii). It is argued that in the post independence phase also one could see a continuum of

the mainstream is socially incomplete and in economic terms beneficial largely to the non-tribals. They cannot go back to their original ways of life because of the near total destruction of their life support systems. Thus, at the turn of the century we find the tribals as the last frontier facing the march of modernity³. Right development, while maintaining the cultural identity of the ethnic groups, has been recognised by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights as way back in 1982⁴. But most of the development activities have been counter productive due to lack of appreciation of the real needs of the people and ignorance of the resource base and the pattern of its utilisation. In Kerala, the magnitude of tribal population (1.10%) is less than that of the national average (7%) and many targeted programmes have been implemented with a focus on the social and economic development of the tribal areas⁵. However, most of the tribals in Kerala are still marginalised from the mainstream and lead a life marked by hunger and deprivation. Starvation deaths are also not infrequent⁶.

colonial policies, instruments and institutions dominating the state's approaches to the tribal question in India (Jayadas, 1992:32).

³ In a discussion with some tribal youngsters initiated by H N Somasundaram, it was pointed out that "tribals who were once extremely self reliant in the undisturbed forests and in the absence of competition, now feel strangled by the yawning gap between themselves and a demanding world as well as their dispossession" (Somasundaram, 1993:35).

⁴ GOK (1994:1). Also see the U.N. commission on human rights draft declaration on rights of indigenous people as revised by the members of the working group on indigenous populations (Mullick, S.B. et al (1993:76-90).

⁵ The programmes were apparently focussed on the geographical area where tribals inhabit without linking the process with their indigenous economic and social systems. More transportation facilities like road ways, schools or government buildings without generating sufficient employment would not benefit the marginalised tribals.

⁶ In 1993, 30 people died due to starvation in Noolpuzha Panchayat, where Paniyas are a majority (Dirar, 1995:6). News paper report the extent of hunger and hunger deaths in Wayanad quite frequently. A report published in Mathrubhumi daily was titled " Will Wayanad become another Ethiopia ?"(Gopalakrishnan, 1993).

Such casualties were reported from the Wayanad district and the immediate response of the State Government was to dismiss it as exaggerations by the media. Despite such strong refutation, there is a general consensus among the media, political activists, activist researchers and public at large that starvation deaths in Wayanad is a recurring fact⁷. Although through legislation and regulations a legal foundation has been laid to provide adequate support for tribals against land alienation, the system has rendered itself totally ineffective leading to large scale alienation of immovable property among the tribals. Consequent on this worsening living condition, the district is also witnessing new forms of political mobilisation and agitational programmes among the tribals⁸. This forms the immediate context of the present study. The conceptual developments in the field of studies pertaining to vulnerable communities in various parts of the world have given the social scientists a new tool kit and equipped them with more sophisticated theoretical framework. The concepts of entitlement and capabilities present themselves as the most important among these. Entitlement of a person stands for the set of alternative commodity bundles that can be acquired through the use of various legal channels of acquirement open to that person. Capability represents a person's opportunities to achieve well-being through increasing her entitlements (Dreze and Sen, 1993). In the case of tribals, however, along with entitlements and capabilities, institutional sanctions, secondary food systems and

⁷ A report by P.U.C.L. on Wayanad categorically stated that the recurring deaths were mainly due to starvation (PUCL, 1994)

⁸ C.K.Janu, Vice President of the Southern Adivasi Forum is spearheading the agitation. She is an Adiyar women who had no formal schooling (Prasannakumari and Rama, 1995:1-13)

choice of food also have to be taken into consideration (Mukherjee, A. forthcoming).

1.1 Statement of the problem and conceptual questions

Food which enables humankind to survive is the most important cultural category. Food depends on the ecology of the area in which a community lives, religion, the neighbouring populations, geography, socio-economic status etc.. The literature on food indicates that particular food items will lead to specific mental make-up (Hanumantha Rao, forthcoming). Food habits are also changeable over time. In the successive stages of human evolution, from food gatherers to settled agriculture and beyond, there is a perceptible change in food habits. For example, food gatherers would have lived on fruits, nuts, tubers and flesh of animals. Cultural evolution in the subsequent period was marked by the use of boiled rice, sour rice gruel, fried barley and some new pulses. In one sense the cultural specificity and evolution with regard to food is still continuing.

The other side of the story is that deprivation of food as well as endemic under-nourishment have been persistent features of history. The enormous expansion of productive power that has taken place over the last few centuries has made it possible to guarantee food for all, and it is in this context that deprivation of food and starvation deaths have to be seen as "morally outrageous and politically unacceptable" (Dreze and Sen, 1993). Apart from this ethical and political issue, the general issue of inequality has always been important. However, the issue of inequality in the distribution of food is not a new phenomenon by any means. But

while in the past affluence may have been confined to a small section of society, we can say that in the modern world the bulk of the population in many countries is in the affluent category as far as food is concerned, without undermining the substantial pockets of hunger. These pockets have been identified as the 'vulnerable groups'.

The development of modern economic relations, rapid expansion of market economy along with the institution of wage labour have added a particular source of vulnerability to a group of people who were socially and culturally marginalised but not entirely deprived of their livelihood. A case in point is the tribals who were marginalised from the mainstream but could survive on the natural produce of the forest. Their vulnerability increases especially in a context where the system of social security has not yet developed unlike in more advanced economies. Even in the case of more advanced economies, the experience of vulnerable groups suggests that the mere existence of a state sponsored social security system alone would not suffice the need for building up their capabilities and entitlements. Therefore, vulnerable groups in developing economies, in the absence of a functional social security system, the fundamental question of building up capabilities and entitlements poses deeper practical and political problems. Moreover, it should be noted that it is these groups who are forced into the role of 'adjustors' (Ibid), in the sense that fluctuations of supply have to be absorbed by them through adjustments in their consumption.

Placing them in a more broader framework of rural population, we have to say that, on the one hand, advances in agricultural technology have increased the potential for improving the living conditions in rural areas, on the other hand, environmental degradation in the form of deforestation, desertification etc. has begun to pose a great threat to the livelihood of the rural population. The problem of trade off between short term increases in productivity and maintenance of the long term eco-balance is a crucial aspect of modern debates on growth and development. The notion of sustainable growth has become the buzz word in the development literature. An attempt to view the history of regional development from an alternative perspective of environmental history has become central to the analytical discourses on sustainable growth⁹. This perspective has to be included into a framework for understanding the current problems faced by many vulnerable groups in India.

With the growth of modern politics and the development of welfare oriented interventionist state, the analysis of state policies has become an integral element in understanding the economics of food and starvation. But the important analytical question here is that what are the social and economic factors that determine the acquisition of state welfare measures by various groups. We may hypothesise that the initial endowments of each group might have played a vital role in shaping their response to modern economic situation and state initiatives. These initial endowments could be identified in terms of their social and economic class positions.

⁹ Guha and Gadgill (1993) could be considered as a representative work of this newly emerging school of thought.

This can be posed in another way also; how did the state intervention affect the various strata within a particular vulnerable group?

Understanding the internal organization in terms of the hierarchy of socio-economic status of a particular vulnerable group assumes significance in the context of analysing their response to both state initiatives as well as market signals. However, the vulnerable groups identified in terms of mere socio-cultural characteristics are often considered as homogeneous groups requiring specific attention. Can a *prima facie* category picked out, be valid enough to identify the actual sufferers on the basis of which they could be granted special attention and privileges? This has become a major political and policy related issue in the area of research on vulnerable sections. Irrespective of the development a country has achieved, the tribals constitute a major part of the vulnerable segment almost everywhere in the world. Historically, it would be incorrect to assume that tribals would remain tribals always. The whole history of caste formation in India is arguably marked by the amalgamation of different tribal groups into the brahminical caste hierarchy (Kosambi, 1975). Hence this aspect also has to be addressed while discussing their vulnerability.

But in addition to the problem of definition and identification of a tribe, there are several inherent axiomatic propositions in tribal research in general and Indian tribal studies in particular which hinder the analytical understanding of the internal differentiation among tribes (Jaganath Pathy, 1984). Most of the

studies on tribals in India seem to share certain notions that are to be challenged. The most prominent among these are:

- (1) isolated and closed entities due to their unique historical and cultural setting
- (2) ahistoric and static societies surviving as cultural lag
- (3) homogeneous and unstructured units of production and consumption and,
- (4) because of (3), every tribal tends to benefit more or less equally from a given policy and expenditure of the state extended towards the tribals.

Now there is an increasing realisation that such notions are incongruous with the social and cultural reality of tribal life in India. The dialectics involved in it can be understood only by altering our approach from that of primitive societies to the analysis of social classes focusing on the social stratification among tribal groups.

This approach becomes all the more relevant when taking into consideration the present scenario of tribal population where their natural habitat has made inaccessible to them by various state policies and pushed them into the role of state beneficiaries. It can be argued that most of the tribes in India have become a part of the Indian class society for a long time and, therefore, can hardly be cognizable in a separate context and studying them with ethnographic tools also would help only to understand the tribal dynamics in a partial and reductive way. A fuller comprehension of this dimension requires supplementary analytical tools from

different social science disciplines particularly political economy.

Available archaeological and pre-historic information demonstrates that all societies, notwithstanding their level of development had certain amount of contact with neighbouring and / or distant groups, and maintained reciprocal transfer of products. This means certain goods were produced over and above the local needs and that such a surplus production was felt necessary to meet certain needs of the group itself. Besides, precious goods, socially determined were not equally accessible to all the members, their consumption and transfer are more or less distinctly organised into hierarchical categories. In that sense, the exchanges were ultimately linked to the reproduction of the social relations of the primitive order itself (Servet, 1981). Several border communities acted as a bridge in this exchange or served as a buffer between societies (Burman, R. 1975). So the conventional characterisation of tribal societies as empirically closed and isolated is ostensibly erroneous and hence does not carry much heuristic value. Historically also almost all the major tribes of India have either formed independent large confederacies or were closely linked to regional states and multi-ethnic empires, and shared history and culture to a very considerable extent. In fact, "the entire course of Indian history shows tribal elements being fused in general society" (Kosambi, 1975: 27). But it should be noted that with the penetration of colonial capital, the context and level of interaction was changed to suit the colonial interest (Pathy. J, 1984).

It may be noted that, in Kerala, around 60 per cent of the tribal population is concentrated in three or four districts, along with non-tribal majorities. Some of the major tribes like Paniyar, Adiyar, Kurumar and Kurichiar are found in Wayanad and Kadar, Kurumbar, Mudugar in Palakkad and Kurumbapulayar, Mala Arayan, Mannan and Muthuvan in Idukki and Kanikkar in Trivandrum. The spread of individual tribes is not necessarily contiguous, meaning thereby a greater mobility. Many of these tribes are settled cultivators or agricultural labourers or engaged in petty trade with a stratified internal social organisation and having a long history of interaction with state institutions and limited but significant involvement in markets, at large. Also, the encroachment of people from the mainland to forest hills has resulted in a more integrated co-existence of tribals and non-tribals. Similarly, the question of unique historical and cultural setting lacks both content and form, for no two societies separated by mere distance are ever isomorphic. Obviously, there could be discernible differences between these communities in terms of various mutually inter linked variables like social status, economic position, cultural and anthropological traits, occupational orientation and numerous other factors.

Drifting away from the classical colonial anthropology where tribes are treated as homogeneous and static, with no differentiation among them and exogenous factors alone held responsible for their change, we have to embark upon the fact that they have become part and parcel of a class society where differentiation in income, wealth, status etc. should be recognised and hence, due attention be given to these indicators in the analysis of the pace at which

they are getting assimilated. The consequences of such rapid transition for their economic subsistence as well as for the cohesion of their internal organisation, also should be considered. Given the context of internal polarisation of the tribal societies, the possibility of an upper stratum benefitting from the socio-economic and political privileges endowed upon the tribals as a whole, and thus leaving the more backward tribes in the continued state of deprivation cannot be ruled out. This might lead to the widening of the already existing gap between the advanced and backward tribes and also between the rich and the poor among a particular tribe. Moreover, endogenous factors that are responsible for the tribal transformation should also be given adequate importance.

These analytical insights are of utmost significance in the particular context of understanding the tribal dynamics in Kerala. A considerable amount of financial input through various tribal welfare schemes have been channelled into the numerous tribal settlements scattered all over Kerala. Although there has been a lot of hue and cry about the more obvious inequities caused by the interventions of intermediaries resulting in leakages of the resources, the fact that whatever little that finally reaches the tribals is grabbed by the groups and individuals belonging to the higher echelons of the tribal society has not received adequate attention. Moreover, the impact of state policies on sharpening or lessening the internal stratification in general and of particular tribal sects should also be considered.

This study concentrates on the impact of state policies and development of market institutions on the internal organisation of tribals in Kerala. We focus on their food economy since this is the most crucial aspect of devising their survival strategies, determining the nature of their relationship with the market economy which has penetrated deeply into their traditional forms of livelihood.

Any economy consists of interlinked sub-systems of production, distribution and consumption. In this sense, the term food economy is used to imply the economic resources of food production, distribution, exchange and consumption practices associated with it. As far as the food economy of the tribals are concerned we can say, without any exaggeration that the transition which the tribal society has undergone as a result of endogenous and exogenous factors are reflected directly on it. In the early stage their food economy was one of subsistence, the system of slavery, then bonded labour and finally the institution of wage labour brought about substantial changes in its original structure. They are uprooted from their traditional economy and integrated into the market where survival depends on their entitlements they command and capabilities that are opened to them. And it is also known that due to land alienation and lack of job opportunities the entitlements and capabilities of tribals are quite below of what is actually required. At the same time there are inter-group and intra-group differences in the nature of their responses to state and market. The modes of survival in the face of ever increasing economic difficulties also seem to vary. The system of preserving food was widely prevalent among the various tribal groups and it formed an

important part of their food cycle. Now it appears that due to various economic compulsions the technologies of such preservation have become a thing of the past.

This can be brought out by a detailed analysis of their asset structure, consumption pattern, employment structure and other socio-economic factors. More significantly, the dietary habits are undergoing a thorough transformation with decline of their traditional sources of food and with their inability to acquire and adjust to the new economic situation. This should also form an important item in the agenda of tribal research.

Another aspect favouring to focus on food economy is that there are good reasons to believe that the family would typically give priority to food in its consumption allocation, and hence the expenditure on food may be a better guide to a family's overall economic solvency and opulence than conventional indicators such as total income, total expenditure etc.. Many studies have also shown that if the general standard of living¹⁰ is judged not by the observation of its short run income, but by the size of food expenditure per capita, the behaviour of consumers becomes much easier to explain including the observed chronic dissaving of the poorest sections of the people classified in terms of per capita income or per capita total expenditure. Food expenditure forms just one part, more important is the question that what constitutes their food basket. More precisely, the consumption deprivation and

¹⁰ For a discussion of the statistical aspects related to the estimation of the standard of living see Ravallion (1992).

the related factors which are at the root of their poverty stricken existence.

Assessment of consumption deprivation is significant because it has manifold effects on economic, social and medical fields. That is, the connections between different types of deprivation are not only biological, eg., between illness and under nutrition, but also economic and social eg: between unemployment and illness. Also, recent studies have shown that nutritional factors play a major role in the inheritance and expression of certain diseases and infections (Archana Sharma, 1989). Moreover, it is the consumption level that forms the basis for evaluating the health status of a particular community in terms of categories like undernutrition, undernourished and malnutrition.

In the recent years, the concept of food economy is widely appreciated in the academic circle. But in most of the cases its scope is limited to market integration, food security and related issues with narrow economic interests¹¹. Here the perspective of food economy approach is used as a scaffold for the analysis of consumption deprivation, understanding of general socio-economic conditions and for intra-group and inter-group comparisons of the strategies of livelihood among tribals.

1.2 Review of literature and specification of objectives

Although, the literature on Indian tribals has become extensive, there is a paucity of new ideas and insights into the way tribals survive, particularly on the changing configuration of tribal

¹¹ See for example, Tyagi (1990)

identity in the altering socio-economic and political matrix. Almost all the works have contributed to the perpetuation of certain stereo-typed images of tribal communities in which the problems of tribals are looked upon in isolation from the complex realities of the prevailing social and political system. The interest is also limited in describing their cultural practices and economic and social organisation through kinship etc.. In the case of the literature on tribals of Kerala, this is even more true. In the pre- independence period commendable works were done by Aiyappan (1940, reprinted in 1992), Thurston (1907) and Iyer (1909) to understand and introduce the aboriginal tribes of Kerala. But these ethnographic notes opened up a new area of interest to individual researchers in the post independence period. Consequently, attempts were made to place these communities in contrast to the socio-cultural and economic setting of the mainstream communities. The migration from the mainlands, deforestation and alienation resulted from urbanisation and industrialization in the later decades along with the state interventions specially moulded for the welfare of these deprived sections, researchers channelled their attention to grasp the scope of further needy interventions, integration and rehabilitation. The studies of this nature basically brought out their poor standard of living and hence called for more attention from the government and public at large (Panoor, 1963; Mathur, 1977). The late seventies and early eighties witnessed increased awaraeness about the alarming situation of tribals all over the world. In India this initiated considerable amount of input into the field of tribal research and development. These were essentially meant for assessment and appraisal of approach towards tribals and tribal

development programmes (Burman, R, 1975; Amir Hasan, 1992; Sathyanarayana, 1990; Chaudhari, 1992; Singh, 1972). In Kerala, focus of such studies were limited to the problems of rehabilitation, forest policies and land alienation (Sasikumar, 1993; Menon, M, 1993). In the past few years, the setting up of¹² KIRTADS promoted tribal studies from various disciplines and consequently preliminary reports are available about few tribal communities. The lack of attention in these marginalised communities becomes more evident when we scan for published works on tribals in Kerala in the past three decades.

We come across very few: Luiz (1962), Mathur (1977), Bhanu (1989), Aiyappan and Mahadevan (1990), Suseela Devi (1990) etc. This can be attributable to the scattered settlement of tribals in various districts and absence of noticeable political affiliations and movements unlike in other parts of the country. Departing from the culture contact studies of the earlier kinds only very few studies attempted to touch upon their economy. Of these, Kunjhaman (1982) is worth mentioning. But it is based on the survey of 1976-78 by the Bureau of Economics and Statistics, Trivandrum and no direct field work of the researcher is involved, limiting its scope.

Eventhough food habits form an integral part of all the tribal studies, their expenditure on food, consumption pattern, their nutritional status are hardly paid any attention. The relevant works are by Hanumantha Rao (forthcoming) and P.N.Sen Gupta (1980). The Diet Atlas of India also carries some interesting information.

¹² Kerala Institute for Research and training for Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. It was set up by the government of Kerala in 1982.

The National Institute of Nutrition has carried out surveys of food consumption, pattern, extent and type of malnutrition and the prevalence of different nutrition symptoms among the Maria Gonds of Bastar and Sarguja (Madhya Pradesh) and Bhamragarh area of Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra, Raj Gonds of Adilabad, Jatapu of Srikakulam and chenchu of Mahaboob Nagar. Food consumption was assessed by means of the 'Recall method' for the previous 24 hours and per capita consumption calculated for different food stuffs. The standard used for judging the nutritional intake of a population was the Recommended Dietary Allowances by ICMR (RDA). The nutritional status of a population was assessed in terms of nutritional deficiency signs and anthropometry, including body weight and height. The incidence of anaemia and goitre were also taken as indicators of nutritional deficiency and or imbalance. This survey covered Kadar, Irular, Urali and Kanikkar of Kerala. Their calorie intake is found to be much lower than the RDA, especially that of Kanikkar and Irular. The survey concludes that the intake of calories is lower in most of the tribal groups compared to the rural areas. It holds the view that poor economic conditions and low literacy levels are mainly responsible for this. The Diet Atlas of India reveals that protein intake per day in South Indian states is the lowest in TamilNadu followed by Kerala, Andra Pradesh and Karnataka. It observes that due to their poverty, even the substitutes they have like roots, leaves, flowers, fruits and seeds are not now available in sufficient quantities to make up the deficit.

A brief survey of literature on the economics of tribal life in general and their food economy in particular reveals a major

lacunna with respect to a comprehensive approach towards the analysis of inter relationship between hunger and the economic environment in which the tribals struggle to survive. Therefore, this study focusses on this aspect with the following broad *objectives* as its prime concern:

- (1) To understand the nature and characteristics of the food economy of the tribals within an analytical framework of social stratification and formation of social classes.
- (2) To examine the structure of the food economy of two major tribal groups namely Kurichiyar and Paniyar¹³ in Kerala and compare and contrast their relative performances.
- (3) To examine the state policy towards the tribals and assess intra-group and inter-group differences in their response to state initiatives.

1.3 Chapter scheme

The chapterisation of the study is as follows: Chapter 2 provides an overview of the fundamental methodological concepts and tools that inform the analysis of the food economy of tribals in Kerala. Chapter 3 discusses the basic facts relating to the social and economic characteristics of the sample households belonging to both Kurichiyar and Paniyar. Chapter 4 focusses on the continuity and change that one observes while attempting to understand certain key

¹³ The rationale for choosing these two communities is provided in chapter two. Instead of the usual English equivalents of the respective tribe names as Paniyas and Kurichiyas we wish to retain the indigenous expression Paniyar and Kurichiyar.

aspects of the food economy of Paniyar and Kurichiyar. Chapter 5 probes* further into the food economy giving particular emphasis on aspects pertaining to the process of feminization of hunger among tribals. Chapter 6 provides a broad overview of state policies towards tribals and a closer analytical look at the interrelationship between state initiatives and socio-economic characteristics of Paniyar and Kurichiyar. A summary of arguments and their implications are outlined in Chapter 7.

Chapter 2

THE METHOD: A TECHNICAL NOTE

Introduction

This chapter provides a methodological review of the theoretical and empirical aspects of the present study. Since the study is based on field survey and data therefrom, we may give a brief description of the area and the groups under study, sampling method, collection of information, operational definitions of the concepts and categories used, coding and the statistical tools used in the processing and analysis of the data.

The present study, as indicated earlier, aims at understanding the role of socio-economic status vis-a-vis the internal stratification of the tribal groups in determining their response to state policies and programmes. To a large extent, a community's position in the social hierarchy determines its socio-economic status, defines and limits its access and use of various facilities, resources and opportunities available in the larger society and, regulates one's aspirations, interaction and participation in economic, political, social and other fields. This is even more true in the case of tribals who were socially deprived and beyond the periphery of the prevalent system for centuries. This marginalisation from the dominant culture along with their own internal stratification demarcates their territory, both social and geographic, from the rest of the society in several aspects. This direct relationship between socio-economic status and social stratification is delineated in the recent studies in terms of

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entitlement and capabilities¹. Groups which belong to the lowest rung of the tribal society are affected worst because their entitlement are far below the minimum. It has been demonstrated by various studies that differences in the initial endowments play a significant role in the functioning of developmental programmes. This is established by taking various aspects like health, education, occupational achievement, income levels etc. with the caste/ economic status of particular groups. We focus on the food economy because tribals, whether they are engaged in subsistence production and subsistence earning and consumption, whether they are food gatherers or hunters leading nomadic life or agriculturists practicing settled agriculture as well as shifting agriculture or agricultural or wage labourers, their whole economic activity is determined essentially by their need for food.

A number of plausible propositions have been identified based on the review of literature presented in the previous chapter. These propositions were kept in view in designing the sample, the choice of the method and analysis of the data. These propositions are derived from the major premise that tribal groups are internally stratified which in turn has a direct bearing on their socio-economic endowments:

1. Stratification is mainly visible in terms of the occupational status of the group.
2. The traditional occupational structure of particular tribal groups has not completely withered away.

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¹ For a useful discussion of these concepts see Sen, A.(1985). For a complementary analytical discussion and further elaboration of Sen's views see Mukherjee (1995) and Sugden (1993).

3. Mobility in occupational status has happened mostly in the upper rungs and least in the lowest rungs.
4. Possession of land is a decisive factor in determining the social position of a group.
5. The food economy is based on subsistence production and production in turn is determined by consumption requirements.
6. Their forest dependency is regressing due to various reasons.
7. Traditional dietary practices and indigenous medical systems are disappearing against a decreasing forest dependency. Further, following from this a decrease in the nutritional status and increase in morbidity may be discerned.
8. The capability of a tribal group to respond positively to state initiatives and market signals depends heavily on the initial endowments and social status which are historically determined.

2.1 Operationalisation of concepts

Social Stratification

Theoretically, social stratification refers to the arrangement of various groups in a hierarchy indicating relations of superiority and inferiority with respect to property, status and power². It provides differential status and role to individuals and groups that constitute a basis for human behaviour in relation to each other. It confers differential possession of goods and services,

² For a detailed analysis of varied aspects related to the recent theoretical approaches to the question of social stratification, see Gupta, D. (1990). Functional approaches to the question of social stratification have been developed by Davis and Moore (1945), Tumin (1953), Wesolowski (1962), Hanco (1970) etc. Marxian and Weberian ideas have also generated an ever accumulating literature on social stratification. In the Indian situation, stratification has been viewed from the point of view of caste, class and power. For a useful discussion see Kopardy (1994: 6-8).

differential access to resources and differential utilization of facilities and opportunities. It is a "system of structured inequality in the things that count in a given society, that is both tangible and symbolic goods of that society" (Heller, (1969) quoted in Koparty [1994:5]). Indian society is highly stratified through caste system which is characterised by hereditary membership, endogamy, commensal restrictions, common traditional occupation, dietary practices etc. Tribals in India, though outside the caste system constitute a stratified society. In earlier days this stratification was determined by their cultural and religious practices, activity through which they collect their food, dietary practices and habitats etc. For example, those who cultivate were ascribed high status. Similar to the caste system which has local versions of hierarchy, the stratification of tribals is also region specific. In the case of Kerala, Kurichiar due to their matrilineal practice and mythological status of their past assert themselves as Hill Namboodiris³. They practice untouchability/ unapproachability to Paniyar, Adiyar, Uralimar and Kattunaickar. But Kurumar, another land owning tribe is not treated as equal to them although unapproachability was not practiced towards them. Therefore, it may be observed that the cultural background and the economic activity determine the social status of a community.

³ The tribal society in Kerala is said to have hierarchically differentiated even before the period of brahmin colonisation. It is some times argued that the rigidity of the caste structure in Kerala could be attributed to the fact that the process of amalgamation of tribals into caste as vividly described by D.D. Kosambi happened in Kerala with a certain uniqueness in it in that the social hierarchy that existed among tribals in Kerala who practiced even untouchability and unapproachability was suitably adopted by the brahmin colonisers. This argument is aired by Balakrishnan, P. K (1987).

Initial endowments

This concept refers to the socio-cultural and economic standing or possessions of a group. This can be in terms of land, education and income. The differential distribution of any of these variables between communities or within a community has direct relationship to the pace with which they can come up to the required standards of living. In the case of tribals this is explicit in land holding, literacy rate, occupation and income.

Entitlement

Entitlement of a person stands for the set of alternative commodity bundles that can be acquired through the use of the various legal channels of acquirement open to that person.

Capability

It represents a person's choices to achieve well-being. The notion of capability "refer to the extent of the freedom that people have in purchasing valuable activities or functioning". (Dreze and Sen, 1993:42). This is a broader concept compared to the idea of 'standard of living'⁴ (Ibid:12).

Food economy

The concept food economy is used in tribal studies to classify the nature of economic organization of a particular tribal group. Usually a fourfold classification is used viz food gatherers, pastorals, shifting cultivators and settled agriculturists (Sathyanarayana, 1990). In this study however, the concept is used

⁴ For a discussion of issues relating to freedom and choice see Sen (1985b) and (1988).

in a broader sense to encompass the economic resources of food production distribution, exchange and consumption.

2.2 Sample design: the identification of area and tribes

The study was carried out in Wayanad district, where the spectrum of tribal society shows a range of varied tribal groups with economically and socially well off Kurichiyar and Kurumar to the poverty stricken, undernourished and socially deprived Adiyar and Paniyar. In other words, we found the tribals in Wayanad as deeply stratified and more diversified as compared to other districts. Moreover, Wayanad district has the highest proportion of tribals in the state⁵. Since the highest ST concentration is in Wayanad, three offices are functioning viz., Project Office Kalpetta, Tribal Development office at Sultan's Battery and Mananthavady and the whole area and the tribal population are fully covered under ITDP as per 1991 Census.

To bring out the inter-group differences among tribals we have chosen two groups which have different socio-cultural and historical background by which differences are still evident in terms of this socio-economic status. Thus, Paniyar and Kurichiyar were selected. The rationale behind the selection of these two groups is explained by the historical evolution of these two groups and their present position in the social fabric of the tribal society in Wayanad.

⁵ 35.82 per cent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of the state is concentrated in Wayanad. This forms 17.11 per cent of the total population of the district. Scheduled Caste population forms only 0.83 per cent of the total population of Scheduled caste in the state.

Paniyar

The etymology of the word Paniyar indicates their main activity. It is derived from the word Pani meaning work and the term means one who works (Singh,1990). They live in the forest tracks of the Wayanad, Kozhikode, Kannoor and Malappuram districts of Kerala. But 72% of the Paniyar live in Wayanad.They are the single largest tribal community in Kerala. According to 1981 census, they number 56,952 which constitute 21.8% of the tribal population of the state. The socio-economic survey of 76-78 reveals that 57.85 of the Paniyar are landless agricultural labourers.85.17% of the total workers are agricultural labourers, 11.57% engage in fishing,etc. and only 0.50% are cultivators. The remaining 2.76% engage in other vocations. They are preponderantly a rural community with only 78 persons returned from urban sectors(Census of India, 1981).

Paniyar were traditional food gatherers leading nomadic life. In the later period they were made slaves and used to be bought and sold at the annual festival of Valliyoorkkavu temple. In 1969 Kerala government abolished bonded labour, but the socio-economic survey of 1976-78 shows 32 % of paniyar as bonded labourers.Thurston (1909) has mentioned that when coffee planters from outside started settling in the area , they purchased land along with the Paniyar living there, and utilized their labour power. Aiyappan (1992) has also studied them way back in 1940s. His interest in them was guided by their low economic profile and association with crimes⁶. Later Nair, S.(1982) and Panoor, K. (1963) have written about this tribe. They tried to highlight the

⁶ Other early studies about them are the genetic studies of Das and Ghosh(1954) and Das (1955).

unemployment faced by Paniyar after their release from bonded labourers.

Kurichiyar

Kurichiyar, the Brahmins among the adivasis of Kerala are a real fete for anthropologists due to their economic self sufficiency, massive joint families, matrilineal heritage, co-operative farming etc. Aiyappan and Mahadevan studied extensively about their ecology, economy, matriliney and fertility and had lots to comment on this 'socialistic' tribe. Traditionally they are agriculturists, herders and hunters¹. Because of their high sense of purity and hygiene, they still practice untouchability with other tribes of the lowest strata like Paniyar and Adiyar.

In 1981 they are ranked third in terms of tribal population with a share of 7.84 (22,215). They are concentrated in the Wayanad district and inhabit forest areas. According to the 1981 census, 34.44 % of them are returned as workers, 45.96% are agricultural labourers, 38.58% cultivators, 12.09% are engaged in livestock, forestry, hunting, etc. and the remaining 3.37% are engaged in other services.

These brief notes provide us with a contrasting picture about these two tribes. Among Kurichiyar majority own land while Paniyas are landless agricultural labourers. Kurichiyar are comparatively better off in terms of economic well being while Paniyar hit the newspaper head lines with recurring starvation deaths during the lean

¹ A detailed account of the legenderies about their origin, higher status and the associated cultural practices can be found in Aiyappan and Mahadevan (1990).

months. In the changed new economic scenario, Kurichiyar were the victims of land alienation due to developmental projects, rehabilitation programmes, sanctuaries, immigration of non-tribes etc., Paniyar experienced the trauma of immediate transition from food gathering stage to slavery, bonded labour, and finally to free wage labour status, but facing shortage of employment opportunities.

2.3 The study area

Noolpuzha in Wayanad is the biggest panchayat in terms of tribal population. The large section of tribals in this area are Paniyar and in the past few years it has been in the news for starvation deaths, deaths due to tuberculosis and sickle cell anaemia among the tribals.

Mananthavady is the main centre/market for hill produce and tea/coffee plantations. Kurichiyar are settled\concentrated in and around Mananthavady. Kurichiyar of Mananthavady are presumably taken as educationally, economically and politically upcoming tribal group (Singh, K. S. [1990:661])⁸. Moreover, they appear to be largely affected by christianisation in this area. The spread of Kurichiyas around Mananthavady is so diverse that we had to extend our sample limit to Mananthavady block instead of panchayat unlike in the case of Noolpuzha.

2.4 Sampling

Sampling process was done at stages. From the demographic particulars of tribals available at the district head quarters,

⁸ K.S.Singh, The Scheduled Tribes(1990)Pg.661

twelve hamlets each from Paniyar and Kurichiyar was selected randomly from Noolpuzha Panchayat and Mananthavady block respectively. From the selected hamlets random sampling was again done to select 60 households each from both the communities. The Hamlets selected from Noolpuzha Panchayat are the following: Ponkuzhy, Pulluthookky, Kakkathodu, Kakkavayal, Choramkolly, Karippoor, Panayambam, Panappadi, Kolippaly, Kumuzhy, Mammathanpaly, Thiruvannoor. Mannanthavady block includes seven Panchayats. The kurichiya settlements selected for the survey are Kallumuttam, Kammana, Arrekara, Mundankutty, Eranamkolly, pallikkunnu, kuttiyottil, Karimani, Edathana, Nettamani, Thalamalakunnu, Kunjhom. Random sampling was used to give equal opportunity to the different tribal hamlets which varies in their geographical proximity to the main centres of activity as well as in terms of differential degrees of assimilation.

2.5 Questionnaire

In view of the objectives of our study and the nature of data needed a detailed questionnaire was prepared. Considering the educational level and the kind of exposure of the respondents, care was taken in framing the questions. Since the questions have to be posed in Malayalam we anticipated the problems related to the dialect of the researchers and the language of the respondents and decided to split questions into parts. For e.g. instead of asking where do you go for treatments we ask whether he/she knows about the nearest primary health centre. How often does the concerned person visit the hamlet, how often and what for usually they avail of the services of PHC. It was much easier to put those small questions effectively into a conversation. The pilot study done by

the researcher was very helpful in getting a feel of the field and the respondents which invariably was of immense use in developing the questionnaire. The questionnaire was pretested among the Kanikkar of Trivandrum. At the pretesting stage of the questionnaire, besides sorting out various economic questions, a few issues stemming from the socio-cultural farming milieu were also included. For eg. shared labour. We have found that questions pertaining to diet profile was little embarrassing and respondents tend to hide the actual situation. Besides this, since they don't keep track of many things, it seemed essential to cross check the details. For example, what was your ailment or how many kilos of rice you purchase every week. For both these questions, they tend to answer in value terms. The chit from the ration shop and the hospital resolved the problem.

Finally, when it was developed the questionnaire contained six parts. First part collects particulars of household environment and demographic details, second part, activity, and agriculture related details, third part expenditure, sources of finance and savings, fourth, social and political participation, fifth, diet profile and health related issues and finally details of benefits from the state.

2.6 Field Work

Field work was done in the months of July, August, September in 1994. First it was done among Paniyas in Noolpuzha. Since it was monsoon season, and for agricultural labourers there was not much work, we could find most of them staying back due to heavy rain. This had advantages as well as disadvantages. Since most of them

stayed back, males as well as females, it was possible to meet all of them in person. Moreover, they had time to spend continuously with the researcher, which is otherwise impossible due to their hectic work schedule. On the other hand, their actual expenditure pattern, diet profile, work schedule were missing.

Staying with them was proved successful in getting reliable information and cross-checking of what was reported earlier especially regarding diet. It also helped in reducing the time of interviewing. Many things were observable during the stay and questions could be asked in different steps, not at one stretch. Also, questions were not asked as it is framed in the questionnaire. It was impossible to get them into a question-answer session. So a purposive conversation which covers all the aspects of questionnaire was developed with the head of the household. Since the households were selected randomly, and all the hamlets have 8 to 20 households, avoiding some households in the same hamlet caused problems. So whether it is included or not, visiting every household was necessary during the stay. Such visits were made after completing the target of the day. This also served as an additional source of information and also an effective cross checking about the households surveyed. Access to the kitchen was also possible due to our stay in the hamlet. Moreover, introduction by the tribal extension officer assistance from the Anganwadi teachers and tribal volunteers made cooperation from their part much more easier. However, asking a person about his dietary practices who has not eaten anything for two days was very uncomfortable.

Field work among Paniyar got over faster than expected mainly due to- no work for most of the households and stay in the settlements. Land related questions could be skipped since they don't possess any land. But field work among Kurichiyar was laborious and time consuming because their settlements are far away from each other and staying with them was impossible. They just cannot host a non caste. Even entering into the houses was also not possible in many of the cases. More than the transportation from one settlement to other, it was from one household to another in the same settlement that was tiresome. We had to cut across acres of paddy fields. To get correct information regarding labour, land and agriculture many settlements had to be revisited two or three times. Politically and socially active households and households of employers provided an altogether different kind of welcome. Their sense of purity is limited within the household. But access to traditional Kurichiya household was found difficult as they were not forthcoming to provide all the details we needed. Intervention of TEO's helped to convince them of our purpose. But still many households associated us with Tribal Department and hearing their complaints and answering their counter questions and queries real problems. It was quite noticeable that they were too keen to provide details of agriculture to show that the problems they face are related most importantly related to irrigation. However, interviewing them was less strainful because they were comfortable with vernacular and their exposure to the outer world helped them to understand the questions without being repeatedly asked or reframed.

2.7 Concepts and variables

The study has used many variables. A brief outline is presented for few variables which run across sociology.

Assets

This is classified into two, performing and non-performing based on whether it is income generating or not.

Activity

Activity is meant for economic activity. Any kind of work in which earnings are directly or indirectly involved is considered as an economic activity. Agricultural labour is completely wage paid in respect of the landless labour households and wage paid-cum-self employment in the case of marginal and small farming households, income earning activity in the case of large farmers and housewives who form a part of family labour as well as shared labour are treated separately. Person days of employment was obtained for each male/female working members separately under different field crop operations in terms of hours spent per day and total days.

Household Income

Earnings of all members summed over the diverse sources of employment or any other income generating activity plus rent payments from any type of assets plus all transfer payments (pensions, grants etc.) make up the total household income.

2.8 Analysis procedures

Some general remarks about the analytical procedures used in this work are presented here. The purpose of analysis is primarily to

assess the role of socio-economic status vis-a-vis the internal stratification of the tribal groups in their response to state initiatives. Therefore, our main task is to bring out the stratification as it exists in terms of social and economic endowments. In doing so, important within the tribe (intra group) and among a tribe (inter group) differences have been identified in terms of land, income, education and occupation. An effort has been made where ever possible to discuss important observations regarding this in comparison and in contrast.

All the variables pertaining to the social and economic status of a household are clubbed together (particulars of household environment, demographic details, asset structure, income, occupation, education and savings). For these variables mainly percentage distribution are used for individual and household level or both wherever necessary. It is done for Paniyar and Kurichiyar separately as well as for the whole sample population. To create intra groups within the communities land and income are used and categories are formed on the basis of quartiles⁹. On the basis of land four divisions were made possible landless (0), marginal landholdings (.1-2.5 acres), small land holding (2.6-5), large land holding (5.1 acres and above). Income categories for Paniyar based on quartiles are, below 4000, 4001-5000, 5001-6000, 6001 and above. Kurichiyar the income categories are below 15000, 15001-20000, 20001-30000, 30001 and above. But other than for cross

⁹ Quartiles is a commonly used measure of position dividing a particular distribution into quarters. The first quartile being the same as the 25th percentile. Percentile identifies the point below which a specific percentage of cases fall.

tabulation, income categories were made based on standard poverty line for tribals which is 11000/- per year.

In the analysis of expenditure pattern also, to find out the percentage share of each item in the total income, quartiles are used. Expenditure items are grouped into four -Household, agricultural, social, and personal. To find out inter-relationship or interdependency between two variables for eg. income and education, land and state benefits, processed data are cross-tabulated using SPSS programme and to quantitatively establish the degrees of linear association between socio-economic variables three statistical tests are used - ¹⁰chi-square, Mandel-Haenzel and Lambda tests. The resulting significance levels are given at the bottom of each table.

In the first section of the analysis descriptive and percentage distribution of different socio-economic variables with regard to the sample population are given. Following is the expenditure pattern of the households. The parity that is established thereby is substantiated with diet profile and morbidity pattern. This section is meant to bring out the inter group differences between the two sample groups. The second section aims at the intra group differences within particular tribal groups. This is done mainly with land ,income and education. The third section deals with the feminization of poverty which is implicit in the analysis.

¹⁰ These tests are used for measuring the association between two variables.

The last section of the analysis probes into the role of these differences in shaping their response to state policies. Here, along with land and income, education of the head of the household is found to play considerable role. So the aggregate state benefits (number of schemes a household has benefitted since 1984) is cross tabulated against these. A multiple regression is also run to establish the relationship between these variables and the state benefits.

Chapter 3

PANIYAR AND KURICHIYAR - A SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROFILE

Introduction

Paniyar and Kurichiyar, as we have observed in the previous chapter, have followed sharply contrasting historical paths in terms of their social, economic and cultural evolution. These differences refuse to fade away instantly and still retains their respective characteristics influencing their responses to the challenges of modernity. This chapter provides a profile of the sample population of Paniyar and Kurichiyar as a background to understand the nature of food economy as it exists among them. We begin by describing the demographic particulars of the sample.

3.1 Demographic indicators

A total of 120 households were selected from both the communities (60 each) to constitute the sample population. The number of persons in the sample is 837 with 385 Paniyar and 452 Kurichiyar. The gender composition of the sample is given in Table 3.1

Table 3.1: Gender distribution of the sample population

	Paniyas		Kurichiyas		Total	
	No:	%	No:	%	No:	%
Male	176	45.7	240	52.9	416	49.6
Fem	209	54.3	212	47.1	421	50.4
Total	385	100	452	100	837	100

Source: Survey Data

female members, while Kurichiyar have more male members. This holds true about these tribes in general also¹.

Table 3.2: Percentage distribution of the sample by age

Age group	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
0 - 5	12.2	10.4
6 - 18	34	30.3
19 - 30	23.4	28.3
31 - 50	20.0	18.6
51 and above	10.4	12.4

Source: Survey Data

The age composition of the population among two groups seem to be almost similar. Both for Paniyar and Kurichiyar the highest percentage is shown by the age group of 6-18. However, it was observed that the number of aged people are more among Kurichiyar and their life span is 95-100 in most of the cases. This has its roots in their dietary and cultural practices which we will discuss later.

Table 3.3: Percentage distribution of the sample by level of literacy

	Paniyar	Kurichiyar	Total
Illiterate	69.9	23.7	55.1
Literate	30.1	76.3	44.4

Source: Survey Data

Coming to literacy levels, a clear picture of the wide disparity that exists between these two groups as observed in Table 3.3. While 70 per cent of the Paniya are illiterates, 76 per cent of the

¹ The male-female ratio among the tribals of Kerala as a whole is much lower than the ratio for the state. It is only 1000 for 932 where as it is 1000 for 1032 for the state (Census of India, 1981).

Kurichiya are literates. The total literacy rate of our sample is 44 per cent, which is much below the average literacy rate for the tribals in the state ostensibly due to the higher incidence of illiteracy among Paniyar influences the sample.

3.2 Habitation, housing and land ownership

A glance at the most conspicuous indicators of socio-economic status namely habitation, housing condition and land ownership would provide a better understanding of the striking differences among these two tribal groups.

It is known that most of the tribals live in rural areas, due to their proximity to the forest. According to 1991 census this percentage is 96.51. We have classified the sample according to their habitation into three namely, rural, remote and very remote. This classification is based on the mode of transport available to the hamlet (rural by bus, remote by jeep, very remote by foot alone).

Table 3.4: Percentage distribution of households according to habitation

Habitation	Paniyar	Kurichiyar	Total
Rural	35	65	50
Remote	20	25	22.5
V.Remote	45	10	27.5

Source: Survey Data

Out of the 120 households surveyed 27.5 per cent reside in very remote areas, 22.5 per cent in remote and 50 per cent in rural areas of the district. Those who reside in very remote areas are yet to benefit from the widely covered state sponsored housing

programme. 20 per cent of the sample who own modern self built houses are absorbed more or less completely into the modern ways of life.

However, inter group differences are indeed very glaring. We see that 45 per cent of the Paniyar sample live in very remote areas while it is only 10 per cent for the Kurichiyar. Living in a very remote area for Paniyar, the landless people, means totally cut off from the rest of the society with a hand to mouth existence. For them income comes from the seasonal collection of minor forest products and agricultural work in the neighbourhood, making their economy one of minimum subsistence. They depend on forest not only for construction materials, fuels, food and sanitation but also it is the forest wood which they gather and sell that serve as their major income during the lean months. But for Kurichiyar, living in remote areas means taking care of inherited/encroached land and involving in traditional occupation. They limit their dependency on forest to fuel (20%), sanitation (5%) and construction materials (5%).

Table 3.5 Percentage distribution of the sample by Type of Dwelling

	Govt. built	Self built		
		Modern	Indigenous Pucca	Katcha
Paniyar	63.3	--	--	36.6
Kurichiyar	50	20	30	--
Total	56.6	20	30	36.6

Note: Indigenous Pucca houses belong to the category of dwelling units which are spacious whose roofs are thatched and floor cemented with cow dung as a reflection of the cultural preference of its tribal inmates.

Source: Survey Data

In a survey conducted during 1990-91 by the Scheduled Tribes Development Department, it was found that there are landless, houseless families. The houseless families alone are nearly 21,000 in numbers. In our sample, 25 per cent of families are houseless or in other words, 25 per cent of the households share their kitchen with other families.

It is evident from Table 3.5 that none of the Paniyar own a modern or even a pucca house under the self built category, whereas for Kurichiyar it is 20 per cent and 30 per cent. Further, a distinction is possible between the government built houses of Kurichiyar and Paniyar. For most of the Kurichiyar, the money allotted under the housing scheme is a grant to assist them in building a house, where as for Paniyar, the house is built entirely with state aid and by government contractors.

Table 3.6: Housing structure

Group	Housing condition												
	Roof					Floor			Wall			Separate	
	Th.	Ti.	As.	Con.	Oth.	Mud	Cement	Oth.	Mud	Bri.	St.	Oth.	Kitchen
Paniyar	36.6	53.3	0	10	0	89.9	10	0	6.6	53.3	3.5	36.6	0
Kurichiyar	30	40	0	10	20	30	70	0	0	50	20	30	98

Notes: Th - Thatched; Ti - tiled; As- Asbetoes; Bri - Bricks; St. - Stone; and, Oth.- Others

Source: Survey Data

Table 3.6, which supplements the previous one, substantiates the contrast between Paniyar and Kurichiyar in terms of housing conditions. Further, it may be observed that none of the Paniyar households possess any separate arrangement for latrine and waste disposal. For this, the backyard forest area is used. Kurichiyar,

on the other hand have latrines whether it is of the indigenous or the modern variety. Land owning households make arrangements to channel the liquid waste and solid waste is converted into natural manure. In the case of no separate arrangements for this, they throw or dump this in the home garden itself. Separate kitchen for Kurichiyar is a cultural necessity and their spacious houses are built to suit their cultural preferences. In the case of small pucca houses built with the help of government programmes, most of them retain indigenous structures to serve different purposes related to their cultural practices. The dwelling units of Paniyar consists of three rooms at the maximum whether it is self-built or Government built and due to their large family size keeping a separate room for cooking is found to be impossible. Another point which needs to be mentioned is electrification of households. Ten households were found to be electrified among Kurichiyar and two Paniyar hamlets had this facility².

Table 3.7: Source of drinking water

Group	Private				Public			
	Well	Tap	Keni	Pond	well	tap	Keni	Others
Paniyar	0	0	0	0	55	10	20	15
Kurichiyar	38.3	0	2.7	6.6	20	12	0	20

Note:Keni is a shallow well dug in the field which serves as a source of water.

Source: Survey Data.

The problem of drinking water in the rural areas is quite explicit in our survey area also. None of the Paniyar has their own sources

² These hamlets got electrified under the special order of the tribal welfare minister during an official visit. However, the visit was occasioned by the recurring tuberculosis deaths among the tribals in the Noolpuzha Panchayat.

of water and majority depend on public wells/tube wells (see Table 3.7). Irregularity of water supply in these public sources especially during the summer season makes most of them rely on other sources of water like small streams, keni, etc., for which they have to walk a distance of minimum two kilometres. For Kurichiyar, because they possess land, it is possible to have their own sources of water. Those who do not possess own wells/ponds rely on neighbours. This is not possible in the case of Paniyar due to their isolated settlements and proximity to the forest.

Land

Tribals as a whole never had the concept of 'ownership' of land for they feel they cannot own their 'mother'. Those nomadic tribes, who were engaged in food gathering and hunting, never felt the need to possess a piece of land. And those who were cultivators pursued shifting cultivation and once they were settled, the mere fact that they use the land gave them the feeling of owning it - operational right. This outlook had serious set backs in the colonial and post-colonial periods. They were evicted from their settlements due to various forest policies, sanctuaries and developmental projects at different points of time. They were never given any land because forests were considered a 'common property'. Some get rehabilitated in Government built 'colonies', but again with no land and no right over the place they stay.

It was observed during our survey that out of 12 hamlets of Paniyar only 4 had got the land documented. In most of the settlements, 8 to 18 houses are there with an area ranging from 15 to 22 cents and

it is documented in the 'Mooppans' name, the senior most male person in the settlement.

In the case of Kurichiyar, eventhough they were handling land for centuries, they got it documented quite late. They lost most of their land due to the encroachment of non-tribals who migrated to this part of the state.

Land alienation is a serious problem faced by tribals. According to official records, the actual number of landless tribals has increased during the last decade: Other than encroachment, various other reasons can be attributed to this phenomenon. Tribals are dependent on non-tribals to meet their credit requirements. And these debts eventually result in the disposal of their land some way or the other. With regard to the main reason for land alienation, the socio-economic survey of tribals conducted by the Bureau of Economics and Statistics during 1976-78, revealed that "the land alienated to meet the domestic expenses alone accounts for 33.6 per cent cases and 49.2 per cent area and the land transferred to clear the debt covers 28 per cent cases and 21.1 per cent extent. Similarly, alienation in connection with medical treatment and marriage represent 14.7 per cent cases and 9 per cent area and 4.5 per cent cases and 2.3 per cent areas respectively. The district wise alienation is 3788 acres and 95 1/4 cents in Wayanad, 4166 acres in Palakkad, 2000 acres in Idukki has been alienated as on 31.12.1993". In our sample, out of 60 households, 3 cases of land alienation are spotted. Out of these, two are with non-tribals due to encroachment and the other with a tribal family itself due to false documentation.

Land distribution in our sample population clearly brings out the economic inequality associated with social inequality.

Table 3.8: Particulars of land ownership

	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Landless	96.66	5
Land owning	3.3	95

Source: Survey Data.

Table 3.8 reveals that Kurichiyar are predominantly a land owning class whereas Paniyar continue to be a landless group. It is interesting to note that the 3 households that are landless among Kurichiyar account for the total number of land alienation cases among the sample population. The 3.3 per cent of land owning households among Paniyar possess forest land which they encroached way back in fifties and documented only recently. Disparity in terms of possession of land becomes more vivid in the later part when we categorise the land holdings.

Table 3.9: Asset structure and savings

	Av.Land size	Radio	Watch	TV	Vehicle	Well	Savings
Paniyar	.02	13.33	5	--	--	--	--
Kurichiyar	.63	66.66	71.6	3.3	6.6	38.33	?

Source: Survey Data.

Asset structure and savings also reveal the same trend (Table 3.9). Assets of Paniyar limit to radio and watch with absolutely no savings. On the other hand, the asset structure of Kurichiyar shows their slow but steady assimilation into the modern ways of living. There are two households with television, one with two jeeps for

marketing facilities and the other with a scooter and bicycle for transportation to the office. Their savings also deserve attention. Normally whatever surplus they get after each harvest is invested into agriculture as more or improved varieties of crops, fertiliser and for leasing in land. Their savings in banks and in other private saving facilities is a recent phenomenon which clearly indicates that they are adapting faster into the mainstream.

The inequality in terms of economic assets among the tribal groups can be substantiated with the help of the economic activities they engage in and the income distribution. The distribution of the sample according to occupation is provided in Table 3.10.

Table 3.10: Economic activities of the sample

Category	Paniyar		Kurichiyar	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
1. Old age	82	21.3	15	3.3
2. Under age	28	7.3	42	9.3
3. Agrl. labour	111	28.8	15	3.3
4. Casual labour	2	23.6	35	7.8
5. Wage labour	2	0.5	12	2.7
6. Govt. employed	0	0	26	5.8
7. Private	0	0	8	1.8
8. Self employed	0	0	6	1.3
9. Cultivators	1	0.3	38	8.9
10. Family labour	1	0.3	126	27.9
11. Full time students	62	16.1	126	27.9
12. House maids	7	1.8	0	0
13. Others	0	0	3	0.7
Total	385	100	452	100

Source: Survey Data.

According to 1991 Census, among the tribal workers 55.47 percent depend on agriculture and 16.66 per cent constitute cultivators. And it also points out to the marginal shift of labour force among the tribals from agriculture to other sectors of the economy as the

percentage of workers depend on agriculture decreased to 72.13 per cent in 1991 from 78.01 per cent in 1981. 14.04 per cent of the tribal agricultural labourers are from Wayanad district alone.

Table 3.11: Occupational status of the sample

Category	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
1.Out of labour force	44.7	40.5
2.Labourers	52.9	13.8
3.Employed	1.8	8.9
4.Own farm workers	0.6	36.8
5.Others	0	0.7

Source: Survey Data.

In our sample, a discernable shift could be shown in the case of Kurichiyar only (8.9) as Paniyar more or less, remain as agricultural labourers (The 1.8 per cent in the employed category are housemaids). This is to say that there has been no occupational mobility among Paniyar. 23.6 per cent engage in works other than agriculture like wood cutting, slicing, loading, construction etc. and 0.5 per cent to factory as weekly paid wage labourers. Wayanad is a backward area in the industrial map of Kerala and there is no major industrial units in the district worth mentioning except some factories for processing tea and coffee. Agriculture is the principal occupation of the people. Some are engaged as labourers in plantations. Noolpuzha has two sandalwood distilleries both under the private sector. The one which falls under our survey area is locked out. Hence, the possibility to shift from agriculture to other sectors is very limited in Noolpuzha Panchayat. Mananthavady taluk has many tea estates which absorbs workers as wage labourers (wages fixed on weekly basis).

All this amounts to say that occupational mobility among Kurichiyar is picking up at a fast pace. The 5.8 per cent (26) of employed persons in Government services are from 24 households, which means 40 per cent of the sample households have additional permanent income from government jobs. This again is an indication of their transformation from agricultural based economy. Moreover, the younger generation among them is for jobs. Many aspire to avail self employment scheme under Tribal Department. Driving, motor mechanic, plumbing, etc. are also found attractive for them. Agriculture is something which they want at 'leisure times' to quote one of them. This change in attitude has many reasons. The transition from joint families to nuclear families is perhaps the most important reason. The resulting partition of land has made subsistence farming nonviable. Education and the consequent acculturation³ has also played a major role.

3.3 Agriculture and subsistence

The principal crops cultivated in the district are coffee, paddy, tapioca, pepper and other cash crops like rubber, cardamom, ginger and turmeric. The main crop of the district is coffee which accounts for 33,254 hectares, which works out to 15 per cent of the total cropped area. A peculiar feature is that all the villages in the district have coffee plantations and in our sample also, all the land owning households irrespective of the land size grow coffee. The cultivation of paddy comes next in importance with an extent of 23,494 hectares. As in the case of coffee, paddy is also grown in all the villages. Out of the 62 landowning households 40

³ Acculturation refers to the coming together of societies with different cultural traditions (Davies.D, 1972: 16) and the resultant process of change in artefacts, customs and beliefs.

found to have wet lands with paddy cultivation. Insufficiency of wet lands to meet the required rice for home consumption is met by leasing in, provided family labour is available.

Table 3.12: Work days and Wage rate

	Paniyar		Kurichiyar	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
The average working days	60	158	40	240
The average wage rate	25	40	25	42.5

Source: Survey Data.

The difference that is visible in the average working days available is to be understood in terms of the area of the habitat and the female- male difference in terms of the activities they engage in. Female work force gets employed for paddy, coffee, pepper and ginger. Lack of irrigation facilities during summer allow, in most part of the area under survey, practically one crop of paddy each year. This reduces the number of actual working days to half for those who depend solely on agriculture. Pepper, coffee and ginger offer seasonal and very minimal working days of 7 to 10. So any shift of preference from any of these crops due to climatic conditions, diseases, reduced demands or prize in the market has adverse effect on female work force. And surprisingly, this shifting has become very common because it reduces risk factor, labour and fertilizer cost. Both for plantain and ginger, there is a minimum level to which prices can fall. Furthermore, insuring facility for plantain cultivation and loans for agricultural purpose is an added incentive for large size wet land owners. It was observed that even small land holdings are trying this. For

example, in Thavinjal, a Kurichiyar who own one acre dry land and one acre wet land used his paddy field and another half an acre which is leased in for plantain. He took Rs.5000/- from Canara Bank, Thalappuzha as agricultural loan. It is worth noticing the way he used up the money. He bought 1000 seedling for Rs.2500/-, Rs.1000/- for insuring it 250 he spent for supports, 800 for fertilizers and around 360 for hiring in labour. He lost some in the monsoon for which he got 25/- per plant and from the rest he got Rs.20,000/- Even without insuring he finds it profitable and plans to continue the same way. For men, the average working days are more because of the availability of casual work like wood cutting, slicing, loading and home garden maintenance. However, the distribution of work days among the sample population appear to be extremely uneven.

When we take the percentage of earning members, for Paniyar, it is 55 per cent which is an attractive figure and which would mean that only less than half of the population sample are dependent. But the fact lies not only in the nature of occupation but also in the average earning of these members.

Table 3.13: Distribution of income

Income distribution	Paniyar	Kurichiyar	Total
Below 5,500	60	--	30
Below 11,000	40	10	25
Below 22,000	--	45	22.5
22,000 and above	--	45	22.5
Total	385	452	837

Source: Survey Data.

Table 3.14: Distribution of Per capita

Per capita distribution	Paniyar	Kurichiyar	Total
Below 50	33.3	--	16.7
51 - 100	51.7	1.7	26.7
101 - 250	15	43.3	29.2
251 and above	--	55	27.5
Total	385	452	837

Source: Survey Data.

Table 3.15: Averages of income and per capita

	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Average annual income of the household	5,166.6	23,633.33
Average Monthly per capita of the sample	78.4	300.19
Total	60/385	60/452

Source: Survey Data.

The average annual income of the Paniya household is found to be 5166.6 and the monthly per capita income is 78.4 relatively lower figures when compared to the respective state averages. This is perhaps due to the fact that employment opportunities are increasingly becoming less and less as a result of a variety of reasons which include inter alia conversion of paddy lands for non agricultural uses. The availability of employment is limited to 6 to 14 days in a month depending on the season. Moreover, agricultural work is available only for 9 months because of the heavy monsoons twice a year. It is also significant that 20 per cent of the Paniya households are female headed and employment opportunities for them are very less. Considering the wage rate, it is worth noticing that Wayanad has a very cheap labour market when compared to any other districts in the state. Wage rate being

low (for men it ranges from Rs.35-50 and for women it is Rs.20-30), and employment opportunities fast decreasing, their economic base has become very fragile.

The cultural and social make up of the tribals always favoured large families and their fertility was under natural check. Our sample households are no exception.

Table 3.16: Nature and size of the family

	Nature of the family			Average family size
	N	J	E	
Paniyar	43.3	--	56.6	6.4
Kurichiyar	51.6	26.6	21.6	7.5

Note: N-Nuclear family, J- Joint Family, E- Extended family
Source: Survey Data.

Kurichiyar were found to have larger families than the Paniyar. This is mainly due to three reasons (1) the joint family system (26.6%); (2) polygamy (8%) (3) aversion towards birth control programmes due to cultural traits. The average Scheduled Tribe family size of the state is 4.62 and for the district is 4.93 (1991 primary census abstract for SC and ST) and in our sample both for Paniyar and Kurichiyar it is above 6. Among Kurichiyar 51.6 per cent of families are of Joint type due to non partitioning of the property and their matrilineal traditions. Among Paniyar extended type of family is more common due to lack of separate dwelling units. The distribution of their limited and unsteady income flow within larger families brings down the per capita beyond the minimum.

It deserves attention here that there are 32.41 per cent of families below poverty line in the state and tribal families with annual income below Rs.11,000/- are considered to be below poverty line. For Wayanad district the poverty rate is 60.38 (Government of Kerala, 1993). Our sample however, shows that the percentage share of population under poverty line as 55 per cent for the whole sample. While the Paniya samples as a whole falls under the poverty line, it is only 10 per cent for Kurichiyar. The official figure need not be totally wrong given the fact that it balances for the inter-group differences for all the tribes. At the same time, it conceals much of these inter group differences.

3.4 Education

Finally we proceed to analyse literacy/education, one of the important socio-economic variables which has considerable implications for various facets of human development. This is particularly true for the marginalised and vulnerable communities for whom a shift from the culture of orality to literacy provides a better coverage in their interaction with and participation in the mainstream cultural, political and economic process.

Table 3.17: Literacy rates: a comparison

State Total Literacy rate	State total Tribal lit. rate	District total Tribal lit. rate	Total sample lit. rate	Paniyar lit. rate	Kurichiyar lit. rate
89.81*	57.22*	50.63*	44.9	30.1	76.3

Source: Government of Kerala, 1994
Survey Data

Table 3.18: Literacy rate male and female of the sample

Category	Paniyar			Kurichiyar		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Literates	34.7	26.3	30.1	82.8	68.9	76.3
Illiterates	65.3	73.7	69.9	17.2	31.1	23.7
Total	176	209	385	240	212	452

Note: Children of the pre-school age included.

Source: Survey Data.

Table 3.19: Percentage distribution of literates by educational standards

Category	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Illiterates	61.6	14
Under age	7.3	8
Literates*	3.4	10.6
Below primary	1.0	1.8
Primary level	14.5	19.6
Upper Primary level	10.9	17.3
High school level	1.3	22.8
SSLC and above	--	6.9
Total	385	452

Note: * stands for those who acquired this skill through informal ways.

Source: Survey Data.

A closer look at these tables reveals that in our sample literacy is much below the average of both state and district tribal literacy rate because of the poor literacy rate of Paniyar which is just above 30 per cent while for Kurichiyar it is 76 per cent which is well above the mean figure for the state. This skewness is more visible from the Table 3.19. It clearly shows that Paniyar continue

to be a non-starter of education and Kurichiyar on the other hand have made a tremendous leap forward in this direction. Among the surveyed population of Paniyar, none have passed SSLC and above (There were two males who studied upto 10th). "The literacy rate for Paniyar is one of the lowest among the tribes of Kerala" (Nair, V., 1993) and our sample is also no exception. However, it is interesting to note that even this low percentage is mainly constituted by the school going children of this community rather than reflecting a general spread of literacy across the sample. Further, it is noticed that there are no drop outs below the age of 16 among Kurichiyar (42 persons studied upto 10th). But the dropped out percentage among Paniyar is 9.1. Among these, girls form the majority especially at the primary school level.

Moreover, there are children who are well above 6 and yet not attending school. For Paniyar, it is 15 per cent. Incidentally among Kurichiyar there are two children but they account for the total number of mentally retarded children in the sample. The high drop out ratio of the Paniya community is mainly due to poverty of varying degrees and their exhortions to come forward to educate children, perhaps have roots in their evolution from nomadism to bonded labour.

3.5 The Intra- group differences

The intra-group differences among particular tribal groups in terms of their economic status also play an important role as inter group differences. These differences are mainly in terms of land and income which have their effects on occupational mobility and education. These are the factors that constitute inter group

differences. Hence we infer that the more a community gets assimilated into the mainstream through more access to economic resources, the more will be the intra group differences among them, since assimilation happens in degrees and depends largely on initial endowments. This becomes clear when we compare the intra group differences among Paniyar and Kuruchiyar. We see that intra group differences are more prominent among Kurichiyar. Here we have not attempted a detailed analysis of the asset structure of different categories of households within a particular community. But as an indicator of the prevalence of such intra group inequalities, we have classified land and income into quartiles and its relationship to each other and to other variables like occupation and education are discussed.

Land plays a more vital role in the life of forest dwellers than in the case of others. It is not only a source of subsistence and income but also a part of their social and cultural life. They never owned land in the past and a community's position was determined by the organic relationship it established with the land⁴. The differential social positions attributed to hunters, food gatherers and cultivators is a case in point. Commoditisation of land has, however, altered the balance of human-nature interactions. Private ownership has now come to play a more active role in determining the social and economic positions.

Coming to the intra group differences in terms of land, we have classified land holdings in quartiles. We see that the intra group

⁴ It is interesting to note that, as a reminiscence of this culture, they still refer to land as earth.

differences among Paniyar and Kurichiyar in a way reflect their inter group differences also. Paniyar, as we have seen, are a more deprived community. Consequently, landlessness among Paniyar seem to be more predominant (see Table 3.8). To illustrate, 96.66 per cent of the Paniyar are landless and 3.3 per cent of the Paniya household own small holdings, that is, less than one acre. Not a single household in our sample is reported to possess land above one acre. Coming to the intra group differences of the Kurichiyar, on the other hand, what we find is an exact reversal. 81.67 per cent of Kurichiyar own land above one acre. A relatively smaller number of households (13.33%) own small holdings. Landlessness appear to be negligible with a low level of 5 per cent among the sample. The individual cases of landlessness in the sample, however, are cases of land alienation. Another significant information worth mentioning in this context is that nearly 50% of the Kurichiya households owns land above 2.5 acres (Table 3.20).

Table 3.20: Percentage Distribution of households according to size of land holding (in acres)

Group	Landless		0.1--2.5		2.6--5		> 5.1		Total No
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	
Paniyar	58	96.66	2	3.3	0	0	0	0	60
Kurichiyar	3	5	29	48.3	9	15	19	31.6	60

Source: Survey Data.

To bring out the intra-group differences in terms of income also. we have followed classification based on quartiles. The quartiles range (in Rupee terms) from 4000- 6000 and above for Paniyar where as it is 15000- 30000 for Kurichiyar. Consequently the lowest and the highest values of annual income of these groups also show significant variation. For Paniyar it starts from 1200 to 10500

whereas for Kurichiyar it is 10000 to 75000. In the case of Paniyar, we see that 43.3 per cent are below 4000. This is mainly due to the 12 female headed families (20 % of the sample). The 21.7 per cent of households which are the better offs in our sample are households where there are two or more male members who are Wage/casual labourers.

In the case of Kurichiyar the 11 households who belong to the upper quartiles are households with large land holdings with supplementary income from government employment. The 30 per cent, who are in the lower quartiles, are mostly agricultural labourers with marginal land holdings. This also includes landless households (5%). It was noticed that those families which got separated from their parental houses without any permanent source of income from employment, with ever incurring agricultural expenses and with the decrease in farm activities are falling into this category. The two sample households of Kurichiyar who belong to christian denomination 'Pathiri Kurichiyar'⁵ are good examples of this. It has to be mentioned that with the disintegration of joint family and matriliney, and the subsequent partition of properties are affecting their economic well being adversely. In our sample we have found that joint families are prosperous than the others.

⁵ For a detailed account of their conversion and alienation from their own people, see Singh K.S (1990).

Table 3.21 Distribution of income among Paniyar

Income range	Number	%
< 4000	26	43.3
4000-5000	10	16.7
5001-6000	11	18.3
> 6000	13	21.7
Total	60	100.0

Source: Survey Data.

Table 3.22: Distribution of income among Kurichiyar

Income range	Number	%
< 15000	18	30
15000-20000	13	21.7
20001-30000	18	30
> 300001	11	18.3
N	60	100.0

Source: Survey Data.

In order to understand the relationship between land and income, we have cross tabulated land categories against income categories. The result is not found significant for Paniyar since majority are landless. In the case of Kurichiyar households with higher income are invariably households with larger landed assets. But it appears that the reverse does not hold true. This could be due to the fact that income of a household may not be from land alone. Most of the households with larger landed assets have at least one family member earning extra income from private or public employment⁶. It was noticed that irrespective of the large land holding some of the households belong to middle income category because their marketable surplus is less due to the large family size and the consequent higher share of home consumption and also of low productivity based on traditional methods of agriculture.

⁶ Out of the 24 households of Kurichiyar which have members who are employed 22 households belong to large land holding category.

Table 3.23: Bivariate relationship between income categories and land size of Paniyar

Income Categories	Land Size				Total
	Landless	0.1--2.5	2.6--5	> 5.1	
< 4000	100.0	0	0	0	43.3
4001-5000	100.0	0	0	0	16.7
5001-600	90.9	9.1	0	0	18.3
> 6000	92.3	7.7	0	0	21.7
N	58	2	0	0	60
Chi-squared	3.14**				
Mandel-Haenzel Test	2.43**	P < 0.05			
Lambda	0.03	P < 0.05			

Note: ** indicates not significant
Source: Survey Data.

Table 3.24: Bivariate relationship between income categories and land size of Kurichiyar

Income Categories	Land Size				Total
	Landless	0.1--2.5	2.6--5	> 5.1	
< 15000	5	83.4	11.6	0	30
15001-20000	0	61.5	15.4	23.1	21.7
20001-30000	0	38.9	22.2	38.9	30
> 30000	0	18.2	18.2	63.6	18.3
N	3	29	9	19	60
Chi-squared	16.23 **				
Mandel-Haenzel Tes	13.72 **	P < 0.05			
Lambda	0.83	P < 0.05			

Note and source: Same as Table 3.23

The glaring differences in terms of income and landed assets seem to have influenced the attainment of various social indicators also. In this context, it is worth noticing that households having members with a level of education at least up to SSLC or above are also interestingly households with considerable landed assets. We have noticed that in our sample, there are 34 such households and their average land holding comes to 3.38 acres of dry land and 2.01 acres of wet land. It may be presumed that the surplus generated from the landed asset would have been used in supporting the education of the younger members of the household. 70 per cent of

these households, that is 40 per cent of the total sample, have at least one of their family members as government or semi-government employees, exemplifying a direct relationship between landed assets and education\employment.

Conclusion

The socio-economic profile of the sample discussed above brings out the striking inter group and intra-group differences among the tribals in terms of habitation, housing, asset structure and savings, occupational status, income and literacy/education. This observation provides a basis for further and deeper analysis of various aspects related to tribal economy in general and food economy in particular.

Chapter 4

ASPECTS OF FOOD ECONOMY I - CHANGE AND CONTINUITY

Introduction

Discussions on tribal transformation would be incomplete without mapping the changes in their food economy. Food economy, as we defined earlier, implies the economic resources of food production, distribution, exchange and consumption practices associated with it. However, the process of transition with respect to food economy are different for different tribal groups depending on the socio-cultural and historical path that they have traversed. The particular tribal groups under study here, Kurichiyar and Paniyar, for example, appear to have had strikingly dissimilar stages of transition regarding their respective economies of food. In this chapter an attempt is made to understand this differential evolution.

4.1 Paniyar and Kurichiyar: initial conditions

"The economic history of the Paniyar is one of the tragedies that has been enacted in many parts of India, of food-gatherers enslaved and never again being able to recover fully from the first great blow" (Ayyappan, 1992). Hand in hand with this dramatic shifts in the economic organization of tribal societies, one can see the emergence of an insecurity with respect to (1) the availability of food (2) an inability to adjust and adapt to the often unanticipated changes which affected their capacity to acquire food and (3) an uncertainty with respect to the nutritional value of the food that they manage to acquire.

As already mentioned, traditionally Paniyar were food-gatherers enjoying the freedom and self sufficiency of nomadic life in the interior forests. They used edible roots, tubers, leaves, wild berries. They also used to eat small animals like crabs by entrapping them. They were enslaved by powerful communities of farmers. The wages for a day's toil was one meal and no cash. But due to their access to forest, slavery did not famish them. When the European planters entered the scene in 1840s, they changed the man-nature balance of the region by introducing commercial crops which are of little use to the local people and brought large numbers of workers from outside who partly displaced the Paniya labour. Later many independent native entrepreneurs entered the plantation business and "they bought the Paniyar along with the coffee plantations" (Thurston, 1909). The same period witnessed migration from the main lands to Wayanad which brought large numbers of small farmers and workers who also entered in the labour market with the Paniyar¹. Hundreds of landless workers from the plains who settled in Wayanad became small land owners by squatting on unoccupied land which was plenty as late as 1940s. None of the Paniyar could do this because they never knew that they also should 'possess' land. These non-tribal migrants not only acquired land which was available but also encroached lands used commonly by tribals. Encroaching the tribal lands which were in cultivable form was found more easier than acquiring virgin forest land. Power and influence of the settlers coupled with preliterate cultural milieu of tribals made it much easier to document these encroachments without any serious challenge or objection from the

¹ Tharakan, P. K. M (1977) and Joseph, K. V (1988) discuss the historical and economic dimensions of this migration process.

natives. After they were caught by non-tribals and brought to the outside of the forest, for which there were many legends, they continued to be 'Adiyan' (slaves) till slavery was abolished in 1812 in Malabar². But this survived in the institutionalised form of 'labour exchange' at the annual festival of Valliyoorkavu temple. The period of engagement was usually for one year for a bonded labour. The amount of advance which was not refundable was Rs. 15 for a husband-wife pair. Daily wages were paid in kind at the rate of 2½ litres of paddy for men and 2 litres for women and no cash. The Paniyar relied completely on this wages for their daily food for which they supplemented the nutritional needs from the different edible items available in the forest. When there is no agricultural work, they relied completely on forests for their food. There was another system in vogue termed the Kankani' system for recruitment of labour for the coffee and tea estates, which were also essentially bonded labour. After the prohibition of bonded labour in 1969 also there were evidences to prove that it continued till the 80s³. Presently, capitalist relations have engulfed their everyday lives providing them a new identity namely wage labourers. The new system into which they are dragged also, have given rise to a new set of problems which affect their food economy negatively. Eventhough the region is predominantly agricultural in character, the low labour absorption capacity of this sector has affected their possibilities to acquire jobs. There appears to be an excess supply of agricultural labourers over demand leaving most of the Paniyar jobless for most part of the

² For a discussion on various aspects of slavery in Travancore see Kusuman, K. K (1977) and Saradamoni, M (1980).

³ Government of Kerala 1980.

year. This saga of transition of the food economy of the Paniyar signifies their loss of paradise and a gradual fall into a competitive world where they found themselves disadvantaged. Initially, in prehistoric times and even later they lived in their natural home environment i.e. forest. They were food gatherers who depended completely on forest resources. However, in course of time, it is said that their initial contacts with the outside world turned out to be disadvantageous for them making them agricultural serfs. However, this phase of their historical evolution did not demand a complete delinking from their home ground. 'Wages' were given as food for work and most often food gathering continued to be a major source of their livelihood. At a later phase it appears that wages were given in kind. Even during this phase one can perceive a partial dependence on forest as the quantity given away as wages was insufficient to make link between their two ends meet. Advent to the market, however, marks a drastic shift in their livelihood. Food gathering from forest ceased to be a supplementary source due to the changes in the forest policies⁴. The wages are now paid in cash and the frequency of work opportunities are inadequate to feed themselves. The indigenous methods of preservation of food, particularly those items which were gathered from forest like wild fruits, tubers and roots were widely prevalent among the tribal communities. The access to forest being limited, the collection and preparation of food for preservation

⁴ The forest policy of the British Government and subsequently Government of India have made a crucial assumption that all land in the country vests with the state and the state has the prerogative to lay down rules and regulations with respect to its use. Permanent settlement of 1793, Land Acquisition Act of 1994 down to the National Forest Policy of 1988 are conceived on the basis of this assumption. Consequently, hitherto, the state policy with respect to rights of indigenous people on forest land has been to restrict and regulate its use. (Anitha Cheria, 1995).

has become non-existent. The Paniyar, consequently lead a life of hunger and deprivation. The irony now is that their entry into what was once their 'home' is restricted by a legal system in which their participation is nil. The situation is worse in our survey area where the government has established the Wayanad wild life sanctuary that encompasses the entire forest area of Noolpuzha Panchayat. The major implication of which was that the tribal communities residing in and around this area were deprived of their immediate access to supplementary sources of food and income.

Kurichiyar were the first migrants into the Wayanad hills from the adjoining plain regions. They have several stories of their origin mainly in the oral tradition. Historically, they figure as sturdy warriors who helped the King of Kottayam in his battle with Wayanad. After this adventure, they could not get absorbed back into their parental commune. They went back to the King of Kottayam who settled them in the forest as 'the first farmers of the region'. There is every possible reason to believe that they have been farmers and hunters from early times. But the period of migration is difficult to pinpoint. However, it is believed that, Kurichiyar, "in all probability migrated to Wayanad at least before the 9th century A.D." (Aiyappan, 1990). So like any other forest dwellers, they engaged in hunting and shifting cultivation for their livelihood. They used to cultivate mainly paddy, ragi and certain vegetables for their own consumption. As farmers practising wet and also dry farming, the Kurichiyar used to produce enough cereals for themselves and others till the tenancy problems were complicated by the exorbitant land revenue demanded by the

British⁵. For meeting their entire agricultural requirements, they used to maintain large number of cattle. These animals were raised for their dung to be used as manure and for plastering the floor, ploughing the land or threshing paddy. Kurichiyar, historically are identified as a indigenous agricultural community whose characteristics are anthropologically explained to be (1) relatively larger size of the households; (2) collective farming and shifting cultivation; (3) gender and social division of labour; and (4) a relatively large labour force maintained through the high fertility usually seen among such traditional people.

In order to understand this change and continuity with respect to food habits of Paniyar and Kurichiyar we would provide an analysis of the mode of organisation of the culture and economies of food intake of these respective communities. We will begin by analysing their consumption and expenditure patterns as revealed by the field survey.

4.2 Expenditure patterns of Paniyar and Kurichiyar

Consumption data is a good proxy for the living standards derived from income. It tends to be a more reliable indicator of current living standards than income, more so when incomes vary over time in ways that, households can not predict. Households deals with this uncertainty through their consumption smoothing behaviour. Moreover, poverty is defined in terms of expenditure, but consumption below a norm, which has commonly been expressed in terms of a nutritional minimum, or in simpler terms, the ability or

⁵ For a discussion on the impact of British land revenue system in Malabar see Panikar, K N (1989) and Verghese, T C (1970).

inability to avoid hunger and/or malnutrition. But many aspects of household well being are not adequately captured by income or consumption based measures. Measures of consumption spending should include the imputed value of consumption from own production and should be normalized for differences in household size and composition and adjusted for differences in local prices. Instead of attempting this we use supplementary information on diet profile which includes items included or excluded in their consumption, number of meals taken per day, regularly and occasionally and details of diet for two days (past 48 hours during the survey) using recall method.

Expenditure details were collected for food, fuel wood, other fuels, building materials, clothes, education, news papers and magazines, social expenses, rituals and ceremonies, narcotics and liquor, entertainment and recreation, hired labour, crop inputs, irrigation expenses, farm equipments, livestock expenses, health care, travel and transport and any other agricultural expenses. It was found that most of the sample households do not spend on fuel wood, building materials, irrigation expenses and those who do spend only very negligible amounts. So fuel wood and building materials are excluded and the rest were put under other agricultural expenses.

Total amount spent for each item in an year is calculated after deducing for those months, in which consumption of that particular item is increased or decreased or excluded completely. If it is an occasional spending, number of times that was purchased in the previous year is taken (purchase of clothes, kerosene). If the

spending varies from month to month for some items, average amount spent for it in the previous months is taken. The two steps involved in the analysis of expenditure are :

- (1) Percentage share of each item in the total income is calculated.
- (2) All items taken for the analysis are put under 4 categories.

EX1- Household expenditure (food, fuel, education and health)

EX2- Agricultural expenditure (fertilizer, crop, hired labour, other agricultural expenditure)

EX3- Social expenditure (social, paper, entertainment, travel)

EX4- Personal expenditure (Pan/beedi, liquor etc.)

The percentage share of these in the total income is also calculated. As we know that food consumption is a function of income, the differences in the economic status of the communities are evident from these tables. The differential proportion of each item clearly shows the standard of living of the community. For example, Paniyar, the landless tribe, spends almost 100 per cent (98.71) of their income which entirely comes from their daily work. (0.31 per cent is the share of income from land and, with absolutely no savings). While Kurichiyar, the land owning tribe, spends only 88 per cent of the total income and the rest is saved or reinvested into agriculture. Looking at the household expenditure of the two groups we find that share for capital is comparatively less (61.29 %) for food which enables them to save around 15 per cent of their income. Expenditure on food is reduced to 44 per cent mainly because most of the households rely on home grown consumption of rice. Out of the 60 households of kurichiyas

6.7 per cent produce surplus rice to sell to the market 75 to 200 kilograms. But there are 12 (20%) households with no rice production at all.

Table 4.1: Expenditure pattern

Items	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Food	75.15	43.76
Fuel	0.71	1.34
Clothes	7.68	11.59
Education	0.37	1.90
Paper/magazine	0.00	0.56
Social	1.33	3.09
Pan/beedi	6.28	5.29
Liquor etc.	3.66	0.33
Entertainment	1.27	1.31
Hired labour	0.00	2.52
Crop	0.00	3.91
Fertilizer	0.00	4.73
Other ag.exp.	0.00	3.81
Health	1.69	3.70
Travel	1.07	1.16

Source: Survey Data

Table 4.2: Expenditure categories

Category	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Household expenditure	85.23	61.29
Agricultural expenditure	0.00	14.97
Social expenditure	3.54	6.12
Personal expenditure	9.94	5.62

Source: Survey Data

This includes landless households and households with no wet lands (10 per cent of households with no wet lands have leased in some to supplement their rice consumption) 33.3 per cent has home grown rice for 6 months, 25 per cent for 8 months, 8.3 per cent for 10 months and 6.6 per cent for the whole year. And all these households with wet land cultivation grow vegetables once a year following paddy cultivation. Twelve households sell vegetables

almost every year. The vegetables with marketable surplus are green chillies, beans, cucumber, pumpkin etc.. Irrespective of the land size, Kurichiyas maintain home gardens rich with various edible items. This further reduces their consumption expenditure. Their comparable share of expenditure on food, clothes, health, education and social purposes in the total income clearly indicate their almost complete assimilation into the mainstream.

On the contrary, it is interesting to note that 75 per cent of the Paniya households do not depend on home cooked food at all throughout the year. Instead, they invariably purchase way side cooked food from nearby hotels, or tea stalls. Their reluctance to cook food at home and preference for way side eating cannot be attributed to any single reason⁶. We can only presume that their socio-cultural attitudes are still rooted in an earlier phase of their historical evolution as food gatherers. Secondly, one can also argue that their new preference for food used by non-tribals and their own incapability to learn or afford the new culinary practices may be another reason. On the more practical side, hotel seems to be attractive for economic reasons as well. That is, during the lean months hotel owners provide the credit for food on barter basis, where as rice vendors and agents of public distribution system refuse such facilities.

So, one finds that, like in the past they still respond directly to the drive of hunger and invariably refuse to be drawn into the mainstream culinary culture. This is exemplified by the manner in

⁶ Such preference for way side eating is also revealed in the case of other marginal communities in Kerala. For a typical example would be the fisherfolk (John Kurien, 1984).

which their preferences are revealed in the market. Most of them are addicted to betel leaves which appear to be their first choice to be purchased from shops. Food items particularly raw items which are to be cooked at home are not usually preferred. Hence, we can presume that storing consumption goods at home for future use is not a priority for them. They buy rice which is required for a particular day or a particular meal. At the same time it is interesting to know what constitutes the food basket of a community who spends 75 per cent of their income on food in contrast to a group who spends only 44 per cent?

4.3 Diet structure of Paniyar and Kurichiyar

Diet depends on culture, ecology of the habitat and income as far as tribals are concerned. We have already seen that in terms of cultural practices and also in social and economic spheres, our sample tribal groups differ significantly. This becomes even more evident in their dietary practices.

Paniyar, the autochtones of Wayanad used to decide on their temporary abode on the basis of the availability of food they preferred. Accordingly, their food stuffs differed from season to season. In adverse conditions, they used to shift to areas where food is available. The main food stuffs eaten by them were roots, tubers, wild fruits and berries, mushrooms, leaves, crabs etc. And before the recent drastic changes in the economy of Wayanad, the life of the Paniyar, precisely, their food habits was closely tied up with the rhythm of the seasons and farming operations, both dry and wet. Now we ought to say that their food consumption is closely tied up with the employment opportunities from season to season. In

the earlier times, it was only August-September (Kanni) to be the month of famine in Wayanad with little work in the field. Due to large scale shift to commercial crops lean season happens more than twice a year. In the peak of summer and in heavy monsoon, they run short of employment. This is also the time when forest contributes nothing to their diet. It is only after the monsoon, forest provides them with varieties of roots, tubers and leaves. Hence most of them consume food twice a day, if work is available, other wise once a day. Their staple diet is rice. If it is cooked two times, the second time they take it as 'kanji'⁷. During lean months also kanji is preferred. Preparing kanji could probably be considered as a household strategy to minimise the quantity of rice used for a particular meal. Kanji, is a semi-liquid food which fills one's stomach with less quantity of rice as it is a mixture of boiled rice and water.

Table 4.3: Diet profile of the sample

Group	No. of meals per day					
	Regular			Occasionally		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Paniyar	83	12	5	--	40	5
Kurichiyar	--	10	90	---	--	100

Source: Survey Data

The Table 4.3 shows that for Paniyar, three meals a day is something which they enjoy very rarely. Even during work days large sized families cannot afford this. A usual working day means, early morning tea (without milk, most of the time without sugar

⁷ Moni Nag (1989) has noted that in Kerala kanji with its peculiar combination of rice with the water in which it is boiled has a richness in terms of its nutritive contents which compensates for the calory deficiency due to low and inferior food intake in the case of poor people.

also) and lunch at the field as part of the wage (from nearby fields they bring it home and share it with the aged and the children) and in the evening they buy provisions with whatever is left after paying their debts and spending for pan/ beedi/liquor. An off day also begins with tea depending upon the availability of tea powder. If they have money, they take parcelled break fast items without any side dishes from tea shops, and rice or tapioca, depending on the availability, for the meal. Sometimes this meal is skipped, if very little money or rice is left and it is kept for dinner. Usually most of the Paniya households do not take food in the morning and yesterday's left over rice is served to the children. Normally they take rice with salt alone or salt and chillies which they call chutney if nothing is available. They collect bamboo shoots, and other edible leafy stuffs. In some seasons they get vegetables from the field. Only when they have excess money they purchase vegetables or dried fish as side dishes for the meal. Vegetables they usually purchase are onions, potatoes, beans, and sometimes dal, green gram etc.

This inconsistency in food consumption is quite evident in the following table. It shows the food consumption of the sample for two days (last 48 hours) during the survey.

Table 4.4: Food consumption for two days

Group	No. of meals							
	Last 24 hours				Previous 24 hours			
	0	1	2	3	0	1	2	3
Paniyar	25	53.3	21.6	--	20	35	45	--
Kurichiyar	--	---	10	90	--	---	5	90

Source: Survey Data

As we have seen in the previous chapter the entire sample of households of Paniyar fall under the poverty line while it is negligible for Kurichiyas. Table 4.2 illustrates the extent of poverty among the Paniyar. In the month of July, when the survey was undertaken, none of the sample households could afford 3 meals a day. There were 12 to 15 households which were practically starving. Those households who could afford one meal have managed some edible stuffs from the surroundings like Pappaya, jack fruit, jack fruit seed etc. Only very few settlements have agricultural work and these households could afford two meals.

The diet profile of Paniyar as revealed by the survey is characterised by a conspicuous absence of milk and milk products. Equally striking is the absence of items like coconut, oil, meat, egg, pulses in their every day diet, eventhough these items might appear occasionally in their culinary practices⁸. In this connection a short note on their meat consumption seems to be in order. Meat is essentially used and consumed on specific occasions like marriage and rituals. Even in cases where we find households possessing poultry or goats, they keep them to be sold during times of distress. There seems to be a pattern among the sample with regard to the selling of domestic animals and poultry. We have observed that they sell up the stock primarily for raising money for family functions like wedding and paying off personal debts. Other items like pulses, coconut, oil, sugar, etc.. are purchased only in the peak seasons.

⁸ In our sample, however 4 households reported consumption of eggs. They were compelled to do so at the insistence of government health officials following the recurring incidence of Tuberculosis in the locality. Apart from this, we find that consumption of egg as a habit among Paniyar is almost nil.

A similar picture emerges from our data pertaining to Kurichiyar. We have seen that in the case of Paniyar, who had total dependence on forest and its resources for livelihood are thrown into the capitalist system with only partial dependence on forest. While Kurichiyar, who were mainly depended on produces from their own homesteads, now have to rely on frequent market consumption. This transformation is, however, a more recent one since historically Kurichiyas followed a pattern of partial forest dependence with self cultivation. The process of transition had its own negative impacts on the livelihood of the community. This is manifested by a decrease in the landed assets due to land alienation, disintegration of joint family and matriliney and changes in their economic pursuits and dietary pattern.

The diet profile of the Kurichiyar manifests a richness and variety when compared to Paniyar. Their diet usually consists of boiled rice, pulses and vegetables three times a day. And there used to be significant seasonal variations in terms of the items consumed. In addition, they also take tea/coffee three times. Coffee is taken more since it is a home grown stuff. They consume milk, egg, fish, chicken and wild meat quite often. The diet profile which was taken during the survey reveals that their first meal of the day has changed from rice to break fast items of the non-tribals. It is evident from the table 4.4 that only a negligible per cent could not afford three meals, recalled for the day on which the survey was conducted and on the previous day. It was also noticeable that almost all the items included in the list were consumed by a considerable per cent of the sample, for example, coconut, fruits, bakery items etc. Ragi which was an important item of their diet is

found to be totally missing from their diet and wheat seems to be the contribution of PDS to their diet structure. Home grown tapioca also forms an important item.

4.4 Subsistence production

Paniyar have very little scope for home production. Most of them are landless. Those who own some land choose share cropping with non-tribals for want of sufficient capital to engage in agriculture. The share of the produce that the Paniya farmer is thus able to receive, invariably falls short of his/her actual requirement for a particular year. Further, land ownership in most cases is limited to the possession of a few cents of land as the backyard of their huts, where they sometimes grow minor vegetables, like pumpkin and a few plantains.

In the case of Kurichiyar, the extent of transformation of food economy has to be understood in terms of changes in their landed assets, cultivation practices, agrarian system, and nature of production process. First let us look at land, agriculture and cultivation practices. In the past, Kurichiyas had community ownership and land was generally held by the 'Mooppan', the chief (Burman, R. 1985). The management/control/ access to land/ and land based endowments was based on this community ownership. The rationale of communal rights with the endowments of nature associating in their immediate surroundings has been interpreted differently by different social thinkers. (Scott, J. 1986). We can attribute this to the social and moral economy prevailed among the forest dwellers in Kerala.

The main staple crop for Kurichiyar was paddy which was raised twice annually. Ragi was another major item which used to be cultivated in the hill slopes. Ragi was consumed at least once a day. Otherwise their diet was gruel three times a day with one vegetable/fish/ wild meat. Seasonal food stuffs from the forest were also a part of it. The large joint families and matrilineal system favoured this collective ownership and cultivation. But the migration that occurred mainly in the first half of the 20th century introduced several changes in the Wayanad district particularly among Kurichiyar than any other tribe. The immigrants initially introduced tapioca, a short term root, for their temporary and immediate consumption and started raising long term cash crops like lemon grass, coffee, rubber, cardamom, banana, ginger etc. The Kurichiyar who were content with their cultivation and hunting were less enterprising and adopted this agricultural innovation in a limited way. But the ecological, economic and social changes in the subsequent years affected them adversely. The most important was land alienation. The shift in the agricultural pattern to cash crops, which was very slow in the beginning, is almost complete now.

In our sample of Kurichiya households all the land owning households have coffee cultivation. But paddy still forms the main cultivation for them. Out of the 60 households 43 possess wet land. Those who do not possess land appear to be adopting share cropping where in they supply labour and bear 50 per cent of the fertilizer and other input cost and receive 50 per cent of the total output. The quantity and quality of family labour available determine the magnitude of involvement in share cropping. Larger the number of

working members in the family higher the surplus labour available. Even in the case of households who are landless we find that a certain share of their annual requirement of rice for consumption is met by the share cropping arrangement that they enter into, with landed households. Market dependence of the Kurichiyar, however, is on the increase. Traditionally each Kurichiya household used to produce rice at least for their subsistence. Of late even those Kurichiya households who have a marketable surplus at the time of harvest may require to approach the market to meet their ritual needs⁹. Ragi cultivation was widely prevalent among the Kurichiyar even in the recent past. But now they seldom cultivate it which has resulted in the almost total disappearance of this item from their dietary structure since they do not seem to be purchasing ragi from the open market.

This should lead us to a discussion on the cropping pattern as it exists among the Kurichiyar. Due to complications regarding the actual measurement of land under each crop we were not able to find out the exact area of land under each crop. A thoroughly subjective evaluation is attempted after observing their operational holdings in the following manner:

In the dry land they cultivate coffee, pepper, ginger, turmeric, aracanut, yam, chembu, chena etc. Very few households are found to have ragi (4), lemon grass (2) and rubber (2). Wet land cultivation basically consists of paddy, vegetables and plantain. The cash crops like coffee, pepper, ginger cultivated in the dry lands

⁹ For an interesting account of ritual practises of Kurichiyar, see Aiyappan, A and Mahadevan, K (1990).

yield them maximum returns in money terms. Their cash flow mainly depends on the sale of these three crops. Lack of irrigation facilities has now emerged as a major constraint for paddy cultivation. Apart from this, farmers are now attracted towards plantain cultivation which is considered as a more profitable alternative to paddy. Another reason accounting for the relative neglect of paddy cultivation is the change in attitudes. It appears that the younger generation of Kurichiyar, with the break up of joint family, an ongoing process which was begun in the early 80s, are no longer keen to pursue agriculture as a main occupation in the fragmented small holdings. On an average income from land forms 37.85 per cent of their income because of the obvious reasons that paddy forms their main cultivation for which very few households have marketable surplus and most of the households (52) have supplementary sources of income (24 household-employed persons, 16-casual labourers, 8- wage labourers, 4-other occupations).

Most of the households have enough family labour needed for the agricultural activities. In peak seasons this is supplemented with shared labour, that is, labour is shared among the neighbouring households in order to avoid hiring in of labour. Only when this is not possible they go for hired labour. Among the sample 15 households hire in labour. This is mainly for paddy, ginger and plantain usually for 3 to 6 days, ranging from 2 to 5 persons depending on the activity. The average operational working days ranges from 30 to 150 depending on the size of the land holding, family labour available, cropping pattern etc. They usually recycle the crops, if the harvest is good. Otherwise, on an average they spent 2.46 per cent of their total income for crop inputs. It was

noticed that they are getting exposed to methods of intensive cultivation using modern fertilizers, machines, etc. which were not there in the past. Moreover, they now make use of agricultural loans from banks and co-operative societies (75 per cent). 83.3 per cent of the households use fertilizers and 6 per cent pesticides which forms 2.08 per cent of their total income. Other than labour (0.93 per cent), crop (2.46 per cent), fertilizer (2.08 per cent), some of it has to spent for the hiring in of tractor/tiller/livestock to plough the field, etc. which takes away 0.7 per cent of their income.

Animal husbandry which formed an integral part of their food economy is loosing its significance. The major reasons for their reluctance to rear cattle could be summarised as follows:

(1) decrease in the forest area available for grazing and inability to afford cattle feed (2) reduction in the person power available for rearing and (3) shift to modern houses and techniques of agriculture. In our sample only 58 per cent of the households possess livestock. They use it for ploughing the field, to hire out for ploughing at the rate of 100 rupees per day, for cowdung as manure and a plastering material. Very few households were found to have cows when compared to bullocks and buffaloes. Most of them have bought it by obtaining livestock loans (41.6). But poultry rearing is common to all houses and it forms a source of income at times of emergency.

4.5 Procurement

Mode of procurement of essential commodities required for every day consumption does not seem to be a proper cognitive measurement in

the case of Paniyar, since they do not regularly depend on the market for procuring food items. This is mainly explained by the fact that their earnings are seasonal, variable and minimal at the level of subsistence. Therefore, instead of market dependency a more reliable index would be their forest dependency which we will eventually attempt to explain. Rice seems to be the only item purchased directly from the market, probably the single item that forms their 'food basket' for which they consider tapioca as a strong substitute. So the mode of procurement of rice should be usually from 3 sources namely, (1) one's own farm, (2) private retail shops, and (3) Public Distribution System. In the case of Paniyar the second and the third are the main sources. The significant share, however is from PDS. This is not surprising since the Tribal welfare department with the co-operation of civil authorities launch frequent camp sittings¹⁰ in tribal localities to issue ration cards to the deserving. Thus, we find 92 per cent of our sample population being notionally covered under the PDS. The utilization of PDS is limited by the purchasing power of the respective households. The PDS in Kerala supplies sugar, kerosene, oil, wheat etc. apart from rice. However, Paniyar seem to purchase only rice as a rule, eventhough at times of relative prosperity they buy sugar and kerosene. Sugar is usually substituted by an inferior good jaggery in most of the cases.

¹⁰ Camp sittings are organised by Tribal Department in specific tribal localities to expedite distribution of ration cards with a wider coverage.

Table 4.5: Forest dependency

Purpose	Paniyar (percentage of households)	Kurichiyar
Food	100	5
Fire wood	100	20
Sanitation	100	15
Minor forest products	75	0
Building materials	66.6	0

Source: Survey Data

As we have mentioned earlier, in the case of Paniyar it is important to understand their dependence on forest resources particularly for their subsistence requirements. In our sample, for example as table 4.5 reveals a total or partial dependence on forest resources for food, sanitation and fire wood, in the case of all the sample households, whereas a little less but significant share of households depend on forest for MFP (75 per cent) and building materials (66.6 per cent). Dependence for food is mainly guided by their need, availability and accessibility. For sanitation the entire sample households depend on backyard forests. This is primarily due to the fact that in none of the Paniya hamlets have toilets in their respective homesteads¹¹. Fire wood is collected from the forest mainly for two purposes. One is for own use in the kitchen and second for selling. It seems that in some cases they exchange fire wood with petty vendors and hotel owners for edible consumption goods. Not infrequently they sell fire wood in the open market to meet their liquidity requirements. Similarly, they collect and sell minor forest produces like honey, gooseberry, mushroom, medicinal herbs etc. to co-operative

¹¹ An informant suggested that the absence of sanitation facilities within the settlement area is mainly due to 'a lack of interest' for having one on the part of Paniyas. The often sighted example is that in a couple of hamlets belonging to Kattunaickans and Paniyans where modern sanitary facilities were provided, 'the beneficiaries' simply refused to use them.

societies organized to procure such things. The lesser number of households among the sample depending on MFP is due to legal restrictions imposed on the tribals by civil authorities. The system of issuing permits to those who want to make a living on collection and sale of forest produces makes it impossible for all the tribals to have free access to this occupation. There are two reasons why an even lesser number of sample households reporting to be depending on forest as a source for building materials. The first one is as just mentioned the restrictions on having a free access, the second and more important reason is that a significant number of tribal houses are government built using modern technology and construction materials. However, as the table shows majority of the Paniyar still depend mainly on forest resources for their livelihood¹².

As evident from the forest dependency table, only 5 per cent of the Kurichiyar depend on forest for food. This is mainly for some varieties of tubers and roots available soon after the monsoon. The rest of the sample population has totally given up such food habits. So we see that other than for rice, vegetables and certain other items which they produce at home, Kurichiyar are wholly dependent on market. In most of the cases their monthly account at the provisional stores ranges from Rs 250-750.

Utilization of public distribution system among them is also worth mentioning. The whole sample population possess ration cards. Unlike in the case of Paniyar, they take care of their large

¹² Minor forest products and the fire wood form the only source of income during the lean months.

households by creating cards for each family within the household. They buy sugar and kerosene regularly, wheat and oil, when it is available, and rice when needed. However, when the home grown rice stock is exhausted, PDS does not seem to compensate it fully. Most of them feel that the weekly allocation of rice is quite inadequate and units per head need to be increased. So towards the end of the year, we see most of the households buying equal quantity of rice from the open market as from the PDS.

We have seen that the dietary practices of Paniyar and Kurichiyar have changed totally from home grown stuffs and seasonal edible items from the forest to 'modern' culinary culture posit various kinds of new and hitherto unfamiliar health hazards for them.

4.6 Morbidity pattern

'Health is a socially produced reality' (Djurfeltdt and Lindberg, 1975). 'Diseases exists and abound where human habits and social conditions foster them' (Kochar, 1979). Hence 'response to ill health and its consequences can be seen as cultural and sociological phenomena' (Kopparty, 1994). Several other studies have also established the relationship between health and social stratification in terms of occurrence of mortality, differential incidence and prevalence of morbidity, differential accessibility of health resources and health seeking behaviour. In the case of tribals this is even more true; health system constitutes a sub-system in the social system of the community with its own beliefs, interpretations, curing practices and indigenous medicines. We have seen that with the disruption of their traditional livelihood systems, their food habits have changed significantly. And this had

serious repercussions on their health status. In recent years, the tribal population in Wayanad have been exposed to many diseases which are totally unfamiliar to them. Tuberculosis, sickle cell anaemia¹³, cancer, blood pressure and heart diseases are some of them. In this section we shall provide a short exposition of the comparative morbidity pattern of Paniyar and Kurichiyar.

A person is considered morbid when he shows symptoms reflecting the onset of a disease. Morbidities can be categorised broadly as acute and chronic depending upon the duration and the degree of severity. Acute disease is the one which starts abruptly, reaches its formation quickly and terminates in a limited duration. Chronic disease develops insidiously over a long duration and continue for prolonged period with periodic flare-ups and progressive deterioration. Episodes lasting for more than 30 days duration are treated as chronic morbidity episodes while those lasting for less than 30 days are treated as acute morbidity episodes (Seal,1971). Acute morbidities are further classified as minor (less than 7 days) and major (7-30) based on the duration the person took to recover.

Information on morbidity episodes experienced over one year (June 1993-June 94) were collected from all the sample households consisting of 452 individuals. Details were collected from respondents about all episodes of illness that each member of

¹³ Sickle cell anaemia, however, was the product of endogamous kinship prevailed among the tribals as a genetic disorder which was in former periods successfully contained by consuming wild strawberries as reported by an informant. The scientific validity of this information is not immediately verifiable.

his/her family has suffered during the preceding twelve months¹⁴. The set of questions pertaining to this section was collected in the presence of all the members of the family in order to facilitate better recollection of episodes. The details were cross checked with the help of prescriptions given by the doctors/hospitals. Medicines were given without prescriptions only from PHCs. But details were available with the health person in charge.

Distribution of morbidities

Practically all the sample households (99 per cent) reported occurrence of one or more acute morbidities of minor duration and chronic morbidities were reported by 40 per cent. Sixty seven per cent of the respondents reported sick during the period under investigation and eighty one per cent of the children were affected by scabies during the survey period. In all, 590 episodes of both acute and chronic types were reported. Of these 381 episodes were of acute and 177 were of chronic type. Distribution of morbidities reported often in the sample were fever, cough, scabies, anaemia, joint pain, back pain, arthritis, chest pain, stomach pain, typhoid. One or two cases of heart, liver, and kidney related diseases and sickle cell anaemia were also reported. It was observed that, in general the number of morbidities among females were more than that of males. Health seeking behaviour of the sample population also provides a very good account in the case of kurichiyar while it is very alarming for Paniyar.

¹⁴ It was posed to the tribals as last monsoon till date.

Among Paniyar, scabies has shown the highest frequency. All the children in the sample households got scabies during the one year reference period. Few of them got it for more than two times. This accounts for 143 episodes¹⁵. Next highest frequency was shown by fever which accounts for 90 episodes followed by 80 cases of chest pain. In the case of scabies if the distribution is equal, fever and chest pain show significant gender variations. Fever and the associated weakness happened among females while chest pain found more rampant among males. Fever strikes them more in the monsoon. A higher number of cases of chest pain can be attributed to their personal habits like beedi, liquor. Similarly cough is also found more among men. Joint pains, stomach pains, back pain and arthritis were also not infrequent. Reported anaemic cases were 25. Moreover, there were ten unidentified morbidities (these are the cases which cannot be inferred from the symptoms and not yet consulted by a medical practitioner). Other than these more frequent ones there are cases of urinary infection among women (3), Tuberculosis (10), Jaundice (4), typhoid (1), sickle cell anaemia (1) and a psychiatric case. On the whole 414 episodes are reported for Paniyar.

Among Kurichiyar we observe less number of morbidity episodes but more variety of diseases. To be more specific, sixteen cases of morbidity are reported for diseases related to heart, liver, kidney and the like. Less number of morbidity cases which is a good indicator of the general health condition, by all means could be

¹⁵ Sometimes it is suggested that higher incidence of scabies is mainly due to unhygienic practices that prevailed among tribals. This, however, is a relative concept since they are forest dwellers before and the notion of hygiene could be different for them.

due to the high sense of purity and hygiene in association with their cultural practices¹⁶. An example of this can be the negligible cases of scabies among school going children (4) when compared to Paniyar. The highest frequency is shown by fever followed by back pain among females. But it is worth noticing that they are exposed to many diseases which were not known to them or were effectively contained by their indigenous medical system. This creeping in of 'modern' diseases can be explained only with their changed life style, particularly their dietary practices. This explanation becomes convincing when the kinds of morbidities they exhibit now is taken into consideration. These are as already mentioned blood pressure (3), diabetes (4), Heart complaints (2), ulcer (3), Cholesterol(1) and liver, kidney, and uterus related cases one each. Shift from a diet once rich with ragi, leafy vegetables, varieties of tubers and roots, wild meat and more from a home grown consumption to market consumption might have played a considerable role in the deterioration of health of this extremely healthy and prosperous farmers¹⁷.

The table 4.6 clearly shows the poverty stricken existence of Paniyar. Many of the morbidities can be attributed to their inconsistency in food consumption and a diet which consists of low calory and less nutritious food items. Also we have to notice that 68 persons were found sick among them during the survey. Most of them were down with severe fever.

¹⁶ For a detailed account of this see Ayyappan, A and Mahadevan, K (1991).

¹⁷ Kolippali Achappan, who is a known 'Vaidyan' (one who practices indigenous medicines) opined that modern llopathic medicines are responsible for the decrease in resistivity and consequently induced many diseases that they were unfamiliar with. (Personal Interview)

Table 4.6: Distribution of morbidities reported often in the sample (in per cent)

Morbidity	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Fever	14.5	22.7
Cough	7.7	8.5
Scabies	34.5	3.4
Anaemic	5.6	0.6
Joint Pain	2.4	22.7
Back Pain	2.9	8.5
Arthritis	3.6	9.1
Chest Pain	13.3	6.8
Stomach Pain	8.6	5.7
Total	93.1	88.0

Source: Survey Data

As already mentioned, acute morbidities of minor and major duration are more in the case of Paniyar which is a clear indicator of their low health status. Chronic diseases among them are tuberculosis, sickle cell anaemia, arthritis, chest pain, stomach pain, back pain and joint pain, while for Kurichiyar many of these are absent (TB and sickle cell anaemia). On the other hand their exposition to other types of morbidity are on the increase. Further, cases of death reported for the sample also shows high rate for Paniyar. In our sample 3 persons were died of tuberculosis and another of an accident case. For Kurichiyar only one case was reported, that too death due to old age.

Table 4.7: Distribution of Acute and Chronic morbidities

Type of diseases	Paniyar	Kurichiyar	Total
Acute			
Minor	24.9	30.7	26.6
Major	53.9	30.7	46.9
Total	78.8	61.4	73.5
Chronic			
More than 1 years	21.2	38.6	26.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Survey Data

In general cases, morbidity reported for females are significantly very high. During the survey days also, out of the 68 persons who were ill, majority (40) were females, excluding children affected with scabies. They were affected by acute fever cough, chest pain and arthritis. Their mobility was seriously affected and consequently they could not go out to the forest to collect some edible items for eating and fire wood to cook and keep them warm. Since it was heavy monsoon and agricultural work was almost over in that area, most of our sample households were starving. Their illness has to be seen against this.

Table 4.8: Distribution of sick persons and number of episodes among males and females

Sex	Type	No: of Episodes		No: of persons	
		Paniyar	Kurichiyar	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Male	Acute	128	37	120	37
	Chronic	46	31	44	31
Female	Acute	183	61	167	57
	Chronic	57	47	55	47
Total	Acute	326	108	287	94
	Chronic	88	68	99	78

Source: Survey Data

Health action¹⁸ taken by an individual when he/she is ill or the health seeking behaviour of a community is important in understanding the health status of that particular community or most often, the development of the group to which he/she belongs to. Because health action is closely associated with health beliefs and practices which form a part of the larger cultural and

¹⁸ Health action is defined as 'any action taken by a sick person to restore his or her health' (Kopparty, 1994: 81). It includes consulting medical practitioners, healers, self-medication or any other means resorted to for recuperation of health.

religious system of the community¹⁹. In our sample survey we observe that among Paniyar, health seeking behaviour is very minimal²⁰. In about 60 per cent of reported morbidities no health action was sought and in 10 per cent of the cases some form of health action was taken. In other words, only for 25 per cent of cases health action was taken. Among all categories children were given better health care action. In most of the cases, acute minor (fever) and chronic diseases (arthritis, TB) are neglected. For example fever is either neglected or taken care by some herbs or by a medicinal coffee which was made with dried ginger, pepper etc. ('chukku kappi'). Most of the times only when their mobility is seriously affected they seek health action. Regarding chronic morbidities, majority discontinue medicines after a while due to time and money constraints. They wait till it erupts again²¹. This lack of interest becomes clear when the unidentified ten cases of morbidities of more than two year duration.

On the contrary Kurichiyar, are very alert in the matters pertaining to health. None of the cases of morbidity were found to be neglected without any health action. They keep themselves away

¹⁹ Many empirical studies have supported against this. For example see, Ishwaran (1967), Carstairs (1955 and 1983), Lewis (1958), Hasan (1967), Kopparty (1994).

²⁰ Perception of illness is an important aspect while discussing morbidity among tribals. For example, the simple poser regarding their illness is positively answered in the affirmative only when the concerned individual is bed ridden with motor incapacity unable to work. Usually a tribal person who is affected by tuberculosis but still not bedridden would consider himself as being not affected any illness.

²¹ Due to the recurring deaths due to TB last year, government has started supplying medicines free of cost along with pension through Primary health care centres. Because of this TB patients are continuing medicines. Other wise, violent eruptions of chronic diseases makes the person bed ridden and once the condition worsens, nearby non-tribals and tribal activists/ volunteers take them to hospital with the help of tribal department ambulance.

from hospital only for some minor ailments. Utilization of primary health care facilities available to the sample population are PHC, private practitioners, homeo and allopathy, private hospitals, mission hospitals, government hospital, allopathy and ayurveda, folk healers, indigenous medical practitioners etc. The choice is strictly guided by the seriousness of the disease (distance to these sources differ significantly), money and time at hand. For minor ailments like scabies both Paniyar and Kurichiyar approach PHC. Other wise their preference is for government hospital which is far away from their hamlet. Some Paniya hamlets were resorting to private allopathic and homeopathic doctors and some other government ayurvedic hospital. This is strictly guided by their convenience to commute.

Table 4.9: Health seeking behaviour of the sample

Group	Sample seeking health action		Type of health action sought					
	Yes	No	IN	PHC	GOA	GOAY	PRA	PRH
Paniyar	55	45	10	30	10	5	5	0
Kurichiyar	88	12	15	10	25	18	20	10

Note: IN - indigenous medicine; PHC- Primary health centre; GOA- Government hospital (modern medicines); GOAY- Government hospital (Ayurvedic medicines); PRA- Private hospital (modern medicines) and PRH- Private hospital (Homeopathic medicines).

Source: Survey Data

Kurichiyar as a whole seem to prefer modern allopathic medicines²². It is interesting to note that many of the Kurichiya households avoid consulting private practitioners. Instead they make use of the provisions they have for free medicines from government sources and mission hospitals, where as Paniyars hardly know about it.

²² It was noticed that K. Achappan, an approved Kurichiya 'Vaidyan' by the government of kerala gets very minimum number of patients from his own community.

Conclusion

As we noted in the chapter on methodology the basic concepts that informed our analysis of the food economy of Kurichiyar and Paniyar were (i) entitlements and (ii) capabilities. Eventhough we did not make an explicit attempt to translate these categories into our systematisation of information collected through the field study, the contours mapped in the analytical terrain broadly reflect their operational contents. As we have seen, the pattern of expenditure and consumption levels of Kurichiyar and Paniyar, reveals that the latter are worse off in terms of their entitlements. The same is true of their capabilities since the pursuit of valuable activities and functioning of Paniyar is severely curtailed by the ever increasing restrictions imposed on them in their accessability to forest land. The difference in their respective initial endowments is another indicator worthmentioning in this context. All economic pursuits of Paniyar are invariably characterised by deprivation and absence of vitality. However Kurichiyar also face a dwindling economic base with a decreasing land dependency and market subjection. In short, we find that the food economy of tribals have became more fragile with the worse off group among them facing graver consequences.

Chapter 5

ASPECTS OF FOOD ECONOMY II - FEMINIZATION OF POVERTY

Introduction

The apocalyptic discussions on the fall of the Kerala model (George, K.K. 1990) have generated a debate around the theme of the actual historical impact it had on various elements of the social structure in the state. The difference between the influence of the Kerala model on what is perceived as its central tendency vis-a-vis outliers has attracted considerable attention. Women, Dalits, and other weaker sections constitute the periphery where the failures of the model are arguably more palpable. The persistence of poverty among these marginalised and vulnerable groups has been a recurrent theme in political and academic debates.

The disintegration of traditional sources of livelihood and the vagaries of the market system into which they get involuntarily involved are normally considered the main agencies contributing to the persisting poverty among the tribals. Besides these general causes, the phenomenon of feminization of poverty has to be addressed in terms of a variety of factors that determine gender divisions of labour, wage differentials, property rights, possession of assets, income sharing, education levels etc.

This chapter tries to understand the dimensions of poverty at the intra-household level, among the tribals, emphasizing the impact of economic forces in perpetuating poverty with a closer look at the

phenomenon of feminization of poverty¹ as it is observed among our sample groups.

5.1 Feminization of poverty

Given the crucial role of social conditions and economic forces in the genesis of poverty, we may begin our analysis by exploring the dimensions of issues pertaining to this domain. It is quite obvious that a comprehensive treatment of a multitude of pertinent factors fall beyond the scope of this study. Therefore, we have attempted to map the terrain with relatively more significant aspects to understand the fathom of deprivation. They are land, labour, income, food consumption and morbidity pattern.

Before analysing the data pertaining to these variables to bring out the gender disparities, certain assumptions are made on the basis of present level of academic understanding on the subject .

(1) Environmental deterioration has led to a social environment that is unfavourable to women (Fernandes and Menon, 1987).

(2) Employment opportunities are becoming lesser for unskilled agricultural labour due to various factors inter alia conversion of paddy lands to non- agricultural purposes.

(3) The gender division of labour influence nutritional needs (Kynch, 1994).

(4) Women irrespective of their income earning capabilities do play a significant role in food production for domestic consumption and market.

¹ The term feminization is used to denote the process of unequal sharing of hunger during times of scarcity between gender where the women are forced to take lesser share of the available food than men. The term is usually used in the context of increasing work participation of women in the labour force (see for example, Hein, C, 1986)

(5) A greater share of expenditure incurred on food expense is contributed by women.

(6) Under constraints of employment and consequently income the quantity intake of food by women would be less than that of men. In other words within the family, hunger is shared unequally between gender.

(7) The changes that occurred in the realm of economic organization has not reduced the work burden of women both within and outside home. On the contrary, it could even be argued that women's work has relatively increased.

(8) Assimilation in the economic sphere leads to transformation of contours of their cultural field and consequently a transition in the social values albeit by degrees, which has adverse effect on women.

Studies focussing on the dependence between tribals and forests have attempted to establish the hypothesis that tribal women have a stronger relationship with forests than men (Fernandes and Menon, 1987: 12). The basis of this argument seems to be the fact that women's roles within their households compel them to gather food, fuel, water, fodder, medicines etc. from the forests. It is sometimes recalled that the term Boserup (1970) used to denote shifting cultivation was 'female farming system' (quoted in Ibid)².

The traditional ways of livelihood prevailed among the tribals particularly during the phase of food gathering and subsequent

² Shifting cultivation has existed in India "for several thousand years in a relationship of proximity with settled agriculture" (Sharma, S. 1994: 158)

transition to shifting cultivation, women enjoyed an equal or not infrequently superior position within the household compared to men. This peculiar situation was rooted in the mode of social organization and natural environment in which they lived. It is usually hypothesized that alterations in the natural environment would have a more direct impact on women than on men (Ibid:13). The change in the natural environment, however is brought about in the case of tribals mainly by discriminatory values disseminated among tribals when they are forced to come into contact with alien cultural and economic entities. This change is particularly reflected in the domain of gender relations where the equality enjoyed by tribal women becomes a thing of the past. Our study also, emphasizes this new socio- cultural reality. A diachronic narration of the process of this transition to gender inequality is beyond the scope of the present study. But we have attempted to understand and structurally locate domains of every day life where such discriminatory values have crept into tribal social net work.

5.2 Land

Land, by and large remains as a crucial asset in rural areas and our sample villages are no exception. The introduction of the concept of private ownership on land in contrast to communal ownership had far reaching implication to the economic organization in general and their gender relations in particular. The concept of ownership as it was introduced among the tribals was a simulacrum of the concept as it existed among non- tribals, which is characterised by discrimination against women. Documentation of landed assets of tribals thus, were made in favour of the head of the household defined invariably as the significant male member of

the household, depriving women any legal right over land which was originally communally owned and equally accessible till in the recent past. The Public Distribution System also, following this example, documents the ration cards to record the quantity of provisions supplied to tribal households, in the name of male head of the household. In our sample, for example, only young widows possessed ration cards against their names. This is ironical since the females in households are the ones who contact the civil authorities when they hold camp sittings to distribute ration cards and invariably they are the ones who frequent ration shops for buying provisions. The system of pawning ration cards is prevalent among people belonging to lower income groups in Kerala, a feature that is visible in our sample also. Since the ration cards are issued against the male head of the family he is at liberty to pawn it without the consent of females. This happens not infrequently, to the embarrassment of women. The incidence of such pawnings are on the increase mainly due to the encouragement given to this practice by ration shop owners themselves to facilitate black marketing of provisions supplied through ration shops. Another example of the discriminatory decision making within the family by male members would be the unilateral selling of the livestock supplied by Tribal department ostensibly to pay off the personal debts of males. In our sample households of Paniyar, more than 4 cases were reported where in the head of the household had sold off the goat to clear off the debt in the liquor shop.

Ownership right on land becomes crucial in availing loans and other facilities since financial assistance is issued against the guarantee of landed assets. When the ownership is unilaterally

conferred on male members, females are deprived of opportunities to make use of such facilities. In short we can say that the change from communal ownership on land among tribals has affected women than men.

Our sample population includes 209 females from Paniyar community and 212 from Kurichiyar. It is observed that out of the total female population only 8 women from the Kurichiyar community have got some land which they inherited in the recent past. This possession of land is in no way a decisive factor in their role in decision making or in the utilization of resources. Women of the land owning households are unpaid family labourers who frequently engage in shared labour also (exchange of labour between neighbouring households). Their only source of income comes from poultry (income from livestock also goes to the male head). But the male unpaid family labourer enjoys operational right over a part or a portion of the land where he can do his own cultivation to raise money for his personal expenditure. This is a very common feature among the joint families of Kurichiyar and in the case of Paniyar, none of the women possess land.

5.3 Labour

This is the core part of the anatomy of the feminization of poverty among tribals. It is of common knowledge that poverty is not having enough money to get food for a continuous period of time, the question of labour-the type, the opportunities, alternatives, wages etc. -becomes more significant in the analysis of poverty.

Table 5.1 Occupational status of the sample female population

Category	Paniyar		Kurichiyar		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Agricultural Labour	107	51.2	15	7.1	122	29.0
Casual labour	0	--	4	1.9	4	1.0
Wage labour	0	--	2	0.9	2	0.5
Govt. employed	0	--	2	0.9	2	0.5
Private	0	--	4	1.9	4	1.0
Self employed	0	--	1	0.5	1	0.2
Family labour	0	--	75	35.4	75	17.8
Maid servant	3	1.4	0	--	3	0.7
Full time students	36	17.2	48	22.6	84	20.0
Out of labour force	63	30.1	61	28.8	124	29.5
Total	209	100.0	212	100.0	421	100.0

Source: Survey Data.

As we know tribal women are predominantly agricultural labourers³ and we see from the table 5.1 that majority involve in agriculture as hired labourers or as unpaid family labourers. We also notice that the shift from agriculture to other sectors of economy is absolutely nil in the case of Paniyar and negligible for Kurichiyar. Among the Paniya female labour force, there is not even one casual, or wage labourer. But among Kurichiyar we see that two are engaged as wage labourers in the tea estates and four others in road construction. This can be attributable to the area where Paniyar are concentrated (Table 3.4).

The main crops cultivated in the area are paddy, pepper, coffee, ginger, plantain etc. Among these female work force is employed for paddy, coffee and ginger. The cultural prejudices in the selection of crops and lack of irrigation facilities during summer, allow in most part of the area under survey practically one crop of paddy a year. This reduces the number of actual working days to half for

³ Among the tribal workers 55.47 per cent depends on agriculture and 14.04 per cent of agricultural labourers are from Wayanad district alone (GOK, 1994).

those who depend on agriculture alone. Pepper, coffee and ginger offer seasonal and very minimal working days of 7 to 10. So any shifting of preference from any of these crops due to climatic conditions or reduced demand and price in market has adverse effect on the female workforce. One of the colonies under study is an example of this. The man who owned the major portion of wet land in the area has shifted from paddy to ginger and plantain. So, 40 to 60 days of work in an year was reduced to 10 to 15 days of work. Since, plantain cultivation does not employ females and ginger cultivation offers very minimum days of work. So they had to go to far off places where labour is likely scarce and expensive to offer their cheap labour. And surprisingly, this shifting has become very common because it reduces risk factor, labour and fertilizer cost. Further more, the insuring facility for plantain cultivation is an added incentive for large scale wet land owners.

There are absolutely no non farm /off-season activities available for females due to the general backwardness of the district in terms of industrial development or similar avenues facilitating labour absorption. In addition to this, our sample female population is left with no other option than agricultural work because they do not possess any kind of traditional skill unlike some other tribes and their proximity to the forest area keep them away from getting employed in tea estates. The sundry skills acquired through modern training programmes sponsored by government and non-governmental agencies also have not reached them. The reduction of work in the agricultural sector was compensated by seasonal collection and selling of minor forest products. This however has become difficult due to stringent enforcement of forest

loss and regulations. Even in cases where tribals are actually allowed to gather forest produce for the purpose of marketing them, it can be seen that those produce which fetch a relatively high market price like honey, mushroom, wild gooseberry are collected by men folk leaving a less remunerative basket of herbs and shrubs to the women folk. The average number of days on work availability for the sample is found to be 60. However, the distribution of work days among the sample population appear to be extremely uneven. Some women get only 20 to 40 days of work per year whereas some managed to get work for a maximum of 90 days.

When we take the percentage of earning members, for Paniyar it is 55 per cent which is an attractive figure which means that only less than half of the population sample are dependent. But the fact lies not only in the nature of occupation but also in the average earning of the members. The average annual income of the Paniya household is found to be Rs.5166.6 and the monthly per capita income is 78.4, relatively lower figures when compared to the respective state averages. This is perhaps due to the fact that employment opportunities are increasingly becoming less and less as a result of a variety of reasons which include inter-alia conversion of paddy lands for non-agricultural uses. The availability of employment is limited to 6 to 14 days in a month depending on the season. Moreover, agricultural work is available only for 9 months in a year because of the heavy monsoon twice a year. It is also significant to note that the percentage of earning members among Paniyar the 55 per cent is mostly constituted by women. It is observed that in the age group of 14 to 65, if not

suffering from any chronic diseases is engaged in agricultural work.

Among Kurichiyar only 15 are agricultural labourers but they manage to get more working days than Paniya women because of the advantage of the area in which they live with more plantations and estates. Others who engage in family labour and shared labour, their labour is used for subsistence production of food crops as well as for commercial crops.

As mentioned in chapter 3 Wayanad district has a very cheap labour market compared to any other districts in the state. The wage rate for women is much below than that for men being Rs.20-30 and Rs.35-50 respectively. It should be noted that wage difference of Rs.15 exist even in highly feminised agricultural activities.

Another striking feature of our sample is that out of the 60 households of Paniyar 20 per cent are female headed households. It goes without saying that in female headed households the responsibility of family care will be solely on the shoulders of the head of the family. Given the low economic opportunities available for women and the existing differential wage rate act as a major constraint on their income earning capabilities. Such families are therefore poorer than their counterparts with a male head⁴.

⁴ Another study which arrives at a similar conclusion is Verghese, S (1994).

Coming to the employed population of our female sample we notice that out of 26 government employed persons (Table 3.10), only two are women⁵ They are from the Kurichiyar community and none belongs to this category from Paniyar.

This lead us to the literacy level of the sample. In table 3.17 we see the male-female differences in the literacy rate. In the case of Paniyar this difference is 65.3 and 73.7 and for Kurichiyar, it is 17.2 and 31.1 respectively. It is interesting to note that in the case of Paniyar also, we see significant male- female difference. This can be explained only with the help of the pre-occupations females have other than agricultural labour. This includes collection of fire wood and other food stuffs available from the forest, buying of provisions from the market etc. In this connection it is interesting to know whether the new efforts on the part of state and voluntary agencies to develop the culture of literacy among the tribals has also seriously affected by the relative endowments of particular tribal groups. The answer we feel is in the affirmative. Our survey reveals that the percentage of female neo-literates is very low (7.6 per cent) in the case of Paniyar while for Kurichiyar it is 20.68. This may be due to the more leisure available for the Kurichiya women. While 85.38 per cent of the Paniya women earn for themselves where as among Kurichiyar female work participation rate is only 20.74.

⁵ It is worth mentioning here the plight of this employed women of the community who had to move out of the household for education and employment. On the virtue of this no one from their community came forward to marry them and both are unmarried in their late thirties.

5.4 Diet profile

Dietary practices that exist among tribals are the best indicators of the perceived gender differences in sharing poverty and deprivation. Our sample reveals that 83 per cent survive on a single meal per day among the rest only 12 per cent are able to manage two meals. Only 5 per cent can afford to have 3 meals at least during peak season. In the case of most families no work means no food. When food is not cooked at home men usually consume from tea shops on credit. Women on the other hand have no such options but starve. Many times during the lean months it is the responsibility of females to find alternative food stuffs to feed the family. Moreover, expenditure of the food is more or less exclusively met by the women folk from their wages. Consumption of liquor among Paniya men are reported to be very high which considerably reduces the actual income set apart for purchasing food and other articles for the family.

Kurichiya women are better off in this sense that their joint family system prevents this unequal sharing and more over there will always be some thing in their home gardens to feed the family. In the case of nuclear families also, their strong ties with the parental household prevent them from starving. However, in both the communities we notice that consumption smoothing behaviour is primarily a women's responsibility. None of the Paniya women were reported to take breakfast while men occasionally eat from hotels and from non-tribals households where they are called to work in the home gardens. Children are fed with left overs of the previous meal. Discrimination of food at this age is not known to them. But once a girl becomes big enough to look after the younger

ones; she needs to sacrifice her share for the male members and children. It was observed that, if the work place is not far away they come back home to share the noon meal provided to them as part of the wages.

From the above discussion on diet and from the previous chapter we learn that food consumption of tribals is much below of what is normal to a human being and this is further reduced in the case of women. This understanding is important in the sense that along with this reduction in food consumption, the work load of women has increased due to various factors. Most importantly, the inaccessibility to the forest coupled with deforestation. Many of the women respondents reported that they have to cross teak forest ranging from 3 to 6 kilometres to reach the interior forest where they can collect fire wood. Besides, once the agricultural work is over in their locality they have to go to far off places where paddy cultivation is more rampant. This happens because, due to lack of irrigation facilities, instead of second crop of paddy, most of the farmers engage in vegetable cultivation for which men are preferred. In this sense on an average a Paniya woman is active for 14 hours a day and they cover a distance of 4-10 kilometres daily. Men have more options than women, in this sense. They take up loading, cutting and slicing of timber, slicing of fire wood for hotel owners, maintenance of home gardens of neighbouring households and the like menial jobs. Tribals as a whole never have the habit of begging and the Paniya women feel comfortable with agricultural related work only. For example they can never barge into a non-tribal household in search of a day's work and they seldom take up kitchen assistances and the related

works like washing, sweeping etc. They do not think that they are physically fit for any thing other than agricultural work. Sending children as house maids is recent development among them due to the close interaction of some activists and non-tribal families in the locality. It is to be noticed that the three house maids in our sample are from female headed households working for Rs.100/- per month. But this is not very common and they are reluctant to send their children outside even when they are starving. Hence, no work means sitting at home starving. Their ability to withstand hunger needs special attention. We feel it is a clear indication of their poverty stricken existence and the adaptability they have developed in the absence of alternatives. Interactions with and the incursion at various levels of the mainstream cultural values have contributed to the break up of their strong community feelings. Earlier times a widow or the family of a diseased person was attended by the community. But at present, we see that food is not shared within a particular settlement. Even among Kurichiyar for whom the concept of a female headed nuclear household is recent in origin, it is surprising to notice that there are families who are poorer and no help has been rendered to them. This is quite evident when we take the case of a female headed household belonging to the sect of converted Kurichiyar, where they expect help only from the local church and not from any where else.

5.5 Morbidity

Morbidity is one of indices of the health status in a community and it can bring out, if there is any general bias in a community in terms of health practices. Moreover, it has direct bearing on the diet practices of a community. It is observed that in general, the

number of morbidities among females were more than males. This may be due to the higher proportion of females in the sample. But when we take the case of health action or health seeking behaviour of the sample it is observed that 50 per cent of the females do not seek any medical aid for their ailments. They restrain from seeking any health action mainly due to three reasons: (1) lack of time; (2) lack of money; and (3) cultural prejudice. It should be noticed that the cases of unidentified morbidities are also more among them (see section 4.6). Household choice between obtaining health care and food, often gave priority to food. Cases of untreated morbidities forced adults to loose employment/made them incapable to work resulting in hunger in the household. In our sample, 4 Paniya females are unable to do any physical work due to chronic health problems . Surprisingly they have not received any medical care so far

5.6 State benefits

Further the state also through its discriminating policies contributes to the perpetuation of feminisation of poverty. The subtle biases of state policies, it is found become apparent mainly at the operational level. This is brought out clearly in the following chapter.

Turning to the welfare project of the state which are exclusively addressed to the tribal women one finds a mere dismal and regrettable scenario. The data from our sample are more than illustrative of the situation. In the case of Paniya women we find that beneficiaries of welfare measures are nil expect for a few widow and old age pensions. In the case of Kurichiyar their number

is practically negligible. The actual number of Kurichiya women who benefitted from state sponsored welfare programmes are only two. One got Rs.5000/- along with others to start a self-employment scheme and the second, financial assistance of Rs.1000/- for getting married to a non-Kurichiyan. The list of state welfare programme given in appendix clearly shows that of 46 programmes only 3 programmes are directly meant for women. They are financial aid for marriage of tribal girls, financial aid to registered Mahila Samajam for handicrafts, financial assistance of tribal girls for self employment. Most of the tribal women who are far behind their counterparts in the case of education awareness and social interaction never happen to know about these programmes or make use of them.

Conclusion

Thus our study reveals that burden of poverty is most often borne by women. In terms of possession of economic assets (both performing and non-performing), the capacity to earn, education levels and the level of consumption of food, women are invariably ranked below men. This holds true for both an economically well off indigenous community like Kurichiyar as well as socially and economically weaker group like Paniyar. However, the magnitude of feminization of poverty within a particular community depends on the cultural, historical and economic specificities of their livelihood practices. Further, the state also through its discriminating policies contribute to the perpetuation of feminization of poverty. The subtle biases of state policies, it is found, become apparent mainly at the operational level.

Chapter 6

STRATIFICATION AND RESPONSIVENESS

Introduction

We have discussed in the earlier chapters, the intra-group and inter group differences that exist tribals in Kerala. Now we may ask the question how initial advantages in terms of socio-economic status give a particular community a better leverage in responding to state initiatives? Does relatively backward socio-economic standing of the Paniyar affect their capability to be receptive to state initiatives in terms of welfare measures?

The state has a constitutional mandate to promote with special care the interests of tribals. In the pursuit of this goal, the government has evolved several policies and programmes so as to emancipate and empower the tribals. An attempt is made to summarise the efforts of the state government at both conceptual and operational levels. Tribal development through assimilation and detribalisation was the corner stone of state's approach to tribals. Accordingly, the Tribal Sub Plan was launched during the fifth five year plan, with the objective of protecting the interests of tribals through legal and administrative support and and improving their standard of living through various developmental programmes. In 1975, Kerala government formed a special department for integrated tribal welfare. The Integrated Tribal Development projects which form an important component of this plan were implemented in seven districts which formed the traditional tribal belt in Kerala. Since the highest Scheduled tribe concentration is in Wayanad district, three project offices are functioning there. Presently 74.96% of the scheduled tribes in the state as per 1991 census are covered under these projects while

under the erstwhile projects it was only 46.47%. Mainly the development programmes concentrate on the development of agricultural and allied sectors like animal husbandary, the promotion of literacy and educational standards, as well as improvements in housing, health and nutritional standards among the tribals. Self employment opportunities for the landless through resettlement in the agricultural colonies, supply of livestock and training in new skills and trades are envisaged as part of the plan. In addition to these are the public sectors undertaking rehabilitation projects like Sugandhagiri Cardamom Project, Pookot lake dairy project, Attappady co-operative farming society, Tribal collective farm Vattachira and Priyadarshini tea estate Pancharakolly.

Apart from these, according to tribal sub plan all development departments should share 2 per cent of their plan outlay for the welfare of tribals. While the programme is very grand in its design and leaves the impression of maximum effort from the governments part with its laudatory objectives aiming to provide a much needed economic spine to tribals, at the operational level it has turned out to be a miscalculated event. This section tries to probe into the factors behind this by analysing the responsiveness of the sample population to these programmes during the past 10 years. The list of government programmes/ schemes are given in the appendix.

6.1 Comparative picture of State benefits received

The Table 6.2 shows the type of benefits and its distribution among the sample households in percentages. The benefits are put under four categories.

Table 6.1 Awareness about the schemes

Groups	Awareness	Approached/ Applied	Denied/ not received	Camps/ programmes
Paniyar	40	35	80	10
Kurichiyar	100	70	10	60

Source: Survey Data

Table 6.2: Benefits received

Sl. No:	Type of Benefits	Paniyar	Kurichiyar
Housing and Livestock			
1.	House	66.6	60
2.	Wiring	0	18.3
3.	Smokeless Choola	0	16.6
4.	Latrine	0	38.3
5.	Thatching	1.6	1.6
6.	Livestock	3.1	3.3
7.	Housing Loan	0	8.3
Education and Employment			
8.	Education Grant	65	83.3
9.	Hostel	0	----
10.	Employment	0	33.3
11.	Training	0	58.3
12.	Pension	28.3	11.6
Agriculture and allied schemes			
13.	Fertilizer	0	58.3
14.	Crop	0	83.3
15.	Agricultural Equipment	0	46.6
16.	Agricultural Machinery	0	20
17.	Agricultural Loan	0	75
18.	Livestock Loan	0	41.6
Health			
19.	Medical aid	13	70
20.	Camps	18.3	75
21.	Free ration	76.6	30
21.	Others	16.6	75

Source: Survey Data

A cursory glance at these tables reveal that kurichiyar show a particular ability to seize the opportunity of being the beneficiaries of state welfare programmes, where as Paniyar, a traditional backward group hardly succeeds in benefitting from whatever minimal state assistance that is provided. This in other words connotes that land owning households among tribals receive maximum attention and benefits while those landless tribals have been largely excluded, if not completely. Their benefits starts and ends with housing and livestock, because the other benefits like pension (half of the beneficiaries are TB patients) and education grant are very temporary.

6.2 Land and state benefits

Land ownership in rural country side signifies a welter of social and economic status symbols apart from being the most important means of production. It indicates the capabilities of an individual or a household to acquire the social and economic needs like education and social participation. Hence in this section we try to bring out the relationship between land and state benefits. To prove our working hypothesis that initial endowments determine the responsiveness of tribal communities to state initiatives, along with land, other variables like income, occupational status and education of the head of the household etc. are taken into account.

Other than the status and dominance associated with it, land guarantees some essential social interactions/participation in connection with the production and marketing which happens during weekly markets. These weekly markets have an important role in their economy. It is the occasional selling of individual items

which are grown in the home garden or small quantities of major crops that keeps their economy active. In other words, it is this marketing that gives them income in real value terms which they have to use to purchase things that they do not produce. Usually vegetables, aracanut, plantain, coffee and pepper are included in this occasional selling. Plantains and vegetables they sell only as and when it ripens. But other than the seasonal large scale selling coffee and pepper form a source for urgent needs of money. Most of our respondents reported that their major source of information is market place, where they meet their own people who reside near to tribal extension, panchayat and village offices. Because of their matrilineal tradition and joint family system, the households in one locality will be related to each other in one way or the other. This makes the diffusion of information smoother and faster. These informations will be about for example, distribution of pepper seedlings from forest department or Krushi bhavan which can be availed by producing the ration card.

It can be discerned from the list of schemes that most of the programmes are tailored for groups who have already come up in terms of social and economic indicators. This can be illustrated by taking a hypothetical situation of an illiterate, landless Paniya. By himself he will never approach the officials. First of all he is not aware of the provisions and policies for tribals and that he need to approach the concerned officials. And even if he approaches, the schemes by which he can be benefitted or can apply for are, housing scheme, education grant for school children, widow/old age/TB/physically handicapped pension for himself or for one of the family members, if applicable, ration card with which he

can get rice at half price and can have free food and medicines from government hospitals ,if admitted. But normally none of the illiterate tribals (here illiteracy is used not only to connote the capacity to read and write but also to indicate social and political awareness) approach the officers. In all the hamlets under survey, we observed that they got houses and livestock, because their 'colony' was selected in that particular year from that panchayat for such schemes. Other benefits like financial aid for thatching, pensions, education grant were made possible due to the intervention of tribal volunteers and occasional visits of tribal Extension officers to the area. This indifference or awareness is clear from the Table 6.1.

Social and political activities form another major source of information/awareness about state's affirmative actions regarding tribals. This includes any interaction other than economic activities.

Table 6.3: Social and Political Activities

Group	Social	Political
Paniyar	0	0
Kurichiyar	68.5	45

Source: Survey Data

We see that the differences that is quite obvious in terms of awareness and responses in the Table 6.1 is reflected explicitly in their social and political activities. For Paniyar, social activities restrict to religious and marriage functions and political awareness to identifying themselves as a colony to a

political party during the elections. For Kurichiyar, they have Adivasi Samrakshana Samiti in each locality/settlement. The major functioning of this is focussed on getting agriculture related benefits to the particular settlement which they belong to. For example, two settlements got ponds sanctioned under Rajiv Gandhi million well scheme and two other, one tiller and tractor from the agricultural department. It was observed that these settlements are politically active and the three full time political activists in the sample belong to these settlements.

To prove statistically the point we are driving at, we have cross tabulated the categories of land against the aggregate number of benefits received by members of each household.

Table 6.4: Paniyar- Land and Aggregate State Benefits

Land holding (in acres)	Aggregate state		benefits Total
	Upto 4 Programmes	More than 4	
0	89.6	10.4	96.7
0.1-2.5	16.6	83.3	3.3
2.6-5	0.0	0.0	0.0
5.1 and above	0.0	0.0	0.0
N	40	20	60
Chi-squared	0.72**	p<0.01	**NS
Mandel-haenzel test	0.72**	p<0.01	
Lambda	0.00		

Source: Survey Data

We see that in the case of Paniyar the relationship between land and aggregate state benefits is not significant because only 3.3% has land holdings and none of the households have received more than 10 programmes. Majority of the households (40) have benefitted from 4 programmes only namely, house, grant, free ration and free

medicines from primary health centres and government hospitals and only 20 households got benefitted from more than 4 programmes.

Table 6.5: Kurichiyar - Land and Aggregate State Benefits

Land holding (in acres)	Aggregate state		benefits Total
	Upto 10 Programmes	More than 10	
0	95.0	5.0	3.3
0.1-2.5	31.0	69.0	11.7
2.6-5	33.3	66.7	25.0
5.1 and above	33.3	66.7	60.0
N	12.0	48.0	60.0
Chi-squared	43.93*	p<0.01	
Mandel-haenzel test	21.62*	p<0.01	
Lambda	0.71		

Source: Survey Data

On the contrary, among the Kurichiyar range of aggregate benefits (7 to 17) itself explains our point. All the kurichiya households in the sample have benefitted from more than 4 programmes. This is due to the benefits they receive relating to agriculture namely crop and seedlings, fertilizers, agricultural equipments and machinery, subsidised loan for agricultural purposes and livestock etc. Most of the households (48) have received more than 10 programmes. When many of the paniya household do not receive education grant due to dropouts and not attended the school at all, 85% of the kurichiya households have received and are receiving it. 80% of the households get crops/ seedlings and fertilizers almost every year. Out of the 60 samples of Kurichiya households, 58 have made use of agricultural loans almost thrice within a span of ten years, 48 livestock loans and 3 housing loans. Many of the youths among them actively participate in the awareness camps arranged by KIRTADS and

other employment related trainings organized by government and non-governmental organizations like Public Service Commission and Sub Inspector selection exams. Moreover, there are students who are in Pre-matric hostels, receive special assistance for talented students, tutorial assistance, etc. These variety of programmes account for the larger number of aggregate state benefits than Paniyas. Hence, the relationship is found to be highly significant at one percent as evident from the Table 6.5.

6.3 Income, occupational status and state benefits

When aggregate state benefits are cross tabulated with income and occupational status, for paniyar both show insignificant results for the obvious reason that they are agricultural labourers with an average annual income of 5141/-. But for kurichiyar, income shows linear association (M.H.Test) at 1% level of significance. The interdependency is not strong, chi-square being insignificant. This is probably due to the fact that in the relationship between income and state benefits is not deterministic in the sense that income essentially supplements other indicators of well being like landed assets and better occupational status. However the fact that there is linear association proves that income plays a specific and positive role in moulding the responsiveness of kurichiyar to state initiatives.

Table 6.6: Paniyar-income and aggregate state benefits

Income categories	Aggregate Up to 4	State More than 4	Benefits Total
Below 4000	76.9	23.1	43.3
4001- 5000	60.0	40.1	10.0
5001- 6000	72.7	27.3	18.3
6001 and above	53.8	46.2	21.7
N	41	19	60
Chi-squared	2.57**	p<0.05	
Mandel-Haenzel test	1.59**	p<0.05	**NS
Lambda	0.60		

Source:Survey Data

Table 6.7: Kurichiyar -Income and aggregate state benefits

Income categories	Aggregate Up to 10	State More than 10	Benefits Total
Below 15000	70.0	30.0	33.3
15001-20000	81.8	18.2	18.3
20001-30000	50.0	50.0	30.0
30001 and above	27.3	72.7	18.3
N	35	25	60
Chi-squared	8.49**	p<0.05	**Ns
Mandel-Haenzel test	6.11*	p<0.01	
Lambda	0.62		

Source:Survey Data

Table 6.8: Paniyar- Occupational Status and state benefits

Occupational Categories	Aggregate UP to 4	State More than 4	Benefits Total
Self farming	9.6	90.4	29.9
Labourers	14.1	85.9	53.5
Employed	0.0	0.0	0.0
Family labourers	50.0	50.0	0.5
Chi-squared	13.33**	p<0.05	**NS
Mandel-Hanzel test	4.54**	p<0.05	
Lambda	0.00		

Source:Survey Data

Table 6.9: Kurichiyar- Occupational Status and state benefits

Occupational Categories	Aggregate UP to 10	State Benefits More than 10	Total
Self farming	0.0	100.0	12.6
Labourers	95.2	4.8	13.7
Employed	0.0	100.0	8.8
Family labourers	80.0	20.0	36.1
Students	100.0	0.0	0.7
Others	0.0	100.0	28.1
Chi-squared	18.99**	p<0.05	
Mandel-Hanzel test	3.86*	p<0.01	
Lambda	0.01		

Source: Survey Data

Table 5.9 which shows the relationship between occupational status and state benefits for kurichiyar further supports the crucial role that land play in grabbing the state benefits. We see that all those who involve in self farming are succesful in benefitting from more than 10 programmes. This is partly due to what may be termed 'land bias' in state policies, that is most of the state programmes formulated for the benefit of the tribals are related to agriculture like assistance for farming. So this strong association between land owning households and utilization of sste projects appear to be an off shoot of this agricultural oriented character of state programmes.

The analysis of the relationship of income and occupational status with state benefits clearly illucidates our argument that it is land that determines the socio-economic status (It has significant relationship with income, education and occupational mobility) and also the responsiveness to state initiated programmes.

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6.4 Education of the head of the household

Our data as Table 6.10 and 6.11 suggest that literacy as an initial endowment is highly influential in moulding the responsiveness of tribals to state initiatives. It was observed during the survey itself that education of the head of the household is an important factor in determining the standard of living, social and political participation and awareness etc.

Table 6.10: Paniyar- Education level of the head of the household and stae benefits

Category	Aggregae Up to 4	state More than 4	benefits Total
Illiterate	74.5	25.5	14.3
Literate	00.0	100.0	85.7
Chi-squared	75.32*	p<0.01	
Mandel-Hanzel test	74.60*	p<0.01	
Lambda	00.70		

Source: Survey Data

Table 6.11 Kurichiyar- Education level of the head of the household and stae benefits

Category	Aggregae Up to 10	state More than 10	benefits Total
Illiterate	100.0	0.0	4.0
Literate	4.8	95.2	96.0
Chi-squared	172.13*	p<0.01	
Mandel-Hanzel test	171.75*	p<0.01	
Lambda	0.82		

Source: Survey Data

However, our hypothesis that inter group differences may exist in the distribution of initial endowments as well as corresponding responsiveness to state programmes is found to be statistically

valid. In the case of Paniyar, 74.5 per cent of the illiterate of the sample could respond to only 4 or less state programmes whereas among the literates we see that almost all are beneficiaries of more than 4 schemes. This holds true at 1 per cent level of significance. Coming to the Kurichiyar, though the pattern is same, the scale and magnitude vary significantly. Even among illiterates one can see a 100 per cent utilization of state initiated schemes up to 10 programmes. Among literates 95 per cent of the sample receive benefits more than 10 programmes offered by the state. This is also a statistically significant observation.

6.5. Factors moulding the responsiveness

Based on the above analysis, we have clubbed together all the factors that found to be influencing the responsiveness to state programmes. They are land holding of the household, income, occupational status, educational level of the head of the household. These variables are regressed against the aggregate state benefits. To nullify the effect of large family size, instead of annual family income we have included family size and per capita income of the household. This is because the aggregate benefits received by a household could be higher, when it has more members. Three alternate models were fitted. These models are described below:

Model 1

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + U$$

It denotes the entire households (120),

Model 2

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + U$$

This is for the 60 sample households of the Paniyar

Model 3

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \beta_4 X_4 + \beta_5 X_5 + U$$

and this for the Kurichiyar sample households (60).

Where,

- Y = Number of aggregate stage benefits of the sample households
 - X₁ = Per capita income of the sample households
 - X₂ = Family size of the sample households
 - X₃ = Educational levels of the head of the sample households
 - X₄ = Land holding pattern of the sample households
 - X₅ = Occupational structure of the sample households
 - U = Stochastic error term for sample and
- β₀, β₁, β₂, β₃, β₄, β₅ are the parameters to be estimated

Table 6.12 Regression co-efficients

Sample size	constant	Per capita income	Family size	Edn level of the head of the HH.	Land holdings	Occupational status
120 (equation 1)	1.89 (0.947)**	0.009 (0.001)*	0.232 (0.078)	0.170 (0.084)**	0.189 (0.078)**	0.219 (0.113)**
60 (equation 2)	2.301 (4.807)**	0.004 (0.005)	0.168 (0.034)	0.218 (0.054)**	- 0.481 (1.347)	- 0.024 (0.150)
60 (equation 3)	1.474 (1.397)**	0.005 (0.003)	0.233 (0.135)**	0.108 (0.073)**	0.133 (0.899)**	0.025 (0.182)
Equation 1 R ²	0.68	* Significant	at 1 per	cent level		
Equation 2 R ²	0.57	** Significant	at 5 per	cent level		
Equation 3 R ²	0.60					

Source: Survey Data

Our model is based on the assumption that income education, occupation and land influences/determines the responsiveness to state programmes. Table 6.8 shows that, for the entire sample, our model explains 68 per cent and for Paniyar and Kurichiyar 57 and 60 per cent respectively. For Paniyar education of the head of the household is the only variable which was found significant (model 2). This could probably due to the fact that variables other than this, when quantified remain negligible. The positive relationship that one finds between the education of the head of the household and responsiveness to state projects is accounted by the fact that most of them are neo-literates acquiring the skill from literacy centres where the basic thrust is to equip them to become aware of their rights and expose them to a whole set of state initiated programmes for their benefits.

In model 3, which explains the relationship of socio-economic variables to state benefits, among Kurichiyar, family size, education and land holdings are found to be significant. (Linear association we have found earlier for income and occupational status have disappeared in the model) Unlike among Paniyar, for Kurichiyar, state benefits are more distributed among the family members. If the elder members benefit from agricultural related schemes, the other members receive, education and employment related benefits. The variety of programmes distributed among the members makes the aggregate state benefits higher for them and hence family size is found to be significant for them.

Model 1, which is for the entire sample, shows that income, education, land holding and occupational status influence

significantly the responsiveness to state programmes. This supports our hypothesis that initial endowments of a community determines its responsiveness to state's welfare measures.

Conclusion

Our discussion so far revealed a strong case in favour of arguing for a better focus and targetting for programmes aimed to cover tribals in general. Since tribal communities are characterised by inter group intra- group differences it becomes imperative that these differences should form the basis of formulating public action. Further, from a sociological angle one can pose the question of the emergence of consciousness among the vulnerable communities. Regarding their capacity to respond to signals from outside awareness seems to be a singularly important aspect moulding consciousness.

Chapter 7

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This study taking food economy as the cardinal referent attempted to understand the existence of inter group and intra-group differences among two tribal communities in Kerala namely Kurichiyar and Paniyar and its implications in terms of their entitlements, capabilities and responsiveness to state policies. The major objectives of the study were to provide a broad picture of the change and continuity in the nature and characteristics of the food economy of tribals in Kerala within an analytical framework of social stratification, to compare and contrast the structure of the food economy of, and to examine the responsiveness the respective communities the state's policy initiatives.

It was assumed that stratification is mainly observable in terms of the occupational status of the group particularly so when the traditional occupational structure of the communities under study had not completely withered away. Further with respect to occupational mobility it was supposed that those with more initial endowments stood a better chance of upward movement. Social position, however, it was understood depends on a variety of factors including land ownership. Another supposition regarding the food economy was that it based itself on subsistence production determined mainly by consumption requirements. Two further observations which informed our analysis of the food economy pertains to forest dependency and dietary practices. Forest dependency is regressing and consequently, traditional dietary practices and medical systems are disappearing leading to a decrease in the nutritional status and increase in morbidity.

The major conceptual categories relevant in the context of the study are stratification, initial endowments, entitlements, capabilities, food economy etc. A short review of these concepts are provided in chapter 2. The method used for the study was determined by nature of objectives already mentioned. A field survey was carried out in the Wayanad district during the months of June-August, collecting information through a structured questionnaire, from Kurichiyar and paniyar.

As provisional rationalisation of the main arguments of the study, a brief narrative of the socio-economic conditions of the sample is provided in chapter 3. We have found that in terms of the initial endowments like income, occupation, education and literacy levels habitation, housing, land ownership, etc, there is a sharp divergence between Kurichiyar and paniyar with the latter showing a relatively dismal picture when compared to the former. These inter group differences were so distinct that the class differences among tribals appear to be prominent enough to warrant our attention. Same holds true for the intra- group differences also. It was found that in terms of the above mentioned indicators there exists a deep vertical diversion within the communities.

Although no explicit attempt was made to translate conceptual categories that formed the cognitive basis of this study, the analysis of food economy of both the communities were carried out essentially by keeping the constituent elements of these categories as the main pillars of exposition. Consequently in our analysis of the food economy is found that the pattern of expenditure and consumption level of Kurichiyar and Paniyar broadly reflecting

their entitlements reveal that the former is relatively well off than the latter with facing a dwindling economic base in turn of their long run opportunities. In the case of their capabilities also we find a similar picture emerging. The pursuit of valuable activities and functioning of both communities have become more and more restricted by the restrictions imposed on them by the civil authorities in the past as present. Paniyar, who were initially more dependent on forest land have consequently become more victimised than Kurichiyar. The differences in the initial endowments of these communities were also singularly striking with Paniyar forming the more marginalised segment of the tribal society in Kerala.

Intra-group differences in the food economy also shows that initial endowments are important in determining the nature and characteristics of a variety of indicators pertaining to its domain. Decreasing dependency on land and increasing market subjection have worsened the more marginalised segments within these vulnerable communities. One telling example which forms the theme of Chapter 5 is the case of feminisation of poverty. Our study have clearly shown that burden of poverty in most cases is shifted on to the women folk. In terms of a comparable set of indicators like possession of economic assets, capacity to earn, education, level of food intake etc. women are ranked below men. And this was found common to both the communities.

Following the analysis of inter-group and intra-group differences among the two communities some statistical estimations were made to assess the implications of these differences with respect to their

responsiveness to state initiatives. By clubbing together the indicators like land holding, income, occupational status, level of education etc. are regressed against the aggregate state benefits. We found that all these indicators had singularly significant influence in moulding their responsiveness. This supports the argument that initial endowments of a community largely determines its responsiveness to state initiatives.

Most of the state programmes are designed in such a way as to benefit landed households who are very few among vulnerable communities. This bias in state policy adversely affects the opportunities of a more marginalised groups like Paniyar who are mostly agricultural labourers than Kurichiyar who are essentially a land holding community. The policy implication of this observation is that the state should plan welfare programmes by keeping in view the specific needs of a particular community. A project conceived to cover all tribal communities need not necessarily benefit the weaker among them. In the case of specific groups within a particular community also this principle should be followed. This fine targeting focusing on the specific needs of group is required in the case of tribal women. Apart from programmes generally meant for tribal population as a whole, there should be specific target oriented programmes which focus exclusively on tribal women and also economically poor sections within each community. This becomes particularly important since we have found that most of the programmes aimed at the development of modern skills among tribals are focused on young men rather than women. Therefore what emerges from our analysis is the need for a systematic and comprehensive orchestration of welfare programmes

which are sensitive to the inter-group and intra-group differences among vulnerable communities.

However, this does not mean that any particular section among the vulnerables should be kept completely out of government programmes. All the benefits that they receive should continue. We believe that, then, the major policy implications of this study is that the coverage of the schemes should be widened to include the poorer and the poorest among the vulnerable communities.

APPENDIX

LIST OF TRIBAL WELFARE PROJECTS IN KERALA

1. Housing grant
2. Housing loan
3. Financial assistance for catching
4. Rehabilitation project for landless tribals
5. Financial assistance for repairing of existing houses and wells.
6. Financial assistance for housing infrastructure.
7. Establishment of Education institutions like Balawadi and Nursery Schools.
8. Stipend for pre-Matriculation studies.
9. Stipend for tutorial education.
10. Scholarship for meritorial tribal students.
11. Hostel facility for tribal students.
12. Training in handicrafts.
13. Financial assistance for technically skilled unemployed tribals.
14. Industrial credit.
15. Self employment scheme.
16. Self employment scheme for women.
17. Forest resource processing unit.
18. Agricultural development schemes.
19. Irrigation schemes.
20. Distribution of livestock.
21. Intensive habitat development programme.
22. Medical camps
23. Financial assistance for the marriage of tribal girls.
24. Financial assistance for inter-caste marriages.
25. Agricultural land development programme.
26. Margin money project for self-employment.
27. Margin money project for industrial entrepreneurship.
28. Financial assistance for taking agency work for petrol/ cooking gas.
29. Loan for agricultural land.
30. Cultural festival.
31. Financial assistance for Womens' Organisations.

32. Financial assistance for seeking job abroad.
33. Margin money project to the purchase tractor, trucker, tempo-
vans.
34. Insurance project for buying agricultural equipments.
35. Insurance facility for agriculture machineries.
36. Project for distribution of drinking water.
37. Widow pension.
38. Financial assistance for Tuberculosis patients.
39. Medical aid for chronic diseases.
40. Financial assistance for animal husbandry.
41. Financial assistance for the handicapped.
42. Financial assistance for Leprosy and Cancer patients.
43. Financial assistance for daughters of widows for marriage.
44. Financial assistance for accident cases.
45. Financial assistance for households ravaged by fire.
46. Financial assistance for households affected by natural
calamities.

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